Introduction to Criminology: An Equity Lens

Introduction to Criminology: An Equity Lens

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JONATHAN PORITZ

Welcome to the complex world of criminology. You should know right from the start that if we already had all the answers, crime would be solved, and we would all live in a utopian society. Obviously, that is not the case, which means we do not have all the answers about crime. Criminology is all about trying to find those answers, and now you get to join the quest.

For too long, the high cost of traditional textbooks has been a barrier to bringing more people into investigating why and how people cause harm and how to stop crime. As fascinating as true crime shows can be, they can only teach you so much about criminal behavior and how we respond to crime. With this textbook being free and openly licensed, all students have access to learn about criminology and can even find their own ways to contribute to this project.

This book was written directly for you, as the reader and student, to help you understand what we know about crime and what has been done to prevent or treat it. We will talk about what crimes happen, why they happen, and how the "why" guides our responses and proposed solutions. Read this book with the mindset that by learning about what has already been done to try to determine why some people commit illegal and harmful acts, you might be the one who figures out how to intervene effectively.

Now it's time to join the investigation into understanding crime!

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About this Book

Accessibility Statement

This book was created in good faith to ensure that it will meet accessibility standards wherever possible, and to highlight areas where we know there is work to do. It is our hope that by being transparent in this way, we can begin the process of making sure accessibility is top of mind for all authors, adopters, students and contributors of all kinds on open textbook projects.

If you encounter an accessibility issue, please let your instructor know right away.

Equity Lens

The Open Oregon Educational Resources Targeted Pathways Project seeks to dismantle structures of power and oppression entrenched in barriers to course material access. We provide tools and resources to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) primary considerations when faculty choose, adapt, and create course materials. In promoting DEI, our project is committed to:

1. Ensuring diversity of representation within our team and the materials we distribute
2. Publishing materials that use accessible, clear language for our target audience
3. Sharing course materials that directly address and interrogate systems of oppression, equipping students and educators with the knowledge to do the same

Designing and piloting openly licensed, intersectional, and antiracist course materials is one starting point among many when addressing inequities in higher education. Our project invites students and educators to engage with us in this work, and we value spaces where learning communities can grow and engage together.

We welcome being held accountable to this statement and will respond to feedback submitted via [our contact page](#).

Course Learning Outcomes

Educators, students, and future employers all benefit when course-level learning outcomes guide our shared work. When course-level learning outcomes are public, institutions demonstrate a commitment to equitable student success through the potential for increased collaboration and inclusive course

design. This project analyzed learning outcomes across the state of Oregon to identify themes and commonalities. Authors used this analysis as a basis for developing course outcomes that could match the curriculum of multiple institutions in Oregon while still considering their local needs and context.

Textbook and Course Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the field of criminology and what makes a criminological theory.
2. Identify how crime is measured and what challenges occur with various data sources.
3. Describe early criminological theories that sought to predict and prevent crime.
4. Evaluate theories connecting crime causation to societal conditions.
5. Analyze psychological criminological theories and individual responsibility.
6. Review theories of methods for stopping crime.
7. Identify crime typologies and categories of crimes.

Teaching and Learning Approach

The authors of this book embraced an equity-minded design for structure, scope, and sequence of chapters and chapter content. They sought to honor the needs and experiences of students who are often underserved in higher education in Oregon. Authors considered Transparency in Teaching and Learning (TILT), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and culturally responsive teaching to design meaningful learning pathways for you. You will find rich images and multimedia in addition to written content. You will also find provocative discussion questions that align with learning outcomes and objectives.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is not something you do superficially—it is something that you have to think about deeper motivation of students and your own motivation as an educator. You have to consider culture and all the elements and intersections that come with that.

Instructors, please see the Instructor Resources section in the Back Matter for an overview of curriculum design as well as openly licensed course packs and teaching tools.

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INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINOLOGY

Figure 1.1. *Protests against police brutality in Portland, Oregon, in June 2020.*

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1.1 Chapter Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns affected the whole world. Businesses were shuttered and often closed for good. Schools transitioned to online classes, and students who relied on school lunches struggled to get regular meals. Rising unemployment, restrictions on public transportation and other resources, home environments under major strain, millions of people getting sick (over 98 million in the United States, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and over 1 million Americans dying added to the enormous pressures of the pandemic (CDC, 2024). In addition, Portland, Oregon, entered the national spotlight for two serious reasons. The first was the protests in the summer of 2020 over police violence in response to the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officer Derek Chauvin (figure 1.1.). Floyd's death was another in a long line of Black men killed by white police officers. The second reason was a significant increase in gun violence that had begun during the pandemic. As a result, Portland was described as "flailing" (Cline, 2021), and politicians began calling for someone to get the city under control.

U.S. News reported, "Nationally, homicides increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020, based on FBI data. However, in Portland, deadly violence—which has been exacerbated by the pandemic—is increasing at a faster rate than nearly all major cities, with an 83% increase in homicides in 2020" (Cline, 2021). Portland Police Bureau has attributed the gun violence and an increase in shootings to an explosion of gang activity (Arden, 2021). This heightened rate of gang activity and gun violence is a continuing area of significant concern for the city's residents, businesses, and leaders.

How do we figure out what really causes crime rates to spike? Criminologists look at phenomena like the situation in Portland to figure out what exactly is happening, why it is happening, and what should be done to stop it. In this chapter, we will use this example to break down the basics of what you need to know about criminology.

Please be aware that this textbook includes discussions and descriptions of various topics related to crime, criminal behavior, violence, and the criminal justice system that may be distressing or difficult to digest. Such topics include, but are not limited to, physical and sexual abuse and sexual assault, domestic violence, homicide, substance abuse and addiction, exploitation, mental health issues, discrimination and inequality, and institutional misconduct and violence. The material presented is based on academic research, case studies, and real-world examples to provide a comprehensive understanding of criminology. If you find yourself in need of support while grappling with any of these subjects, here are some helpful national resources:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 800-799-7233 or thehotline.org
- **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN):** 800-656-4673 or rainn.org
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):** 800-662-4357 or samhsa.gov
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988 or 988lifeline.org
- **The Trevor Project** (hotline specifically for the LGBTQIA+ population): Call 866-488-7386 or text 678-678 or thetrevorproject.org

Additionally, this textbook uses terms such as "criminal" and "offender" to discuss specific behaviors and legal classifications within the field of criminology. While these terms are commonly accepted in legal contexts, they can carry negative connotations and may oversimplify complex social issues. This subject will be discussed at various points throughout the book, but as you read, consider the broader implications of these labels and approach the subject with sensitivity and an understanding of the diverse factors influencing criminal behavior.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Define criminology and theory.
2. Distinguish differences between crime, deviance, criminology, and criminal justice.
3. Explain what makes a valid theory.
4. Identify different ways to categorize criminological theories.
5. Recognize and evaluate ways that society and culture impact law and definitions of crime.
6. Understand and start to identify criminogenic factors.

Key Terms

- **Bias:** a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone that is often considered unfair
- **Correlated:** a term describing variables that have a relationship or connection
- **Crime:** legal term describing the violation of a criminal law
- **Criminal justice:** the system that deals with crime and its consequences
- **Criminogenic factors:** something that increases the likelihood of crime occurring when it is present
- **Criminology:** the study of crime and why it happens
- **Deviance:** a sociological term describing behavior that is outside of accepted social norms
- **Empirical validity:** the degree to which research that is based on systematic observation, measurement, and verifiable experimentation shows what the theory says it should
- **Explanatory power:** the ability of a theory to explain the intended topic in a useful manner

- **Hypothesis:** a reasonable possible explanation of why we think a phenomenon is occurring based on an educated guess that can be tested
- **Logical consistency:** the idea that a theory must make sense and be reasonable from beginning to end
- **Macro-level:** in relation to theory, a focus on large scale issues or populations
- **Micro-level:** in relation to theory, a focus on individuals or small groups
- **Operational definition:** the way we define a concept in order to use, measure, or test it in research
- **Paradigm:** a framework of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that shapes the types of questions we ask and how we answer them
- **Parsimony:** keeping a theory clear, concise, elegant, and simple
- **Scope:** something that is covered or addressed by a theory
- **Spuriousness:** occurs when two things appear to be correlated but are not because of another variable(s)
- **Testable:** the openness of a theory to testing and possible falsification
- **Theory:** a statement that proposes to describe and explain why facts or other social phenomenon are related to each other based on observed patterns
- **Usefulness:** the degree to which a theory has real-world application
- **Variables:** concepts, factors, or elements in a study
- **Victimology:** the focused study of victims and their experiences of victimization

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1.2 What Is Criminology?

> "Trying to understand the behavior of some people is like trying to smell the color 9."
> Janis Ian, activist and singer/songwriter

Criminology can be described as trying to understand people's behavior as it relates to crime. Janis Ian's quote humorously shows how challenging that can be. Still, it is this effort that sets criminology apart from criminal justice in terms of focus, approach, and perspective.

First, what is criminology exactly? Edwin Sutherland (1934), an influential criminologist, described it as the scientific study of breaking the law, making the law, and society's reaction to those who break the law. Essentially, **criminology** is the study of crime and why it happens. It considers individual, societal, and environmental factors to better understand what drives someone to commit a crime. Once we understand the *whys* of criminal behavior, we can start to address those causes and prevent harm. With this goal in mind, criminologists look at crime from many perspectives—psychological, sociological, economic, political, biological, and more.

Crime is a legal term that describes the violation of criminal law. While crime in its technical sense is important to criminologists, criminologists acknowledge that crime is also a social construct. In other words, the people who make laws live in a specific time, place, and culture, all of which influence what becomes known as crime. Consequently, concepts of harm and deviance are also important in criminology.

Deviance—often misunderstood as being the same as crime or bad behavior—is a sociological term describing behavior that deviates from socially and culturally accepted norms. To illustrate the difference between crime and deviance, consider speeding and the practice of bondage and discipline, domination and submission, sadism and masochism (BDSM). Speeding is a pretty common traffic offense that a lot of us commit. It is a crime, but it is not really deviant. In contrast, participation in the BDSM community is likely to be considered deviant in American society, but such behavior is not criminal, assuming all involved are consenting adults. However, some behaviors may be considered both deviant and criminal, such as murder.

Why does this distinction matter? Criminologists do more than assess crime rates and what makes them go up or down; they also try to make sense of human behavior and understand harm, safety, and justice, regardless of the legal "lines in the sand." Although our exploration of criminology will include a little bit about victimization, this book focuses on understanding criminal offending behavior and those who engage in it. The focused study of victims and their experiences of victimization, or **victimology,** is a subject deserving of its own separate textbook and course.

One way we can see criminology in action is when criminologists attempt to break down why there has been an increase in violent crime, such as gun violence in Portland, Oregon, as described in the chapter-opening example. Criminologists are looking at what happened during the pandemic to identify what caused the increase in crime, what the impacts of the crimes were, and what needs to change based on what they learn. Again, they do this with the belief that if they know why crime is happening, they can figure out how to prevent it.

Criminology Versus Criminal Justice

How is criminology different from criminal justice? In the simplest terms, criminal justice is the *what*, and criminology is the *why*. **Criminal justice** is the system that deals with crime and its consequences. It is made up of the three Cs—cops, courts, and corrections. Although the criminal justice system is essential for addressing crime, it is not set up for analyzing and addressing why the crime occurred in the first place. Rather, the criminal justice system is tasked with addressing the crime itself through law enforcement, the courts, and corrections, while criminology focuses on understanding crime.

Criminological investigation may uncover a variety of potential explanations for changes in crime. Some of those causes may be directly influenced by, or be able to be addressed by, changes in the criminal justice system approach. Others may have individual, societal, or environmental causes that cannot be directly addressed by cops, courts, or corrections. As an example, let's return to the phenomenon of increased gun violence in Portland. Figure 1.2 shows potential explanations for the crime increase.

Figure 1.2 Potential explanations for the increase in gun violence in Portland, Oregon, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Potential Criminal Justice Explanations	Potential Societal/Environmental Explanations
Budget cuts to police departments during the pandemic negatively impacted the ability of police to respond to crime.	Kids were out of school, which may have been their source of safety and guidance away from crime.
Dealing with protests downtown after the killing of George Floyd occupied all police resources, meaning no patrols in other areas.	Unsafe homes were made worse during the pandemic as intimate partner violence and child abuse increased.
The high burnout and resignation rates of Portland Police Bureau officers following the summer protests led to decreased police response.	With no escape from bad situations, more kids went to the streets and did so in pain.
The "Defund the Police" movement and negative press turned the community against law enforcement.	Many kids in the same neighborhood were in the same tough situation, creating ideal conditions for street gangs to form or grow.
The Gun Violence Reduction Team was disbanded and unable to address crimes.	Economic distress and high unemployment caused extreme strain on low-income communities.
Law enforcement could no longer adequately police neighborhoods, and without this control, crime spread and escalated.	A lack of sufficient resources caused competition over the limited resources available or anything individuals could claim as their own.

Consider how these different explanations could lead to different potential solutions. What action might someone in a leadership position take if they believe budget cuts to the police department caused the increased gun violence in Portland? Compare this to the action they might take if they believe the increase was due to teenagers lacking a safe place to hang out in neighborhoods where gun violence is the highest. As you can see, a single issue may have many causes or solutions and there is no one simple answer.

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 1.2. "Potential Explanations for the Increase in Gun Violence in Portland" by Taryn VanderPyl is licensed under CC BY 4.0. Revised by Jessica René Peterson.

1.3 What Makes a Theory?

Criminology is an inherently interdisciplinary field, meaning that criminologists base their understanding of the causes of crime on existing theories in psychology, sociology, economics, politics, and biology. They then create new theories to paint an even clearer picture. In this section, we will discuss what it takes to create a theory and what that process looks like.

The *Open Education Sociology Dictionary* defines **theory** as a statement that proposes to describe and explain why facts or other social phenomena are related to each other based on observed patterns. In other words, a theory helps people make sense of what they are seeing. In criminology, that means explaining what is happening in terms of crime and criminal behavior. Theories help us classify, organize, explain, predict, and understand some phenomena. For example, one theory may try to explain the increase in crime in Portland during the pandemic by focusing on why a bunch of kids who are home from school for a long time, who live in the same neighborhood, and who all have tough home lives may come together and act out in violent ways. Later, this book discusses specific theories that attempt to explain such a situation. However, for now, let's start with the basics.

You might be wondering where theories originate or how people come up with them in the first place. We start with a question. Why is what we are witnessing happening? Why is gun violence increasing? How can we explain this phenomenon? To respond to our chosen question, we create an educated guess, called a hypothesis, based on what we have seen. A **hypothesis** is a reasonable possible explanation of why we think a phenomenon is occurring. It is not random. It must fit with what we are seeing, and it must be simple enough that we can test it to see if we are onto something. A hypothesis is the beginning of a theory.

Based on the definition of a theory, it may seem like just about anyone can come up with a possible explanation for what is happening and claim it is a legitimate theory. While it is true that anyone can come up with an idea to explain some phenomenon, legitimate theories involve scientific and systematic study. You can think of your uncle's idea on why people commit sexual assault as a "lower case t" theory, while feminist criminologists' descriptions and unpacking of gender roles based on decades of research is an "upper case T" theory. In other words, a good theory involves more than just personal speculation.

Criteria for Criminological Theories

Ronald Akers and Christine Sellers (2012) established a set of criteria to guide criminologists in evaluating theories. They said a "good" criminological theory must meet these six criteria:

- logical consistency
- scope
- parsimony
- testability
- empirical validity

- usefulness

Logical consistency is the most basic element of any theory. It requires that the theory makes sense. Is it reasonable? Does it make sense from beginning to end? That would make it both logical and consistent.

Scope refers to what is covered or addressed by the theory. Does it apply across gender identities? How about different types of crimes? Are both adults and juveniles covered? The wider the scope, the more the theory explains. The more a theory can explain (while still meeting the other five criteria), the better it is.

Parsimony refers to keeping a theory clear, concise, and simple. A theory with parsimony does not try to explain too much. Parsimony may seem strange coming after scope, since they appear to have opposing definitions, but they are not actually contradictions. We do want that big scope, but only if it is simple and makes sense. When done correctly, scope and parsimony are complementary.

Although we cannot examine our theories through a microscope, they must still be **testable**. When a researcher tests a theory, they are basically trying to prove it wrong or falsify it. That is not a bad thing. Every theory must be open to possible falsification because the more it is tested, the stronger it becomes. If someone falsifies a theory, they also find what makes it more accurate, and that discovery updates the knowledge base upon which the theory is built. Once that is done, it is tested again. And again. And again.

After many tests through a variety of approaches to research, the theory ends up stronger than ever and is supported by evidence from each test or study. This evidence gives the theory **empirical validity**, which means we can see it in research (empirical), and we are seeing what the theory claims we will see (validity). In other words, we see evidence in research that confirms the claims of the theory.

Finally, **usefulness** refers to what we do with what we know. The theory should be applicable to real life. Since our entire goal is to learn more about the *why* of crime, a useful criminological theory will tell us what to do in real life to interrupt the criminal patterns it addresses.

Operational Definitions

How do we test something abstract that cannot be observed in a microscope? We have to make it less abstract. We use **operational definitions**, to specifically describe a concept so we know exactly what we are looking at and what we are looking for. This allows us to measure and test the concept we are describing.

Let's say a theory claims that grand romantic gestures cause people to fall in love. First, we need to know exactly what is meant by a grand romantic gesture. We also need to determine how to know if someone has actually fallen in love. In a study to test this theory, we might define *grand romantic gesture* as the act of inviting someone on a date by using a flash mob or trailing a banner behind an airplane (figure 1.3). By narrowing down grand romantic gestures to just these two specific actions, the research can be targeted. There is no confusion about what is being used to cause something else to happen.

Figure 1.3. Consider how challenging it can be to operationally define something as abstract as a grand romantic gesture or as complicated as love.

The next challenge in this example is figuring out how to measure whether the person on the receiving end of the grand romantic gesture has fallen in love. That is more than we can get into in this chapter—we all know love is more complicated than what can be cleared up in one book. How might you operationally define love?

For a more topical example, what if we have a theory that says someone who commits crime has a low level of self-control? How can we test that theory? First, we have to operationally define the two concepts named in this theory: committing crime and a low level of self-control. What crimes are we talking about? Murder? Assault? Burglary? Vandalism? That's quite a range of actions that we need to define. Also, if there is a low level of self-control, then that means there are other levels, too, such as high or medium levels of self-control. How do we define those levels, and how do we know someone's level? How can that be tested and identified? What is our operational definition of self-control, and how is it measured and divided into different levels?

There are entire classes and textbooks dedicated to this issue alone and how to do this type of research responsibly and scientifically. For now, let's just talk about it broadly.

Variables and Spuriousness

The two concepts of crime and self-control from the previous example are variables in this type of research. These **variables**—concepts, factors, or elements in the study—can be tested to see what sort of influence one has on the other. For example, we could test someone's self-control by exposing them to a temptation (like a sweet treat), telling them they are not allowed to have it, leaving the room so they are alone with the temptation, and then seeing if they go for it anyway. The Marshmallow Test is a famous—and fun to watch—example of testing self-control among children. You have the option to watch the 5-minute video in Figure 1.4 while considering these questions: How do they operationalize "self-control" in this study? What might be causing spuriousness in this study?

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
> *https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=466#oembed-1*

https://youtu.be/Yo4WF3cSd9Q

Figure 1.4. If you watch this optional video, think about what other ways a researcher could test self-control besides using marshmallows as a temptation. Transcript.

Going back to our experiment, we could measure criminal behavior by looking at an individual's criminal record. Will the same people who jump at the presented temptation also have criminal records? Does that show us that someone who commits crime has a low level of self-control? Could we then say these two variables appear to be **correlated** (related)? Others would then come along and test our two variables in different ways to see if the results are the same. Every time this happens, we learn even more about the relationship between crime and low levels of self-control, and we learn more about the proposed theory.

One snag in our experiment could be other variables coming into play that we missed or ignored. Is a person giving into the temptation because they have low self-control, or is there another factor making them cave? Also, what if the temptation we chose is not actually tempting to every participant in our study in the same way? What if someone is really hungry or has been dieting and maybe craving a donut? What if some participants don't really like donuts or just ate a big lunch? In other words, something else could be causing the outcome we see. **Spuriousness** occurs when two things appear to be meaningfully correlated but are not due to the influence of another variable.

For example, research shows that ice cream sales and murder rates are positively correlated (Cohen, 1941; U.S. Department of Justice, 1969; Peters, 2013). This means that when ice cream sales go up, murder rates also go up, and vice versa. At first glance, someone may claim that ice cream is causing people to commit murder or that committing murder makes people hungry for ice cream. What do you think might be a better explanation? Can you think of a third variable that might cause ice cream sales and murder rates to both increase?

Consider the weather and what happens during summertime in Oregon. Thankful for the sunshine after months of rain, a lot more people spend time outside. Also, many homes in Oregon do not have air conditioning, so people may be more comfortable outdoors during heatwaves. A popular activity during

hot periods is to eat ice cream. It is cold, refreshing, and delicious—thus, we see an increase in ice cream sales.

In some areas, more people being outside can lead to more conflict. For example, do you think gang-related murders are more likely to happen when it is cold and the group is hanging out inside someone's garage, or when it is warm outside and the group is out and about, possibly encroaching on a nearby gang's territory? When we consider how warm weather changes people's behavior in this overly simplified example, it is possible to see that the weather itself can be a factor in both an increase in ice cream sales and an increase in murder rates and that ice cream and murder are actually in no way related (figure 1.5). If you want to see more silly examples of spuriousness that demonstrate the difference between correlation and causation, you have the option to read more at Spurious Correlations [Website].
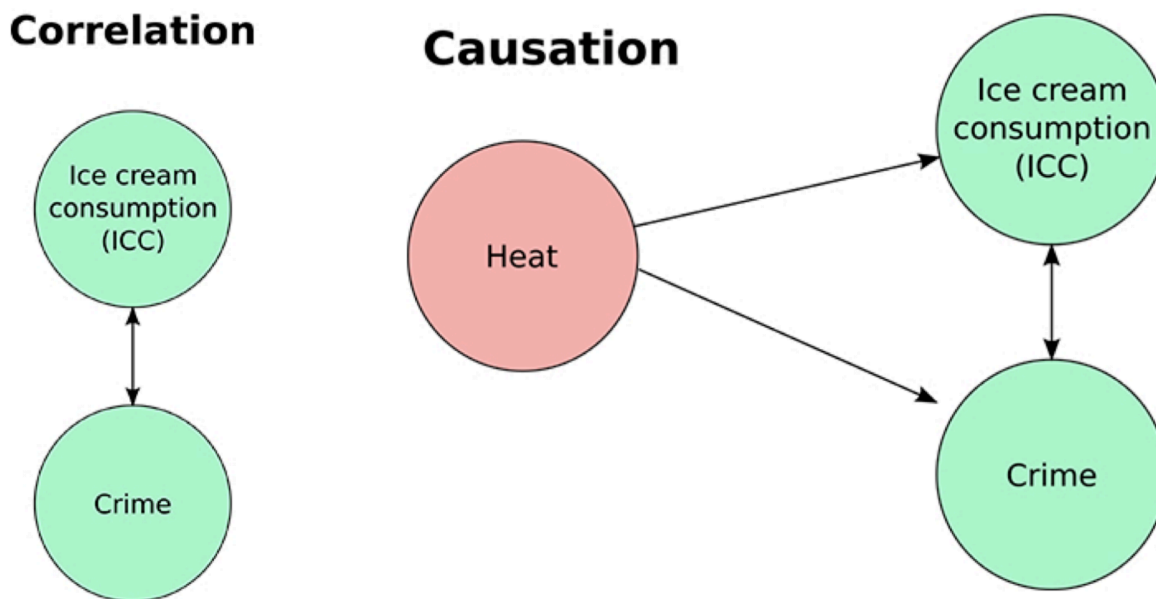
Figure 1.5. This diagram shows how two correlated things—ice cream and crime—might not actually have a meaningful relationship. Hot weather is a more important factor in both events, which reveals that the relationship between ice cream consumption and crime is spurious; correlation does not equal causation.

All the criteria discussed here are important for making a good theory, but there is one last thing to consider: What's the point? A criminological theory needs a purpose. A good criminological theory will help guide policies and practices to prevent or reduce crime. For example, a theory that connects childhood trauma to an increased likelihood of delinquent behavior in adolescence tells those working with at-risk youth that they may be able to prevent some offenses by intervening to protect kids from trauma or to help them work through what they have experienced.

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 1.5. "Ice cream and crime-causation" and "Ice cream and crime correlation" by Wykis are in the Public Domain.

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Figure 1.4. "The Marshmallow Experiment – Instant Gratification" by FloodSanDiego is shared under the Standard YouTube License.

1.4 Criminological Theories: Causes, Crimes, and Consequences

Remember, as criminologists, we focus our theories on the *why* of crime. That means all the criminological theories you will read about in this book will attempt to explain what causes crime to occur. If we can understand it, we can predict it, and if we can predict it, we can potentially prevent it.

When we recognize all the factors that can cause crime, we move from a simple, straightforward view of crime, like we see in figure 1.6, to a much more complex and complicated understanding of criminal behavior as a whole, as in figure 1.7. Criminologists recognize that we are more likely to make matters worse and perpetuate crime if we do not address the underlying causes. Criminological theories also show how some reactions to crime in our criminal justice system or by society may actually cause more crime. A focus only on the consequences of crime can perpetuate the causes of crime. This leads to more crime, which then further exacerbates the causes, and the cycle continues.

Taryn VanderPyl, Open Oregon Educational Resources

Figure 1.6. This figure presents a straightforward view of crime.

Figure 1.7. This figure presents a complex view of criminal behavior.

To better understand this concept, let's consider an example of someone who gets caught in this cycle. College student Mary is working while taking classes and needs her job to pay her tuition. One day as she is rushing between work and school, she is pulled over and gets a speeding ticket. The fine for the ticket is $115. Mary cannot afford to pay the fine and still cover her tuition, as well as the required textbooks and materials, the cost of gas to get to work and school, insurance, rent, food, cell phone, and everything else. Every month, Mary hopes to pay the fine, but there's never enough money left over after her usual expenses, so the ticket sits on her desk and weighs on her mind.

One night, a friend takes Mary out to get her mind off things, and they end up getting busted for underage drinking. When the officer looks her up, she sees that Mary has an open warrant for her arrest because of the traffic ticket she did not pay. Now, Mary also has an MIP (minor in possession of alcohol) and another fine of $265.

Between the unpaid traffic ticket, the open warrant for not paying the fine, and the new MIP, Mary is now *very* stressed out, and she takes it out on the officer. The officer places her under arrest and delivers her to jail. She ends up spending the weekend in jail and misses two shifts at work without calling in, so she gets fired for not showing up. Mary tries to explain, but her boss tells her they do not let "criminals" work there. Now, she has no job and multiple fines on top of everything else. She needs money fast. A friend of a friend offers Mary an opportunity to make some extra money by selling some prescription meds…. You can see how easily everything can spiral out of control.

As shown in figure 1.7, criminal behavior is complex and can be hard to pin down. Sometimes interventions to address criminal behavior—like Mary receiving a ticket she cannot pay—create more opportunities or risk for crime. It is the goal of criminologists to give a more complete picture than you see in figure 1.6.

Perspective and Interpretation in Criminological Theory

A lot of criminological theories exist that attempt to explain why people commit crimes, and you will read about many of them in this book. You may be wondering why there are so many and asking yourself, "How will I know which one is right?" This is a good question with no simple answer. One theory may do a wonderful job of explaining why people steal things but do little to help us understand why people commit murder. Others may provide useful explanations for crime in urban cities but not apply to crime in small towns and remote areas. These differences in **explanatory power** will become clearer as you explore the different theories, but when we are assessing a theory, we should first look at perspective.

Criminology is a different kind of science than, say, biology. We cannot put crime under a microscope and examine it like a biologist would study a group of cells (figure 1.8). We cannot change one variable and watch what happens on the slide. Criminology is dynamic and involves the study of human behavior. Some degree of interpretation is needed, and people do not always agree on what they are seeing. A criminologist's perspective will influence their interpretation of the causes and consequences of human behavior. How a criminologist asks questions, what they assume to be true of human nature, their biases, the time and culture they live in, and their identity are all important factors to consider when evaluating a theory.

Figure 1.8. *Consider how different types of science might conduct research to answer various questions. How might a science like chemistry answer a research question? How does this compare to how a science like criminology answers a research question?*

For example, some people may start studying crime with the assumption that most people are good. They may ask why some people commit crime or choose to hurt others. Other aspiring criminologists may assume that people are inherently selfish and prone to violence, and they may seek to understand what stops people from committing crime. These different perspectives provide different starting points that may affect how individual researchers interpret their findings.

Feminist criminologists point to the fact that the overwhelming majority of criminological theories, especially early theories, were developed by men and were based on the study of men. How do you think that intentionally or unintentionally impacted the theories that came to be? We will address questions like this throughout this textbook, but it is good to keep them in mind. Check out figure 1.9 for a sample of famous researchers who either coined major concepts, developed mainstream theories, or have significant bodies of work in the field of criminology. The names of women criminologists are underlined and the names of Black or Hispanic/Latinx criminologists are in boxes.

Beccaria | Cohen | W.J. Wilson | Lombroso |
Cloward | S. Glueck | E. Glueck | Ohlin | Shaw |
Agnew | McKay | Hirschi | Sampson | Gottfredson |
Sutherland | Anderson | Cressey | Akers |
Wolfgang| Daly | Ferracuti | Merton | Messner |
Rosenfeld | Laub | Hagan | Braithwaite | Sherman
| Messerschmidt | Cornish | Clarke | Moffitt |
Felson | Tittle | Chesney-Lind | Piquero

Figure 1.9. A sample of influential researchers in the field of criminology. All listed here are white men except for those that are underlined (women) or in boxes (Black or Hispanic/Latinx). How might the gender, race, or ethnicity of a person impact their perspective or research?

Another factor that can impact perspective and interpretation in criminology is bias. **Bias** is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone that is often considered unfair (Psychology Today, n.d.). Biases may be known and intentional or unacknowledged and unintentional. Allowing these feelings to creep into our explanations of crime or criminal behavior can be very misleading and even dangerous.

Politics can provide a useful example of how different perspectives can change the way we look at something. The table in figure 1.10 compares generalizations of some of the major beliefs of the top three political parties in the United States. Consider how each different political party might view the causes of crime, appropriate punishments, and prevention strategies. How could these political beliefs influence theory development? If you are interested in an example of how political parties differ in their approach to crime policy issues, you have the option to compare Democratic and Republican party platforms on the use of the death penalty over time [Website].

	Republican Party	**Democratic Party**	**Libertarian Party**
Ideology	Conservative	Liberal	Individual
Economic	Wages set by free market; everyone pays the same tax	Livable minimum wage; higher taxes for the wealthy	Wages set by free market; no taxes
Social	Individual rights and justice	Community and social responsibility	Individual self-sufficiency
Government	Government regulations get in the way of capitalism.	Government regulations protect citizens.	Government should stay out of everything.
Crime	Tough on crime, long sentences, focus on punishment	Criminal justice reform, focus on rehabilitation	Limit what is considered a crime and only protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property

Because criminology as a science can be more subjective and open to bias than natural sciences like biology, we must be especially vigilant. For this reason, theories must go through multiple levels of evaluation before they are considered valid.

Categorizing Criminological Theories

There are a variety of ways to categorize theories, but similarities in their assumptions, concepts, what they explain, and other factors can help us group them together. A **paradigm** is a perspective or lens through which one views reality. Rather than being right or wrong, true or false, a paradigm is a framework of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that shape the types of questions we ask and how we answer them. Not everyone will group theories the same way, especially since there can be overlap between ideas. Additionally, there are many subcategories that can be used to further distinguish theories from one another. However, there are some traditional and common paradigms in criminology (figure 1.11). Most of the theories discussed in this book will fit within the positivist paradigm.

Figure 1.11. Common criminological paradigms and the assumptions that tie theories together within each paradigm.

Paradigm	Assumptions
Pre-classical criminology	Crime is a result of paranormal forces or demonic possession. This outlook on crime is grounded in religion and superstition.
Classical school of criminology	Crime is a result of free will and an individual's choice to offend. This outlook on crime is grounded in personal choice.
Positivist criminology	Crime is a result of internal or external forces that can be biological, psychological, or sociological. This outlook on crime is grounded in determinism and the scientific method.
Critical/ conflict criminology	Crime is a result of society labeling and legislating behavior as "criminal." This outlook on crime is grounded in a social construction of crime.

Paradigms are just one tool for organizing theories based on similarities. Criminologists might also think about crime at different levels. **Macro-level** explanations of crime focus on the differences between large groups, while **micro-level** explanations focus on the differences between individuals or small groups. For example, a criminologist interested in understanding why men commit more crime than women or why one country has more violent crime than another would likely look to societal structures to develop a macro-level explanation. In contrast, a criminologist interested in how genetic factors impact crime might study patterns of behavior in a group of siblings over their lives to gain a micro-level explanation of crime.

Activity: Explaining the "Florida Man" with Different Paradigms

The infamous "Florida Man" meme and internet craze refers to news stories and articles about unusual, strange, or absurd crime events that occur in the state of Florida. Headlines often begin with or include the phrase "Florida Man" and have become a source of comical true crime entertainment.

Using Google or your favorite search engine, search for a Florida Man news story involving a crime and answer the following discussion questions.

Discussion Questions

1. How might a criminologist during the pre-classical period of criminology explain the cause of this crime?
2. Let's say you wanted to prevent this type of crime in the future, and you asked two different criminologists for some insight. How might the classical school criminologist's approach differ from the positivist criminologist's approach? How would each of their assumptions about crime lead to different crime prevention strategies?

Shoutout to Professor Tom Mrozla for the activity inspiration.

History of Criminology

We can also look at the chronological timeline of theory development for context. For example, the Industrial Revolution changed people's daily routines and interactions. Large developing cities became melting pots due to the influx of people with different backgrounds, cultures, and languages. The sociologists and criminologists who were seeing these changes started to study and explain them given their

current understanding of society. In other words, the history, political climate, and culture at the time are embedded in the theories that develop.

There are well over 50 prominent accepted theories in criminology. We are going to cover a lot of them in this book to help you get a better idea of criminologists' efforts to study and understand crime and criminal behavior. The timeline in figure 1.12 shows most of the theories and key events that we are going to cover. As you can see, criminology has grown as a field and a science significantly since 1764. Interestingly, although all these theories and research exist, we have not yet stopped crime.

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https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=17mvbvX3hreDmhAyIe0ixjB-NRA_MWA1s3Wxbt2EUsuhM&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650

Figure 1.12. Click through this interactive timeline to experience the milestones and evolution of criminological theories. For a text-based version of the timeline, visit Interactive CJ Timeline [Google Sheets].

Consider why this may be the case. If we know the problem, why might we not have the solutions? Give some thought to what forces may be standing in the way of addressing the causes of crime identified by criminologists, particularly over the last 150 years. One might argue that we could have fixed this problem already if we really wanted to. What do you think?

From Research to Knowledge

Criminological theories are only really helpful in preventing or treating crime if they are put into action. David Krathwohl, an educational psychologist and social science researcher, created a step-by-step guide for how to design, implement, and evaluate research in social sciences like criminology. Krathwohl's guide uses a chain of reasoning and accountability that looks like the scales of a fish in his *Methods of Educational and Social Science Research* (1993). He explains that the process of moving from research findings to accepted knowledge requires a lot of steps, time, and people.

In Krathwohl's fish-scale analogy, the original researchers begin the process by generating findings, which are then examined by specialists in the field (figure 1.13). After the specialists complete their examination, researchers in the field review and evaluate the research findings and claims. Next, the information is provided beyond the specific field to generalists who are experts in the area and who are able to judge the value of the research and claims. Getting through all these steps is a major accomplishment.

Figure 1.13. The process of moving from research findings to accepted knowledge.

Once making it through this tough gauntlet, the research findings may get picked up by journalists who spread the word to the general public. Most research never makes it this far (see figure 1.14). Once someone's research findings and their claims progress to this point in the process, that information becomes generally accepted knowledge and is more likely to be believed.

Each step in this long process involves multiple people. If you think of each person in each step as a fish scale and picture each fish scale as overlapping the scales behind and beside it, you end up with layers that resemble the skin of a fish. It takes a lot of fish scales for someone's research and claims to become widely accepted. Then, as research findings become accepted knowledge and other studies yield similar results, new theories may be created.

Figure 1.14. *Have you ever wondered why you get different results on Google than you do on Google Scholar? Or why your professors tell you to search your institution's online library instead of the wider internet? A lot of academic and peer-reviewed publications are behind a paywall and not accessible to the general public. The academic community is hotly debating the pros and cons of open-access research and how to improve the research-to-knowledge process.*

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Figure 1.8. "Observing samples under the microscope" by Trust "Tru" Katsande is licensed under the Unsplash License.

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1.5 How Does a Crime Become a Crime?

It is not always clear what does and does not count as criminal behavior. In some instances, a criminal act seems obvious and makes the study of such an offense simple. Murder, for example, is a fairly obvious crime. Although there are different degrees, murder is generally a pretty clear and obvious criminal offense. What about behavior that falls in the "gray area?" The varying degrees of crime and all their complexity is another area where criminology often comes in handy.

Let's look at an example of less obvious crimes in history: so-called "ugly laws." In many states in the 19th and 20th centuries, it was criminal for anyone to be seen in public who was "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object" (Chicago City Code [1881] as cited by Schweik & Wilson, n.d.). Beginning in San Francisco in 1867 and spreading across the country in the 1870s and 1880s, some ugly laws remained on the books as late as 1974 in Chicago and Omaha. These laws unfairly criminalized people with disabilities and also often targeted those of an "unfavorable" social status (Gershon, 2021). Criminologists looked at ugly laws, their sources, their intentions, and their effects, and they provided research on the harmful consequences of such laws, eventually affecting policy.

A more recent example is the determination that texting someone to encourage them to die by suicide is criminal. In 2017, Michelle Carter was convicted of manslaughter after texting her boyfriend multiple messages that pushed him to follow through with his suicidal ideation. Text records (figure 1.15) show that she brainstormed with him on the most effective, quickest, and least painful way to end his life. The most damning text message in this case was one in which she explained that she convinced her boyfriend, who had changed his mind and gotten out of the truck where he was poisoning himself with carbon monoxide, to get back in the truck and die (*Commonwealth v. Carter*, 2019).

Learn More: When Texting Becomes A Crime

The following transcript includes just some of the text messages exchanged between Michelle Carter and Conrad Roy after a failed suicide attempt in which Conrad claimed that he took an excessive amount of sleeping pills. All language, including typos, has been preserved in its original format. See if or when you think a *legal* line was crossed.

If you're interested in the full transcripts, you can find them on [this website](#).

Michelle Carter: I feel like such an idiot

Conrad Roy: Why

Michelle Carter: Beacuase you didn't even do anything! You lied about this whole thing! You said you were gonna go to the woods and do it and you said things that made me feel like maybe you were actually serious, and I poured my heart out to you thinking this was gonna be the last time I talked to you. And then you tell me you took sleeping pills? Whixh first of all I know that's a lie because you already said you wouldn't get enough and idk how you would of got them. I'm just so confused. I thought you really wanted to die but apparently you don't, I feel played and just stupid

Figure 1.15. A shows Michelle Carter, and B shows Conrad Roy III. They had the following text message exchange on September 4, 2014, at 9:45 a.m.

Conrad Roy: Don't I found out a new plan. and I'm gonna fo it tonight

Michelle Carter: I don't believe you

Michelle Carter: You're gonna have to prove me wrong because I just don't think you really want this. You just keeps pushing it off to another night and say you'll do it but you never do

Conrad Roy: okay

Michelle Carter: Okay what?

Conrad Roy: I'll prove you wrong

Michelle Carter: What are you planning on doing?

Michelle Carter: Poision would work

Conrad Roy: Carbon monoxide or helium gas. I want to deprive myself of oxygen

Michelle Carter: How aware you gonna get those things?

Conrad Roy: I wish I had a gun

Michelle Carter: Would you use it?

Conrad Roy: Yes

Michelle Carter: Do you know anyone that has one?

Conrad Roy: I'm sorry I didn't do it last night. I just took a handful of pills and went to sleep. idk I wanted to have one last good night sleep and I did

Michelle Carter: Don't be sorry I understand that. I'm happy you got that good night of sleep. Im just still kinda in shock that you're still here because I honestly thought you did it last night when you didn't answer back

Conrad Roy: don't feel like an idiot it's gonna happen

Michelle Carter: Tonight?

Conrad Roy: Eventually

Michelle Carter: Cute 🙂 haha I love you

Michelle Carter: SEE THATS WHAT I MEAN. YOU KEEP PUSHING IT OFF! You just said you were gonna do it tonight and now you're saying eventually….

Debates about free speech and assisted suicide raged as the courts decided that what Michelle did was, in fact, criminal and should be treated as such. Since then, other similar cases have come to light and ended in criminal charges and sentences. As a result of the precedent set by the Michelle Carter case, what may have otherwise been considered simply cruel and deranged is now considered criminal.

The Creation of Laws

The previous discussion raises the question, does society guide the laws or do the laws guide society? There is no clear answer to that complex question. When we look across the history of the United States, we can see many examples of laws and society changing one another. For example, traffic laws were created in response to the invention and proliferation of the automobile and changed the manner in which people moved from location to location in an orderly fashion (figure 1.16).

Figure 1.16. What are some examples (besides those discussed in this chapter) of how changes in society have led to changes in the law? What are some examples of how changes in the law have led to changes in society?

Prohibition (the banning of alcohol) in the 1920s was in response to an outcry from society about crime, corruption, social ills, and the general degradation of communities. Thirteen years later, prohibition was repealed after people realized it had missed the mark by encouraging the creation of organized crime to source and provide alcohol illegally. Drinking did not decrease, and crime merely shifted. Criminologists also study and bring to light the unintended consequences of laws like this.

Other recent examples of how changes in society have led to changes in laws include the legalization of marijuana for recreational use. Federally, the use of marijuana for any purpose is illegal, but many states (and their voters) have removed this law from their books. Societal norms around gender and sexuality have also shifted over time, and laws pertaining to the civil rights of the LGBTQIA+ community continue

to change in various ways (if you want to learn more about legal changes, you can review [LGBTQ Rights Timeline in American History \[Website\]](https://example.com)).

Changes in specific definitions can also drastically alter what behavior counts as criminal. For example, the FBI's definition of rape has changed significantly over the years. Before 1975, rape could not legally occur between married partners. Before 2011, penetration of body parts other than a vagina did not constitute rape, and consent was not part of the definition until 2013. How might criminologists play a role in these decisions?

Activity: Real and Ridiculous Federal and State Crimes

Read through the "ridiculous" federal and state crimes listed, and then consider the discussion questions at the end.

Ridiculous Federal Crimes

- It is a federal crime to sell "turkey ham" as "ham turkey" or with the words "turkey" and "ham" in different fonts.
- It is a federal crime in a national forest to wash a fish at a faucet if it is not a fish-washing faucet.
- It is a federal crime to knowingly let your pig enter a fenced-in area on public land where it might destroy the grass.
- It is a federal crime in any national park in Washington, D.C., to harass a golfer.
- It is a federal crime in a national park to allow your pet to make a noise that scares the wildlife.
- It is a federal crime to injure a government-owned lamp.
- It is a federal crime to sell onion rings resembling normal onion rings, but made from diced onion, without saying so.
- It is a federal crime to ride a moped into Fort Stewart without wearing long trousers.
- It is a federal crime to skydive while drunk.
- It is a federal crime to hunt doves and pigeons with a machine gun or a stupefying substance.
- It is a federal crime to take home milk from a quarantined giraffe or any animal that chews the cud.
- It is a federal crime to sell antiflatulent drugs without noting flatulence is referred to as gas.
- It is a federal crime in a national forest to say something so annoying to someone that it makes them hit you.

(FreedomWorks, 2016).

Ridiculous State Crimes

- In Wyoming, it is illegal to ski while intoxicated.
- In West Virginia, sex before marriage was illegal until 2010.

- In Washington, it is illegal to kill Bigfoot.
- In Virginia, it is illegal to hunt on Sundays.
- In Tennessee, it is illegal for anyone who has ever fought in a duel to hold public office.
- In South Carolina, up until 2016, it was illegal to seduce an unmarried woman with the promise of marriage.
- In Oklahoma, eavesdropping is illegal if what is overheard may be used to annoy others.
- In New Jersey, it is illegal to wear a bulletproof vest while committing a crime.
- In Nebraska, it is illegal to get married if you have a venereal disease.
- In Maryland, it is illegal to curse in public.
- In Louisiana, it is illegal to wrestle a bear for sport.
- In Georgia, it is illegal to eat fried chicken with a fork.
- In California, it is illegal to eat a frog that has died in a frog-jumping contest.

(Simon, 2018).

Discussion Questions

1. How would a criminologist look at these laws?
2. What do you think was going on that led to these laws? Do you think making these acts into crimes was the right way to address whatever was going on?
3. Would you turn someone in for committing any of these crimes? Which ones? Why or why not?

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 1.16. "Merging traffic" by Oregon Department of Transportation is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

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Figure 1.15 *A*. Photo (Michelle Carter) from Life and Lemons is included under fair use.
Figure 1.l5 *B*. Photo (Conrad Roy III) from Life and Lemons is included under fair use.

1.6 What Causes Crime?

Let's return to the Portland COVID-19 and crime example from the chapter opening. What are some factors that may have led to the increase in crime following the start of the pandemic? Notice that we are talking about what "may have" caused crime because we cannot completely prove it—it's just a theory.

Factors that criminological theories claim may have led to an increase in crime are **criminogenic factors**, meaning that they increase the likelihood of crime occurring when they are present. For example, remote learning caused kids to miss the social interactions, positive adult relationships, targeted instruction and support, structure, safety, and meals that in-person school typically provides. The loss of any one of these things could be criminogenic for some kids, but let's focus on just one: food insecurity.

Families with food insecurity often rely on free or reduced-priced lunches and breakfasts from schools. When the pandemic began and schools closed, there was a time when some children went hungry because they did not have enough food at home. Food insecurity is a significant criminogenic factor under any circumstances but especially when it is part of the larger problem of a world-wide pandemic. What might families or youth do when they are hungry and have no access to food they can afford? In this circumstance, food insecurity is a criminogenic factor because it increases the likelihood of crime occurring.

Activity: Criminogenic Factors and the Courts

Defense attorneys may sometimes use criminogenic factors to explain why a crime was committed by their client. To be clear, neither of the following defenses or claims are backed by any criminological theories or research. Read these two extreme examples of *supposed* criminogenic factors, then answer the discussion questions at the end.

People of the State of California v. Daniel James White

San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and City Supervisor Harvey Milk, a prominent gay rights activist, were assassinated in their offices in 1978 by Daniel White. White's attorneys claimed he had been struggling with depression as was evidenced by his consumption of large amounts of Twinkies—and only Twinkies—in the days leading up to the murders. As a result, although White was facing the death penalty if found guilty of the two counts of murder with which he was charged, the jury convicted him only of voluntary manslaughter. His sentence ended up being 8 years in prison. This infamous case has since become known as "the Twinkie defense."

State of Texas v. Ethan Couch

In 2013, 16-year-old Ethan Couch was charged with four counts of manslaughter after taking his father's truck, driving to Walmart to steal beer, driving drunk, injuring nine people, and killing four pedestrians. His attorneys claimed Couch suffered from "affluenza," which is not a medically recognized

condition. As a result of being raised in an extremely wealthy family and being spoiled, the defense claimed he could not recognize the consequences of his actions. Ethan Couch was sentenced to 10 years of probation. His case has become known as "the affluenza defense."

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of these defenses? Can Twinkies and affluenza be considered criminogenic factors?
2. If extreme wealth and sugar overload really are considered criminogenic factors, what could be done to intervene and stop criminal behavior as a result?

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1.7 Conclusion

In criminology, we try to understand crime by examining it from a variety of different perspectives using the scientific method. Doing so leads to a lot of different possible explanations or theories. Theories look at who is genetically or physically predisposed to commit crime (biological theories), or what happened to them that made them commit a crime (psychological theories), or what outside forces led someone to commit crime (sociological theories). Through these theories, we can identify risks (criminogenic factors) that make it more likely a crime will happen. Criminology helps us to better understand the goals of different laws, the courts, and law enforcement. The field of criminology has a big responsibility and a lot of work to do.

Activity: Human Statistic by Sterling Cunio

When Sterling Cunio was 16 years old, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. As we have discussed in this chapter, criminal behavior is not simple and is rarely easy to understand at first glance. Keeping in mind what you have learned in this chapter about the difference between a criminological perspective and a criminal justice perspective, and also considering possible criminogenic factors, listen to (figure 1.17) or read this poem by Sterling and then answer the discussion questions that follow. Many students find it helpful to read the written words at the same time they are listening to him perform the poem.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=473#oembed-1*

https://youtu.be/qUMPfRTH9pc

Figure 1.17. Listen to Sterling perform this poem [Streaming Video], or read it next.

Human Statistic

by Sterling Cunio

Born to a woman shackled to a hospital bed,

I am the child of the female prisoner seemingly fated to captivity.

I am that baby raised by maternal grandma because every other adult was too dysfunctional for a child, the nephew of alcoholic criminally active uncles, the bastard of an unknown father.

I am the marvelous mulatto who, as a mixed kid, never fit in anywhere I went.

The gifted student who excelled at learning in stifled classrooms.

I am that 12-year-old boy in insufferable pain,

a sudden orphan after the angels called Mama to Heaven where she's supposed to be as some hope dope pusher preacher man told me.

The traumatized child laying quietly on strange couches

listening to men beat women in chaotic homes.

I am that runaway dropout who found belonging among unloved kids roaming the streets looking for excitement in risky arousals.

The foster child with brown-blonde mixed afro and freckles

picked on by everybody until I started punching.

Then I got whipped by adults for being violent.

Sent to juvenile detention for delinquency,

gave probation instead of therapy.

The short-sighted peer pressured wannabe struggling for identity

quickly learning the maladaptivity of criminality and the productivity of spilling.

The boy feeling like a macho man because of a real gun in hand,

instant mechanicalized power.

No more squirt pump water gun cap and pop for Xbox.

The real deal steel boom pop firepower like every TV hero got.

I was that teenage car thief GTA pedal to the metal fast and furious car crash into ambulance rides and best friends' funerals.

The teenage boy shooting strangers as self-validation.

Life waster with court appointed attorney.

Juvenile lifer destined to die as it began – in state custody.

One of close to 3,000 men meant to die in prison for their acts as kids

in the only country that allows adolescent death by incarceration.

The cell block scholar and expert survivor and overcomer, the poor man wise in self, complete truth speaker rarely believed, chain romantic saved by love, converted peace activist, rebel against restraint who saw Gamora, subversive to institutionalized othering.

I am one of the 56% who once freed would never return to prison if ever given the chance.

I am indeed a statistic – albeit human.

Discussion Questions:

- How might a criminologist look at Sterling's story to understand why he committed the crimes he did?
- How is the criminological perspective different from a criminal justice perspective in Sterling's case?

Sterling Cunio's story is one of many that show how complicated the phenomenon of crime can be. With human beings involved, things are rarely simple. In fact, Sterling went on to surprise anyone who knew the 16-year-old boy sentenced to die in prison. He faced his own traumas and did the work for his own extraordinary personal transformation. Sterling became a leader inside the prison, helping other men who had also experienced trauma that contributed to them causing great harm. Through a focus on healing and restoration, these men worked together to face the pain they had caused and learn how to live their amends by striving every day to make the world a better, safer place. After serving more than 27 years inside Oregon State Penitentiary, Sterling was granted clemency by Governor Kate Brown for his remarkable transformation. He was released on November 1, 2021. Sterling now works in the community to prevent violence and harm by supporting others who were previously incarcerated to live their amends as well.

As we have discussed, there are no simple answers to the problem of crime, but criminologists are working tirelessly to try to understand why it happens and what can be done about it. We will build on these foundational ideas in the coming chapters as we explore the following topics: how crime is measured and why that matters as criminologists try to figure out criminal behavior; early criminological theories that set the stage for all those that came later; biological and psychological understandings of criminal behavior; theories exploring society's influence on criminal behavior; society's reaction to crime and how behavior changes over the span of someone's lifetime; and critical and modern approaches to crime that will take us into the future.

Chapter Summary

Criminology is the study of crime and *why* it happens. Criminologists look at both individual and societal factors to determine what drives criminal behavior. It is important for criminal justice and criminology to work hand in hand to have a positive impact on public safety. A theory is an attempt to explain what is happening and in criminology, that means explaining what is happening in terms of crime and criminal behavior. A theory begins with a hypothesis that is tested through research. Crimi-

nology as a science is dynamic and involves a lot of different perspectives that do not always align. For this reason, we have to always be aware of potential biases that may affect how we see what we think we see. Any claims of a new theory must go through multiple levels of evaluation before they are considered valid. A criminological theory must have logical consistency, scope, parsimony, testability, empirical validity, and usefulness. Theories look at who is biologically predisposed to commit crime (biological theories), what happened to someone that made them commit a crime (psychological theories), or what outside forces led to someone committing crime (sociological theories). These theories help us identify risks (criminogenic factors) that make it more likely for crime to occur. Through criminology, we can also better understand the goals of different laws, the courts, and law enforcement.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. How might a criminologist look at the crime problem during the pandemic in areas outside of Oregon? Look at the crime rates available at Crime in the Time of COVID [Website] or in other sources you may find for comparison. Put on your criminologist hat, and explain *why* crime may have gone up during this time.

2. Criminologist Craig Pinkney discusses some possible criminogenic factors that cause youth violence in his TEDxBrum Talk "The Real Roots of Youth Violence" (figure 1.18).

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https://youtu.be/uWNTMmktoCQ

Figure 1.18. Discuss Pinkney's recommendations for intervening in youth violence. Transcript.

3. Choose a recent local, state, or national news story about crime, and brainstorm some possible criminogenic factors that contributed to the criminal behavior. Is there anything that could possi-

bly have been done to address the criminogenic factors and stop the crime from happening?

4.   Can you think of some other examples of spuriousness like the ice cream/murder rate example in the chapter?

5.   Looking at the timeline of the most prominent criminology theories, why do you think they are so clustered in the last 150 years? Can you guess any possible trends in the field based solely on the names and dates of the theories in the timeline?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- The American Society of Criminology (ASC) offers a lot of resources to its members and anyone else interested in criminology research. Find out more at the ASC website.
- CriminologyWeb [Streaming Video] has lots of helpful videos explaining different theories and important information that are a great supplement to this book.
- *Criminology* [Website] is a true crime podcast on Apple Podcasts. Every episode takes a deep dive into different crimes, going into great detail to understand what happened.

Licenses and Attributions for Conclusion

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Figure 1.18. "The real roots of youth violence | Craig Pinkney | TEDxBrum" by TEDxTalks is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.

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1.8 References

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MEASURING CRIME

Figure 2.1. Unfortunately, measuring crime is not as easy as getting out our measuring cups, nor is it always helpful to compare communities' crime in terms of "a little crime," "more crime," and "the most crime." In this chapter, we will explore the ways we attempt to measure criminal behavior and the factors that can make comparisons challenging.

Contents of This Chapter:

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

In the table of contents, you can click on a title of a chapter to navigate to the beginning of that chapter.

You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

Turning a Page

If you're reading on a larger screen, look at the bottom of the page. There is a button in the lower right corner labeled "Next →" that you can click to move forward, and another button in the lower left corner labeled "← Previous" that you can click to move backward.

Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.

2

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In order for criminologists to develop and test their theories of *why* crime is happening, they first need to know *what* crime is happening. This includes knowing how much, what type, and where crime is happening, as well as who the perpetrators and victims of crime are. This information is vital for both criminologists and criminal justice system practitioners in helping them determine what is or is not working and why.

Gathering and keeping track of all this data may not sound too complicated, but it is much easier said than done. Think about what it would really take to get a clear picture of what is happening in every community across the United States in terms of criminal behavior. We already know not everyone gets caught when they commit a crime. However, we need to have an idea of the overall crime situation that is good enough to help us figure out what to do about it.

For this purpose, criminal justice professionals gather information from every type of criminal justice agency, such as local police departments, sheriff's departments, state police, college campus police, tribal agencies, federal agencies, and all types of courts. From this giant collection of information, we try to determine the total number of crimes reported to law enforcement, the total number of arrests made by each agency, and the number and types of cases entering the court system. This data can be found in a variety of government databases and researcher-compiled reports.

The useful data in these reports may be quantitative or qualitative. **Quantitative data** is information that can be counted and expressed in numbers. **Qualitative data** is nonnumerical, descriptive information that helps us understand something. For example, if we wanted to learn about burglaries in 2023, we might look at the total number of arrests made for burglary that year (quantitative) and analyze all the police reports on burglary to look for patterns in behavior among burglars (qualitative). Figure 2.2 provides a comparison of the data types.

Figure 2.2. Quantitative and qualitative data each provide different but useful information regarding crime.

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Purpose	Answers *why*	Answers *how much/many*
Data type	Observation, symbols, words (e.g., interviews with police officers)	Numbers, statistical results (e.g., number of arrests)
Approach	Observe and interpret	Measure and test
Analysis	Grouping of common data/patterns/themes through nonstatistical analysis	Statistical analysis

In this chapter, we will discuss current crime categories, primary sources of crime data, unreported crime, and the challenges of using crime data. There are two key sources for official crime data in the United States: the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics's (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The UCR encompasses multiple databases that are built through reporting from law enforcement agencies around the country, whereas the NCVS contains data gathered directly from crime victims. Both sources have their own pros and cons, different purposes, and different approaches to understanding crime. Together, these sources give

us a more complete picture of crime in the United States. Let's look at what each database has to offer, starting with the biggest one, the UCR, and all its components.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Identify national sources of crime data and official statistics, and critically evaluate the pros and cons of each.
2. Explain the dark figure of crime, the reason behind the disparity, and the potential impact.
3. Analyze the misuse of crime data and statistics as well as the potential consequences of misuse.
4. Evaluate the challenges faced by criminologists working with various data sources and inaccurate or incomplete measures of crime.

Key Terms

- **Bias crimes:** criminal acts based on a particular bias or prejudice
- **Dark figure of crime:** unreported or unknown crime
- **Hate Crime Statistics Act:** the federal act that requires data collection "about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity"; prompted data collection in the UCR
- **Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA):** a collection of data on incidents in which law enforcement officers were killed or injured in the line of duty; part of the UCR
- **Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection (LESDC):** a collection of data focusing on the loss of current and former law enforcement officers, corrections employees, 911 operators, judges, and prosecutors that hopes to prevent future deaths by suicide or suicide attempts; part of the UCR
- **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS):** a database of crimes reported to the police, including incidents where multiple crimes were committed, that includes information on victims, people who have committed offenses, the relationships between victims and people who have committed offenses, people who have been arrested, and property involved in the crimes; part of the UCR
- **National Use-of-Force Data Collection:** a collection of data that contains statistics on the use of force by law enforcement with the goal of providing transparency and improving trust with the

public; part of the UCR
- **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS):** the main source of information on criminal victimization in the United States
- **Qualitative data:** nonnumerical descriptive information that helps us understand something
- **Quantitative data:** information that can be counted and expressed in numbers
- **Self-report data:** data that comes directly from individuals about their own experiences through methods like surveys or interviews
- **Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR):** the largest, most commonly used data collection currently available on crime; housed by the FBI

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Figure 2.2. "Difference Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research and Data" by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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Figure 2.1. "Measuring cups (¼, ½, 1 cup)" by Vimkay is incensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

2.2 Current Crime Categories

As explained in [Chapter 1](#), criminologists are concerned with criminal behavior, trends in criminal offending, and the impact of the justice system's response. Such study of harm does not necessarily require close attention to the nitty gritty details of criminal laws. However, before diving into crime data sources and criminological theories, we should look at some of the common categories and definitions of crime. There are a variety of ways to classify different types of crime, but one common method distinguishes between crimes against people, property, or society.

Crimes against people include assaults, murder, and other types of violence. Crimes against property include burglary, theft, and vandalism. Crimes against society usually include behavior that is considered harmful to society, such as disorderly conduct, illegal gambling, or even drug offenses. Some violent crimes are referred to as "street crimes" when they are committed in public settings. Additionally, crime categories may be further distinguished as victimless or public order crime, domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV), white collar crime, cybercrime, terrorism, state crime, sexual crime, environmental crime, organized crime, and more. See figure 2.3 for brief examples of these categories. Keep in mind, these categories are not all mutually exclusive, meaning they may overlap. For example, stalking is a crime against a person that may be part of intimate partner violence and may be committed via the internet (cybercrime).

Figure 2.3. Examples of common ways to categorize crimes based on broad similarities. We will explore some of these in greater detail in Chapter 9.

Crime Category	Description/Examples
Crimes against people	Crimes that have direct human victims; will typically include violent crimes like assault
Property crime	Crimes that do not have direct human victims, but rather are against property; can include motor vehicle, burglary, and property theft
Crimes against society	Crimes that do not have direct human victims or target property and are also often considered victimless; can include sex work and drug violations
Violent crimes	Crimes that include violence against human victims; can include crimes such as homicide, rape, sexual assault, robbery, and physical assault; many are often referred to as "street crimes"
Victimless or public order crimes	Crimes that disrupt public order and do not have a direct victim or the "victim" is the self; a controversial category for many reasons, but tends to include crimes like sex work, drug use, and gambling
Domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV)	DV: crime in a domestic setting; may include violence between those who live together or have familial relationships, such as crimes against children, partner(s), or other members of a household IPV: violence specifically between intimate/romantic partners
White collar crime	Crimes that typically involve economic exploitation by individuals or organizations/ corporations; can include occupational crime, corporate crime, financial crime, political crime, health-care fraud, and intellectual property theft
Cybercrime	Crimes that are sophisticated and focused on computer hardware and software or crimes that are made possible through the use of the internet; can include network infiltrations, launching computer viruses, cyber-stalking, child pornography, and phishing
Terrorism	Crimes that involve the completed or threatened use of coercion and/or violence against a population of people with the goal of highlighting/changing political, religious, or ideological positions
State crime	Crime committed by states and governments; may include the breaking of a law by the government or the harming of citizens due to government action
Sexual crimes	Crimes that are sexual in nature; may include sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual abuse of children, and rape
Environmental crime	Crimes that impact the environment; can include poaching, illegal fishing, illegal logging, wildlife smuggling, trash/chemical dumping, water theft/contamination, and food crime
Organized crime	Crimes committed by criminal enterprises that engage in continued conspiracy, use of fear and corruption, and immunity from the law with the goals of profit and power; may include illegal trafficking of firearms, drugs, protected species, cultural property, falsified products, counterfeit money, and humans (sex and labor trafficking)

Understanding these crime categories will help you better grasp what crime data sources do and do not capture. Additionally, these broad categories are important because some theories may attempt to explain an entire category while ignoring another. For example, a theory may apply to all property crimes but not apply to crimes against people. Other theories may focus only on one type of violent crime or only on those that are enacted against certain populations (e.g., domestic violence against women). Crime categories are helpful when exploring different data sources and theoretical explanations.

Check Your Knowledge

Licenses and Attributions for Current Crime Categories

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Figure 2.3. "Common Crime Categories" by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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2.3 Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report

The FBI's **Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR)** is the oldest, largest, and most commonly used crime data collection system. The UCR tracks the known occurrences of specific crimes that have been reported to the police and the number of arrests made as a result. The goal of the UCR is to gather and provide reliable information to law enforcement so they can make data-informed decisions in their policies and practices. Although the intended audience has predominantly been law enforcement, anyone is able and encouraged to access and use this database.

Activity: Local Crime Rates

Do you know what the crime stats look like in your local community? You have the option to find out by exploring the publicly available UCR website and their Crime Data Explorer tool [Website].

To look at the most recent data, follow steps 1–4, and answer questions 5 and 6.

1. Go to the Crime Data Explorer and scroll down to "Explore by Location and Dataset."
2. Select "Crime" and your state (e.g., Oregon) under the dropdown boxes.
3. You can then filter by agency—try your local county agency first (e.g., Jackson County Sheriff's Office).
4. Try your local municipal agency next if you have one (e.g., Medford Police Department).
5. What differences do you see when you compare the two agencies?
6. How can the information from both local agency types help create a picture of crime in your community?

This database is used by law enforcement, researchers, the media, students, and the public. It was started in 1929 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police to meet the need for reliable crime statistics for the country. In 1930, the FBI was put in charge of collecting, publishing, and archiving those statistics. In 2021, the FBI formally transitioned to a newer single data collection process.

There are over 18,000 city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies in the United States. They are all asked to voluntarily participate in the UCR program by submitting their data on the number of crimes reported and number of arrests in their jurisdiction to the FBI each month. Note that participation is *voluntary*. That means submitting data to the UCR is strongly encouraged, but it is not required.

The FBI recognizes the voluntariness of the program and that the contributing factors to crime rates cannot be represented in these data. They explain, "Since crime is a sociological phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors, the FBI discourages ranking locations or making comparisons as a way of measuring law enforcement effectiveness. Some of this data may not be comparable to previous years because of differing levels of participation over time" (FBI, 2022a). In addition to pointing out that voluntary participation means differing levels of reporting over time, they also specifically recognize that crime is not a simple, straightforward act. As criminologists argue, crime is influenced by many factors, and none of those are recorded in this (or any) database. In fact, no simple statistic can capture the complexity of criminal behavior. Nonetheless, this information is still important to collect and track, even though the methods are challenging.

Despite these challenges, the UCR has been our best source for knowing what is happening with crime on a national level. Many important decisions about crime patterns, budgeting needs, law enforcement initiatives, and other policies have been based upon the educated guess represented by the UCR.

With all this in mind, and prompted by feedback gathered from the law enforcement agencies that contribute to and use this data set, the FBI has been making improvements. To fill in more of the information gaps, the UCR now consists of five main data collections as shown in figure 2.4. We will briefly look at each of these data collections, their uses, and their strengths and weaknesses. Anytime you want to view the data from one of these data collections, you can use the FBI's Crime Data Explorer tool [Website] to filter by dataset.

Figure 2.4. *Although older data relies on the SRS it was discontinued in 2021, leaving us with five main data collections within the FBI's current Uniform Crime Report (UCR). Image description available.* [*Image description.*](#)

National Incident-Based Reporting System

The FBI's traditional method of collecting data for the UCR program was through the Summary Reporting System (SRS). Additionally, the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)** was created in the 1980s to improve the quality of crime data submitted by law enforcement agencies to the UCR. NIBRS collects data on 23 crime categories (Group A) and 52 offenses (figure 2.5). It also collects detailed information on each incident, including date and time, the demographics and relationship of the people involved, and location. NIBRS is unique because it collects data on crimes reported to the police as well as incidents where multiple crimes are committed, such as when a robbery escalates into a rape. That may seem obvious, but the SRS traditionally only tracked one crime per incident, so NIBRS has far more detailed information by comparison.

Let's say that we wanted to know about murders in Portland, Oregon, during the summer of 2020. The SRS can give us the number of arrests that were made for murder during that time. In contrast, NIBRS can give us the number of arrests for murder *plus* the demographics of the people who committed mur-

der and the people who were murdered, the relationship between them, the location of the murders, as well as whether any of them were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, if any property was affected during the murders, and if anyone involved was affiliated with a gang. NIBRS gives us more robust information and, consequently, a far more thorough understanding of what happened in this city. In other words, NIBRS paints a more thorough picture of the context surrounding each offense. See figure 2.5 to compare the crime categories collected through the SRS and NIBRS.

Figure 2.5. *Compare the list of traditional SRS crimes with the list of NIBRS crimes—look at how many more categories are included! There is even a "peeping Tom" category...which category is the most surprising to you? Image description available.*
[Image description.](#)

Because of the improved quality of data gathered through this system, the FBI transitioned the UCR program to NIBRS-only collection in January of 2021. However, the process has not been without issues. Switching to NIBRS may require technical assistance and is very costly for agencies. For example, the initial cost for setup in a South Carolina town of less than 30,000 people cost between $130,000 and $200,000. Federal grant funds are available to help agencies make the switch, but less than 60% of agencies were able to report via NIBRS throughout 2021, and the FBI was not able to release all of the quarterly data that year (Hanson, 2022). See figure 2.6 for a map of agency participation in April 2022.
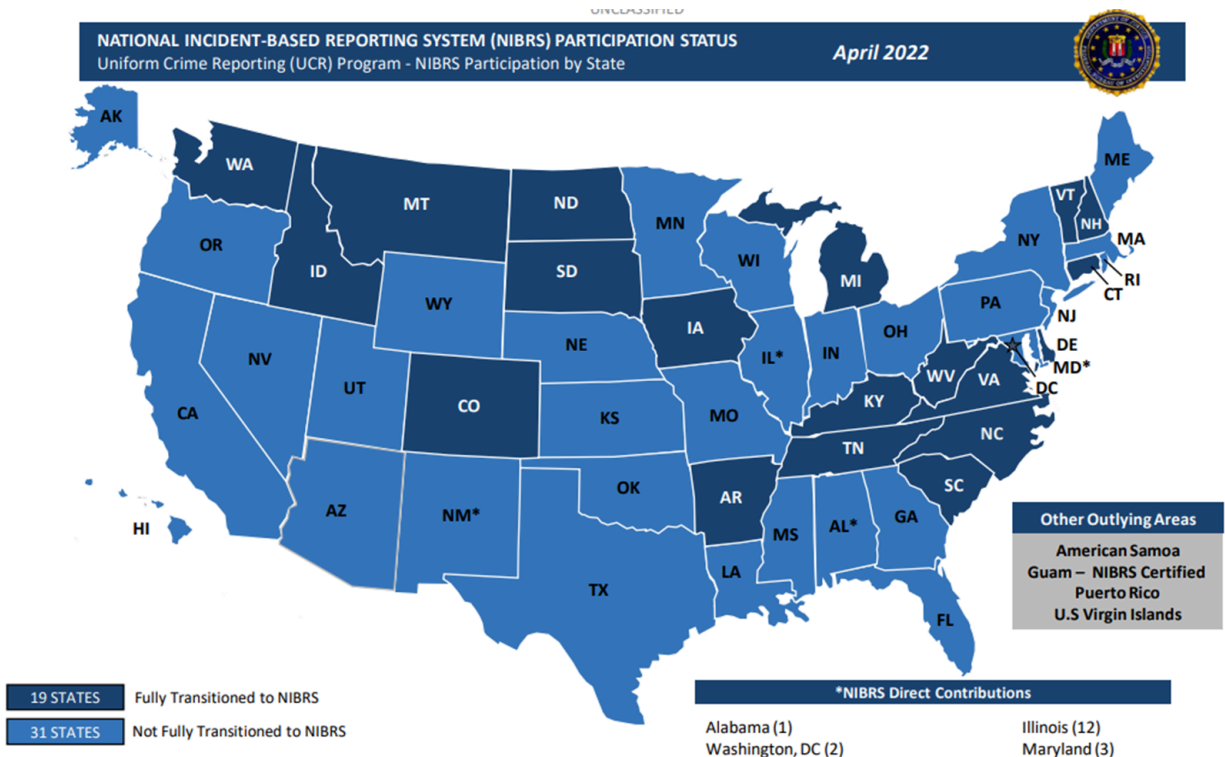
Figure 2.6. *Given the number of state agencies that had still not fully transitioned to NIBRS by April 2022, how reliable do you think UCR data is for the early 2020s? Image description available.* [Image description.](#)

In 2022, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), which had approximately 9,000 police officers, and the New York Police Department (NYPD), which had approximately 36,000 officers, did not report to the FBI. Since data from large metropolitan agencies can drive major crime trends both in their states and nationally, the absence of data of this scale can negatively impact the scope, accuracy, and representativeness of crime data more broadly. The FBI is continually working to fix these issues by assisting in American law enforcement agencies' transition to NIBRS.

The FBI is hopeful regarding the future benefits of NIBRS and reports,

> When used to its full potential, NIBRS identifies, with precision, when and where crime takes place, what form it takes, and the characteristics of its victims and perpetrators. Armed with such information, law enforcement can better define the resources it needs to fight crime, as well as use those resources in the most efficient and effective manner. (FBI, 2022c)

We must also consider what criminologists will be able to figure out when they, too, are "armed with such information." Criminologists, in addition to law enforcement agencies, need this more complete information to try to understand why crimes occur, apply theories, and learn how to interrupt these patterns. For example, a criminologist may compare the NIBRS data for Portland, Oregon, in the summer of 2020 to the summer of 2019 to assess the impact of COVID-19. Remember, they are not just looking at *what* happened in terms of crime; a criminologist is trying to figure out *why* it happened. Data collections like NIBRS are an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to looking at the complete picture.

Hate Crime Statistics Data Collection

Figure 2.7 A shows Matthew Shepard, and B shows James Byrd, Jr.. Both men were victims of brutal bias-motivated crimes. Matthew was murdered simply for being gay, and James was murdered simply for being Black. Their stories inspired the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, which updated federal hate crime legislation in the United States.

Congress passed the **Hate Crime Statistics Act** (101 U.S.C. § H.R.1048) in 1990 and updated it in 2009 through the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (figure 2.7). If you are interested in some important laws and policies regarding hate crimes in the United States, you can read more about them on the Department of Justice website. The Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 was initially focused on collecting data related to "crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity." It was the first law to recognize and include the LGBTQIA+ community. Additional bias categories have been added over time. For example, crimes related to disability were added in 1994, and gender and gender identity biases were added in 2009. In 2013, the religion category was expanded to include seven additional religions and anti-Arab bias motivation.

Crimes against any members of particular groups identified in this law are referred to as either hate crimes or bias crimes. **Bias crimes** are criminal acts based on a particular bias or prejudice. Criminologists follow the progression of hate crime legislation for a number of reasons, not the least of which is how it reflects historical changes in societal attitudes and practices.

The 1968 federal hate crime law was established in response to the civil rights movement to protect people from harassment or harm while they were trying to enjoy freedoms newly available to them, such as going to certain schools, living in certain neighborhoods, or working at certain jobs. Although these laws were beginning to be enforced, there was no central tracking system. The Hate Crime Statistics Act established the national data collection on bias-motivated crimes that became the responsibility of the FBI, although the act did more than what we are covering here. Thanks to this data collection, criminologists are able to look at the motives of hate and bias as criminogenic factors that influenced particular offenses as well as how those motives were influenced by changes in society.

The particulars of hate crime data collected for each incident include the following: bias motivation, victim type (individual adults, juveniles, businesses, institutions, or even society), information about the person who committed the offense, location type (there are 46 different location types, such as house of worship, school, or public transportation), and jurisdiction (federal, state, or local). If you would like to see the full list of bias categories, you can find them on the [FBI's Hate Crime Statistics web page](#).

For a recent example, consider the 2017 stabbing on the MAX Light Rail train in Portland, Oregon. One day after assaulting a Black woman on the public transit system, Jeremy Christian stabbed and killed two white men and injured a third when they tried to intervene in yet another hate crime incident. Christian, a white supremacist and white nationalist, was shouting racist and anti-Muslim slurs at two Black teenage girls on the MAX. Even in court, while witnesses and survivors were giving testimony, he continued his attack, yelling, "I should have killed you, bitch," among other racist and hateful rants. Christian was found guilty and convicted of 15 counts, including aggravated murder, attempted aggravated murder, and first-degree assault. He was sentenced to two life sentences without the possibility of parole plus an additional 51.5 years. This is just one example of the type of offense recorded in the Hate Crimes Statistics database.

You may notice that this dataset centers the victim rather than the person who committed the offense. It also prioritizes the motive for the crime. Not only does this pull in two important areas of study in criminology—victimology and criminogenic factors—but this database captures a level of information that many do not.

Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted

Figure 2.8. *Officer Michael Crain of the Riverside Police Department in Riverside, California, was ambushed and killed by an ex-police officer while stopped at a red light in 2013. Although this type of officer death is rare, dangers on the job can severely impact the entire law enforcement community.*

The **Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA)** database provides information on incidents in which law enforcement officers were killed or injured in the line of duty. The FBI explains, "The goal is to provide relevant, high quality, potentially lifesaving information to law enforcement agencies focusing on why an incident occurred, as opposed to what occurred during the incident, with the hope of preventing future incidents" (FBI, 2022b). Notice the focus here on *why* instead of *what*. That is a criminological approach to understanding the reasons and criminogenic factors that influence criminal behavior against this specific category of victim—law enforcement officers (figure 2.8).

LEOKA primarily focuses on deaths or injuries among police officers who are on the street interacting with the public. More specifically, it publishes data on felonious deaths (those resulting from willful and intentional acts by a suspect), accidental deaths (e.g., a traffic accident), and assaults of sworn city, university and college, county, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement officers who were acting in their official capacity when the injury or death occurred. This means that, generally speaking, LEOKA does not capture the injuries or deaths of officers that result from natural causes like heart attacks, suicide,

or personal situations like domestic violence. Furthermore, it does not provide statistics on the deaths or injuries of corrections officers, court bailiffs, parole and probation officers, judges, attorneys, private security officers, or Federal Bureau of Prisons officers. This database is predominantly used by the FBI to inform their Officer Safety Awareness Training (OSAT) program. This program helps officers learn how to better recognize scenarios and circumstances that have an increased likelihood of fatal danger and trains them on prevention and new safety measures. If you are interested, you can learn more and view the LEOKA data on the FBI's LEOKA Program website.

National Use-of-Force Data Collection

Figure 2.9. The use of force by police—especially excessive force and brutality—has been increasingly scrutinized in the United States. Police may use force in routine duties, such as traffic stops, as well as during major events, such as protests.

The **National Use-of-Force Data Collection** was created in 2015 to improve the collection of statistics on use of force by law enforcement with the goal of providing transparency and improving trust with the public, which is reflected in its slogan "Transparency. Accountability. Trust." This relatively new data collection aims to improve the manner in which statistics about law enforcement's use of force are collected, analyzed, and used.

The collected data includes any use of force that results in the death or serious bodily injury of someone and any time an officer fires their weapon at or toward anyone (figure 2.9). Importantly, the FBI notes, "The National Use-of-Force Data Collection offers big-picture insights, rather than information on specific incidents. The collection does not assess or report whether officials followed their department's policy or acted lawfully" (FBI, 2022d). If you want to learn more about this database, you can view the [Use-of-Force Data Collection's website](#).

Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection

Figure 2.10. *September 26th is National Law Enforcement Suicide Awareness Day, which was created to raise awareness about suicide among law enforcement, recognize the service and contributions of officers lost to suicide, and support the families of law enforcement officers who have died.*

As the newest of the FBI's UCR data collections, the goal of the **Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection (LESDC)** is to learn more about the loss of current and former law enforcement officers, corrections employees, 911 operators, judges, and prosecutors to prevent future deaths by suicide and suicide attempts (figure 2.10). This database contains the circumstances and events that occurred before the death by suicide or suicide attempt, as well as the location, demographics, occupation, and the method used. The data submitted does not include any information that directly identifies the involved officer. LESDC opened in January 2022 for data submissions, and the first report was published in June of the same year. If you want to learn more from the FBI, see [the LESDC website](#).

Limitations and Challenges

Each database has its own limitations and challenges. Completely reliable crime reporting is more complicated than it sounds. Remember that reporting to the UCR is voluntary. That means some of the 18,000+ agencies may not consistently submit their data in a timely manner every month. Consequently, the UCR may not be as accurate as needed for this database to be completely reliable. In other words, just because it is the largest and most commonly used source for crime data in the United States does not mean it actually gives us a complete picture of what is going on.

For example, some agencies may be more likely to report crime than others, which could skew what is known about the reality of crime in certain areas or among certain populations. If Agency A has a dedicated analyst who is really good at accurately compiling and submitting their agency's reports in a timely manner to the FBI, we might see "more" crime in Agency A's community than in communities with agencies that lack such a person.

Additionally, the number of arrests made in a given location is not necessarily equal to the amount of criminal activity occurring in that location. If Agency C's chief and community members do not want to see juveniles enter into the criminal justice system and instead advocate for alternative programming for those who commit offenses, Agency C's police officers will likely start making fewer arrests of juveniles. In this case, a downward trend in the number of arrests made by officers in Agency C does not really mean that the arrestable behavior has stopped or decreased. In contrast, let's say Agency C decides to crack down on domestic violence and starts arresting someone on every home disturbance call. As the number of arrests for domestic violence increases, it might look like there is a spike in intimate partner violence. Such misunderstandings of the actual crime levels could potentially lead to inappropriate changes to policy and practices. Figure 2.11 summarizes some of the pros and cons of the UCR program, emphasizing what the data source can and cannot tell us.

Figure 2.11. What does the UCR really tell us? We have to keep methodology and limitations in mind when using the UCR's data collections.

Pros	Cons
Stable methodology and collection methods have been established for nearly a century.	The program is not comprehensive; agencies are not legally required to participate, and some may be more inclined or able to report data than others.
Analyses are available at many geographic levels including by state, region, city, and agency; metropolitan versus nonmetropolitan; and so on.	NIBRS has improved data collection, but older data may miss crimes since it traditionally only counted the "most severe" crime per incident.
It includes data on multiple types of crime, including those against businesses, across all ages.	The transition period (2021) between the SRS and NIBRS reporting systems has been a major interruption to crime data trends.
Overall participation from law enforcement agencies is extensive.	It only tells us what is known to the police. Criminal behavior is not equal to arrests as some incidents might be handled informally. Arrest trends also represent changes in policies, norms, reporting, and so on.
Arrest data indicate that enough evidence existed about the reported crime to result in an arrest.	Arrests do not equal criminal convictions, and the UCR cannot tell us what happens in these cases after arrest.

Learn More: Examples of What the Data Really Tells Us

Crime data in the UCR is only good when it is accurate. Even when it is, it might have as much or more to say about policy and society than crime itself (figure 2.12). To illustrate this phenomenon, let's consider the Detroit Police Department's rape and homicide reports, and national drug arrest trends for juveniles.

The Detroit Police Department has a scandalous history of inaccurate crime reporting. Journalists in the early 2000s looked at trends starting in the '90s and found that the agency was responsible for both underreporting and overreporting offenses to the FBI. In 1999, the agency reported 790 rapes and 648 arrests for rape. This

Figure 2.12. When we talk about crime rates, we often mean arrest rates. But does the number of arrests equal the number of criminal incidents? There are many factors that influence arrests and arrest rates.

equals eight arrests for every 10 rapes, which far exceeded the national rate of arrests. The Detroit Police Department also reported arresting 27 people for every 10 murders, a rate that was three times the national rate for murder arrests. When such inaccurate data comes from a large police agency, it can severely skew national statistics.

According to the Monitoring the Future survey, national trends in lifetime use of any illicit substance by young people before leaving high school have fluctuated between about 41% and 66% since 1975, but they remained consistently around 50% between 2011 and 2018. However, between 2009 and 2018, arrests for drug use by juveniles *decreased* by nearly 60%. Although kids were steadily reporting use of drugs before age 18, arrest numbers did not tell the same story.

Overreporting of arrests can have a variety of effects on community members. For example, it may fuel fear among some because the increased arrests imply that more crime is occuring. Alternatively, it may give some residents a feeling of safety if they believe dangerous people have been arrested, even if there is no statistical local improvement in safety. Underreporting or overreporting crime may also benefit police departments and politicians in different ways. Perceptions of a safe city (underreporting crime) might help a politician get re-elected, while perceptions of a dangerous city (overreporting crime) could help agencies get more funding to hire more police officers. Additionally, assuming that a reduction or increase in arrests indicates an equal change in criminal behavior is not necessarily accurate.

Sources: (Fazlollah, 2001; Advance Local Media, 2009; Belluck, 2001; Johnston, et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Justice, 2018)

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🖳 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
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Figure 2.4. "Five main data collections within the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR)" by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Figure 2.5. "Compare the Traditional SRS Crimes with the NIBRS Crimes of the UCR" by Jessica René Peterson and Mindy Khamvongsa, Open Oregon Educational Resources, is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Figure 2.6. "NIBRS Participation Status" by the FBI is in the Public Domain.

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Figure 2.9. "grayscale photo of police riot team on pedestrian lane" by Spenser H is licensed under the Unsplash License.

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Figure 2.12. "jail-arrested-arrest-prison311-1-620×400" by BMN Network is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

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Figure 2.7 *A* and *B*. Images of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. included under fair use.

2.4 Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey

Figure 2.13. *People who experience property or violent victimization may not feel comfortable reporting to police, but they may still be willing to discuss their experiences with others outside of the justice system.*

The **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)** is the main source of information on criminal victimization in the United States and, in addition to the UCR, a key official source for crime data. The NCVS helps fill in gaps that the UCR collections cannot because the UCR data only includes crimes known to law enforcement. Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau administers the NCVS and gathers data on the frequency, characteristics, and consequences of criminal victimization from approximately 135,000 households composed of nearly 225,000 individuals. For those age 12 or older, the NCVS collects information on nonfatal personal crimes, such as rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and personal larceny, as well as on household property crimes, like burglary or motor vehicle theft. The collected information includes both crimes that have been reported to police and crimes that have not (figure 2.13).

The NCVS asks participants about their age, sex, race and ethnicity, marital status, education level, and income, in addition to whether the person experienced any victimization in that given year. For each reported victimization, it captures information about the age, race and ethnicity, and sex of the person who committed the offense. Information is also collected about the victim-offender relationship, characteristics of the crime (e.g., time and place of the crime, whether or not weapons were used, the nature of their injury, and any financial consequences), whether the crime was reported to the police, reasons why the crime did or did not get reported, and the victim's experience with the criminal justice system. If you are interested in exploring this dataset, you can visit the [NCVS Dashboard [Website]](#).

The NCVS is a form of self-report data. **Self-report data** is that which comes directly from individuals about their own experiences through methods like surveys or interviews. You can think of this form of data as being "straight from the horse's mouth." Regarding the NCVS, we are going directly to the people who have experienced some type of victimization. Other forms of self-report research may seek to understand different population's experiences. For example, a researcher might conduct self-report research with incarcerated persons to better understand their backgrounds, motivations, and more. Rather than just studying their arrest record, we could ask them to tell us about their lives.

Challenges and Limitations

Self-report statistics can be revealing and beneficial because they can help us discover problems we have been unaware of, like the misuse of prescription drugs or other victimless crimes. We can also uncover offenses that are not as serious, such as shoplifting, and are less likely to be known to police. But just as other official data sources have challenges and limitations, so too do self-report data and victimization surveys.

Potential inaccuracies in self-report data can be purposeful or accidental. Some respondents may have issues accurately remembering victimization, which can lead to underreporting or overreporting. If they were traumatized from the crime, events may blur together, or timing may be mistaken (an event that occurred in 2017 may be reported as 2018). Other times, respondents may lie or omit information for various reasons, such as shame, fear, confusion, or a lack of trust. For example, if the victim is uncomfortable with the interviewer, they may not want to tell them that their partner abused them out of fear it will get reported to police. Furthermore, the NCVS does not include responses from those under age 12, meaning that the vast amount of child abuse victimization will not show up in this data source.

The NCVS focuses on victimization, but consider how these issues may apply when we ask individuals to honestly report their own crimes. Respondents may exaggerate or underreport their criminal behavior for various reasons. For example, some teenagers may not even know something they did was illegal and thus will not report it as a crime. Furthermore, if we do not survey a large enough number of individuals, we may miss out on important information and get results that cannot be generalized across all populations. Despite these limitations, the NCVS helps fill in gaps in the UCR and gives a voice to victims of crime. See figure 2.14 for a summary of some of the pros and cons with the NCVS.

Figure 2.14. What does the NCVS really tell us? We have to keep methodology and limitations in mind when using the NCVS's data.

Pros	Cons
Survey collection has been ongoing for decades	Issues with accuracy due to dishonesty, exaggeration, information withholding, or difficulty remembering
Shows victimization that does not show up in the UCR	Does not account for victimization in unhoused populations, institutionalized populations, or in children under 12
Gives more detailed accounts of victim-offender relationships, effects of victimization, and trends in populations most victimized	Cannot include information on murder and primarily focuses on street crimes
Has a high response rate	Crime counting issues—series victimizations (e.g., repeated incidents of domestic violence) only counted once
Follows same households over a 3-year period	

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Licenses and Attributions for Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey

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2.5 The Dark Figure of Crime
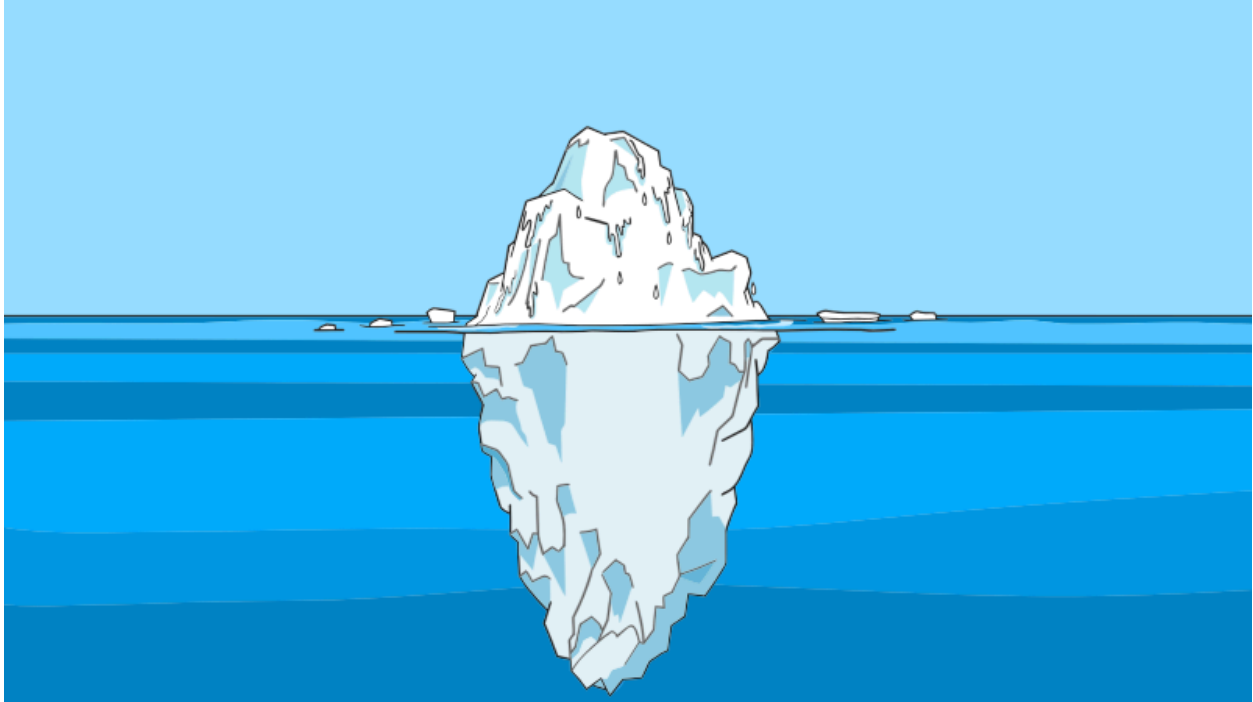
Figure 2.15. *Did you know that up to 90% of an iceberg is under the water? How might this be relatable to crime in the United States?*

What does crime data have in common with an iceberg? Figure 2.15 is an incredibly useful illustration of crime and what our data sources are able to tell us about it. So far, we have talked about the two primary official sources of information on crime in the United States. The UCR provides us with data about crime that is reported to police, documented, and submitted to the FBI. The NCVS provides us with data about crimes that victims are willing and able to tell us about. In other words, these sources provide a picture of crime that we can see—the tip of the iceberg that sits above the water. What about everything else that is not reported or documented? This is known as the **dark figure of crime** and is represented by the majority of the iceberg that is under the surface and out of sight.

Why Crimes Go Unreported

Have you ever been the victim of a crime that you did not report or committed a criminal offense that no one found out about? Consider what circumstances could lead someone to not report a crime they witnessed or experienced. Let me give you an example. I used to live in an apartment complex where my

car was stolen twice and broken into more times than I can count. Both times it was stolen, I reported the crime, the police found my car, and I eventually got it back. However, I only reported the first time it was broken into. Why? I learned very quickly that nothing good came of reporting the break-in. Reporting the break-in caused my insurance rate to increase and, because my insurance deductible was higher than the cost of having the locks fixed, I had to pay for the repairs out of pocket anyway. Furthermore, even if I didn't report it directly, if there was a police report, the insurance company would find out about it and charge me more. Since they were not paying to fix the car, I did not want them to know about it. Plus, I knew the police were too busy to chase down whoever had stolen my cassette tapes (yes, cassette tapes!). I saw no point in involving the police or the insurance company, and I got to know the locksmith. That means for my car alone, although there were more than 10 break-ins, only one would ever have made it to the UCR and into our official crime statistics.

Choosing not to report something like someone stealing my Metallica tape may seem insignificant, but more severe crimes go unreported too, and the reasons for this go far beyond insurance rates (figure 2.16). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports that possibly more than half of violent crimes (nearly 3.4 million violent victimizations per year) went unreported to the police between 2006 and 2010. Reasons why a crime could go unreported include:

- The victim may not know what happened to them was, in fact, a crime.
- The person who committed the offense is a member of the family, a friend, or an acquaintance.
- The victim thinks what happened to them is not worth reporting.
- The victim fears retaliation.
- The victim also committed a crime.
- The victim does not trust the police.
- The victim does not want to discuss their victimization with others.
- The victim does not want to go through the lengthy criminal trial process.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=493#oembed-1

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https://youtu.be/HxP4Djzv3FA

Figure 2.16. If you want to learn more about why victims might choose not to report their victimization, watch this brief video that explores the experiences of sexual assault survivors. Transcript.

Activity: Janell and Martin

Janell

Janell's home was broken into again. This is the second time. Her laptop, tablet, and TV were all stolen this time. Last time, some hidden cash was stolen, but she had figured out a better hiding place, and this time it wasn't touched. Janell did not call the police last time. She has not decided whether she will call them this time. The problem is, she knows who did this—both times—and she doesn't want to turn in her own brother. He struggles with addiction, and she knows he steals to pay for the drugs. She doesn't know if getting the law involved would help or make things even worse.

Martin

Martin's little sister was sexually assaulted at a party. He just found out, and he is furious. She was drinking, and this guy saw that as an opportunity to victimize her. She does not want to go to the police. She said they won't believe her, and they will treat her badly or even blame her because she was drinking. Plus, the guy will probably still get away with it anyway. Martin doesn't agree with her but will support whatever she wants to do. He is thinking of handling it himself and making sure this guy pays for hurting his sister.

Discussion questions:

1. How common do you think these examples are in the dark figure of crime? Why do you think decisions like these happen? What can or should be done about it?
2. What are some consequences of crimes being underreported?

Crimes that go unreported can have a significant impact not only on our data sources but also throughout the entire system and field of criminology. Crime data that fails to capture the true extent of criminal offending may incorrectly influence crime prevention or treatment policies, funding for criminal justice agencies, and the development of theory. Remember, if we can understand crime, we can predict it, and if we can predict it, we can potentially prevent it, but only if the data we are using is complete and accurate!

Which Data Should We Use?

As criminologists, we are looking for the most accurate picture we can find of what is happening with crime so we can figure out why it occurs. Each type of data has pros and cons. Additionally, each source adds a bit of knowledge, making it more likely to produce a better picture of what is occurring, depend-

ing on the area of study. In other words, something is better than nothing, but the hope is that something is as good as it can possibly be.

Just because the FBI and BJS house our official stats on crime does not mean we cannot find helpful information about crime in other places. For example, the annual [Monitoring the Future \[Website\]](#) survey tracks substance use among youth in schools, while the [National Survey on Drug Use and Health \[Website\]](#) provides national estimates of substance use and mental illness in the United States. The [Officer Down Memorial Page \[Website\]](#) is a nonprofit organization that captures information on law enforcement deaths and collects information a little bit differently than LEOKA. Independent journalists and researchers have also started their own data collections, such as the Washington Post police shootings database (the Washington Post requires a subscription, which your library may provide access to). Links have been provided for these sources in case you want to learn more. We just have to be vigilant in how we understand and use different data sources. It is important to look at both methodology and potential biases.

For example, take databases on mass shooting incidents in the United States. Remember when we talked about operational definitions in [Chapter 1](#)? Each database may operationalize "mass shooting" differently, and that can really impact the numbers we see. Take a look at figure 2.17. Depending on which data source you looked at, you might think there were 6 mass shootings in the United States in 2019—or you might think there were 503. That's a huge difference! Which source we use may depend on what type of information we are seeking. Is the location of the incident important to our question or theory? What about the motivation of the shooter?

Figure 2.17. Variations in how mass shootings are defined and counted (Smart & Schell, 2021). This table from the Rand Corporation shows the different ways that data sources defined and counted mass shootings in the United States for 2019. Look at how the variety in measurement regarding casualty thresholds, location, and motivations can change the statistics. See the source data [Website] for more context and detail.

Data Source	Casualty Threshold (for injuries or death by firearm)	Location of Incident	Motivation of Shooter	Number of U.S. Mass Shootings in 2019	Number of Mass Shooting Fatalities in 2019
Mother Jones (Follman et al., 2020)	Three people fatally injured (excluding shooter)	Public	Indiscriminate (excludes crimes of armed robbery, gang violence, or domestic violence)	10	73
Gun Violence Archive (n.d.)	Four people fatally or nonfatally injured (excluding shooter)	Any	Any	418	465
Mass Shooter Database (Violence Prevention Project, n.d.)	Four people fatally injured (excluding shooter)	Public	Indiscriminate (excludes crimes of armed robbery, gang violence, or domestic violence)	6	60
AP/USA TODAY/ Northeastern University Mass Killings database (Associated Press and *USA Today*, 2019; Callahan, 2019)	Four people fatally injured (excluding shooter)	Any	Any	19 (in 2018)	112 (in 2018)
Everytown for Gun Safety (2019)	Four people fatally injured (excluding shooter)	Any	Any	19 (in 2018)	112 (in 2018)
Mass Shooting Tracker (n.d.)	Four people fatally or nonfatally injured (including shooter)	Any	Any	503	628
Mass Shootings in America database (Stanford University Libraries, n.d.)	Three people fatally or nonfatally injured (excluding shooter)	Any	Not identifiably related to gangs, drugs, or organized crime	62 (in 2015)	202 (in 2015)

When determining which data source is best, consider which one would provide the best statistics for the desired information. For example, the best data source for reported homicides in the United States may not be the best reference if we are seeking information about domestic violence rates or estimated drug abuse rates amongst teens in high school. The right source or sources will depend on the statistics being sought and the reason they will be used.

Check Your Knowledge

Licenses and Attributions for the Dark Figure of Crime

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Figure 2.16. "Sexual assault and the Justice System: why so many victims don't report" by The Independent is shared under the Standard YouTube License.

Figure 2.17. "Table 1. Variation in How Mass Shootings Are Defined and Counted" by Rosanna Smart and Terry L. Schell from *Gun Policy in America*, RAND Corporation, is included under fair use.

2.6 Misusing Crime Statistics

According to the FBI, a violent crime occurred in the United States every 24.6 seconds in 2017. There was one murder every 30.5 minutes, one rape every 3.9 minutes, one robbery every 1.7 minutes, and one aggravated assault every 39 seconds. During the same year, a property crime occurred every 4.1 seconds. There was also one burglary every 4.1 seconds, one larceny-theft every 5.7 seconds, and one motor vehicle theft every 40.9 seconds (FBI, 2017).

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) reports more than 10 million adults experience intimate partner violence each year, which equates to an incident of abuse occurring at least every 3 seconds. Furthermore, one in four women and one in ten men will experience intimate partner violence during their lifetime. Also, one in two female murder victims are killed by intimate partners, and 96% of all murder-suicide victims are female (NCADV, n.d.). These examples of crime statistics from the UCR and the NCADV show how data from the collections discussed in this chapter may be used and help paint a picture of what is happening in the United States in terms of specific types of crime.

However, while crime statistics can be used for many legitimate purposes, they can also be misused. In each of the examples in figure 2.18, someone is likely to have bias or even ulterior motives (hidden, often selfish reasons) for wanting to use crime stats. Let's look at these examples with an eye toward the potential for misuse of data.

Figure 2.18. This table provides examples of reasons crime stats might be used, examples of misuse of data, and potential ulterior motives/biases involved in their use. Can you think of any others?

Reason Crime Stats Used	Example of Misuse of Data	Ulterior Motive/Bias
Real estate values in a neighborhood are affected by crime rates.	A real estate agent claims a house is in a "safe" neighborhood by sharing stats on murder ("There hasn't been a murder here in 3 years!") while leaving out stats on home burglaries.	Selling a property quickly and at the highest price possible leads to a nice commission for the real estate agent.
Tourism is greater where people feel safer.	A city's tourism office advertises that there is "no crime here!" but fails to reveal that they are only talking about a small area of town that is actually crime-free.	It is their job to increase tourism in their city, so their goal is to get people to visit and spend money in local businesses.
Claims about public safety can impact voting.	Someone who is running for office and trying to oust the incumbent cites scary crime rates in the area, picking only the ones that sound really bad, and claims their policies will make the community safe if they are elected.	They want to get elected to public office.
The staffing of law enforcement agencies depends on need.	A law enforcement agency shares only those stats that show increases in crime over a carefully chosen period of time and argues they need more officers because of rising crime rates in the area.	Agencies want more money to hire more officers, so they are trying to demonstrate a need.
Sales of security systems and guns are linked to crime rates.	Advertisements focus on the scariest crime stats and highlight particularly gruesome examples to make people feel afraid and as though they must take extra steps to protect their families and property.	More sales equals more money for the retailers of security systems and guns.
Self-defense classes are more popular when people do not feel safe.	Advertisements warn of impending attacks and how we must be prepared to defend ourselves.	More class registrations mean more money and job security for the instructors.
Grant funding depends on demonstration of need.	A researcher shares certain crime stats from a specific time period to show there is a need for their intervention.	They want to get their research funded, so they are trying to show its importance.
Racist ideologies and policies gain traction when people are scared.	A white nationalist group claims crime rates are linked to race, arguing (incorrectly and without attention to relevant factors) that some races are more dangerous than others and pushes for segregation by race/ethnicity for security purposes.	They want to form areas where only white people can live.

As you can see from these examples, some misuses of crime statistics are relatively innocent, and others are downright deceitful and disgusting. Misuse can include providing only limited information, presenting incorrect statistics, and presenting data in a way that is deceiving. It is important to be aware of and to consider the possible motives of the source sharing crime statistics. This will help you determine the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data. While one person's motive may be pure, another person's motive may be manipulative, selfish, or discriminatory.

Learn More: The Myth of the Super-Predator

Dr. John DiLulio became famous as a criminologist and political scientist, but for a very bad reason. In 1995, he misused data from a study in Pennsylvania to predict an impending rise in crime and violence among teenagers, especially Black boys. He claimed, "the next ten years will unleash an army of young male predatory street criminals who will make even the leaders of the Bloods and Crips—known as O.G.s, for 'original gangsters'—look tame by comparison" (DiLulio, 1995, para. 19). Dr. DiLulio said there was a whole generation of heartless, evil, violent kids living in "moral poverty" who were going to terrorize every community (figure 2.19). In particular, he suggested that young Black men were going to be coming after white adults.

He called these new scary teens "super-predators" and convinced a trusting public that they should all be terrified of these youths who were marked by "the impulsive violence, the vacant stares and smiles, and the remorseless eyes" (DiLulio, 1995, para. 6). Legislators latched onto his claim. It backed their tough-on-crime rhetoric and allowed them to pass all sorts of new laws that punished juveniles who committed offenses with longer, harsher sentences, including life in prison without the possibility of parole. DiLulio (1995) warned,

Figure 2.19. Hoodies have at times been associated with deviance and crime, especially when worn by youth of color. Why might some teenagers seem scary or threatening to some adults? Where does that message come from?

On the horizon, therefore, are tens of thousands of severely morally impoverished juvenile super-predators. They are perfectly capable of committing the most heinous acts of physical violence for the most trivial reasons (for example, a perception of slight disrespect or the accident of being in their path). They fear neither the stigma of arrest nor the pain of imprisonment. They live by the meanest code of the meanest streets, a code that reinforces rather than restrains their violent, hair-trigger mentality. In prison or out, the things that super-predators get by their criminal behavior—sex, drugs, money—are their own immediate rewards. Nothing else matters to them. So for as long as their youthful energies hold out, they will do what comes "naturally": murder, rape, rob, assault, burglarize, deal deadly drugs, and get high. (para. 29)
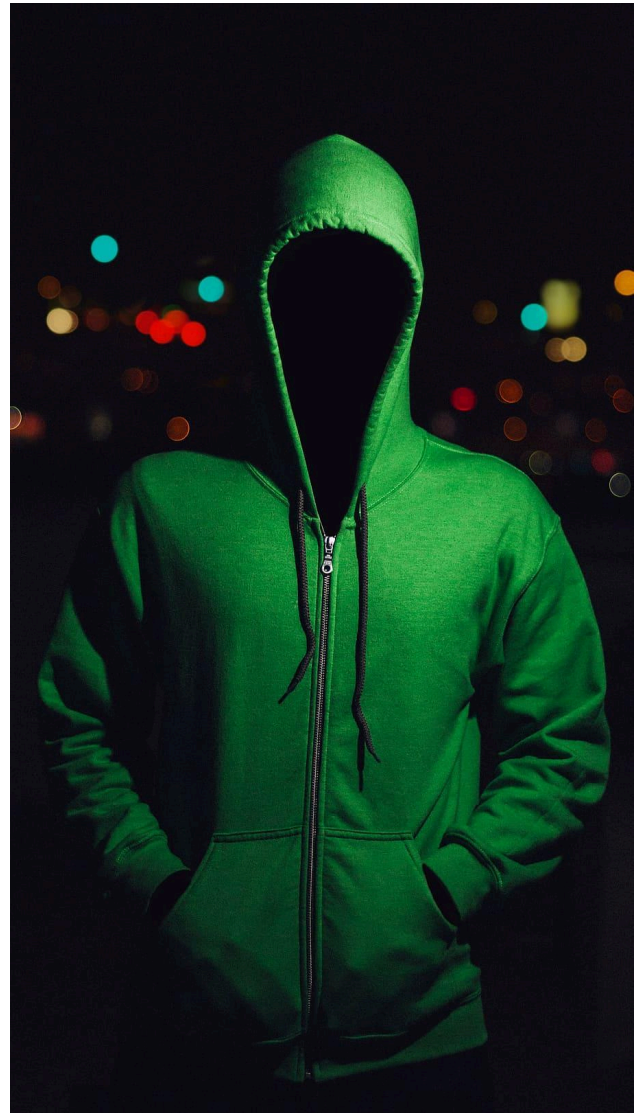
Dr. Dilulio's claim was busted when crime among juveniles did not behave as he predicted. In fact, it went down a lot. Although Dr. Dilulio has since come out and publicly expressed regret, the impact of his misuse of data has been lasting and incredibly harmful. Thousands of teenagers have been negatively impacted by his inaccurate prediction. Furthermore, although he agrees he was wrong, he takes no responsibility for the harsh punishments of children that were the result of his false prophecy. If you would like to learn more, you can read the article [Analysis: How the media created a 'superpredator' myth that harmed a generation of Black youth \[Website\]](#).

Accusations based on the super-predator myth still come up in political debates and discussions about criminal justice reform, making this a legendary example of data misuse in criminology. However, this is just one example of how the misinterpretation of crime data can go horribly wrong.

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Figure 2.18. "Reason crime stats are used, example of misuse of data, and potential ulterior motive/bias" by Taryn VanderPyl is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#). Revised by Jessica René Peterson.

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2.7 Conclusion

No one single source of data on crime is complete or able to give us an entirely accurate picture of crime in the United States. Understanding what each database does and does not include, as well as their benefits and drawbacks, helps us use the data appropriately. Knowing the pros and cons of crime data sources will help you keep a sharp eye as we discuss theories and the data they rely on for development.

Chapter Summary

Knowing the facts about crime that is happening, including how much, what type, where, by whom, and to whom, is all important data that needs to be tracked if we are to be able to determine what is or is not working. The two official go-to data sources for crime in the United States are the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). While the UCR consists of multiple database collections, the information all comes from law enforcement agencies. In contrast, the NCVS data is all self-reported directly by victims of crime. Although these are the gold and silver standards on crime stats, we know they do not capture everything. Crime goes unreported for a multitude of reasons that may be personal, logistical, or due to error or manipulation. We call this the dark figure of crime. Prime examples in the chapter about the misuse of statistics emphasize the importance of being critical in how we evaluate and use crime stats. It is important to be aware of and to consider the possible motives of the source that is sharing crime statistics when determining the validity or accuracy and trustworthiness of the data.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. Explore the statistics [Website] provided by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (n.d.). What are some of the motives behind the data they present? How would you judge the validity of these statistics?

2. Watch an example of how the media [Streaming Video] discusses the FBI's crime statistics. What do you think of the manner in which the reporter shares these data?
3. Watch this TED Talk [Streaming Video] by an attorney general who used crime data to change the manner in which law enforcement strategized how best to reduce crime. What did they learn from improving their use of data? Why did this matter?
4. What are some examples (beyond those shared in this chapter) of why someone may want to know crime statistics for a particular area or timeframe?
5. What are some ways to improve crime tracking data?
6. In what instances would someone want to show that crime rates are improving (getting lower), and in what instances might someone want to show the opposite? In either case, are they lying? What are the ethics involved?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

-   Read the original article that launched the super-predator myth, "The Coming of the Super-Predators" in *The Washington Examiner* (your library may provide access to this article).
-   *The New York Times* reports on the lasting impact of the super-predator myth in this Retro Report on YouTube called "The Superpredator Scare [Streaming Video]."
-   Read this article from *Prison Legal News* about misleading crime stats, "FBI's National Crime Data Found to be Flawed, Manipulated" (2013) [Website].

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ORIGINS OF CRIMINOLOGY

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How to Navigate this Book Online

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On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.
3

3.1 Chapter Introduction

As explained in [Chapter 1](#), criminology is the scientific field of study devoted to understanding the causes of crime. When we start talking about criminology, it is important to consider what was going on before this area of research existed (figure 3.1). That history (at least from the perspective of those in the United States) focuses on Europe. As we discuss different scholars who have been credited with these leading theories, their country of origin will be shared to let you know where this work started and how it spread. Later, when we talk about the early criminology work that was done in the United States, we will drop the focus on the country of origin and consider different key characteristics. Wealthy, educated, well-connected, white men in power predominately founded criminology—or at least, they are the ones who are given credit for it—and are the ones who determined what was criminal, undesirable, and punishable. As we discuss the origins and development of criminological theories, we should keep in mind the positionality (social identities) of those who contributed.

In this chapter, we will look at a brief history of crime and punishment to understand how the field of criminology was born. We will also revisit the common criminological paradigms that were initially discussed in [Chapter 1](#). Finally, we will introduce foundational theories in the classical school of thought and look at how they influenced the creation of our modern criminal justice system.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Locate the foundation of criminological thinking in terms of the race, gender, and societal status of the theorists.
2. Describe the origins of criminology as a field of scientific study.
3. Analyze the broader context of what led to different schools of thought being embraced at their time in history.
4. Compare the variations between the claims of the classical and positive schools.
5. Explain the creation of seminal (classic) theories of criminology in the classical school.
6. Describe how theories evolved from their origins in the classical and positive schools of criminology.
7. Assess the modern relevance of classical criminological theories, particularly as they relate to current crime policy.

Key Terms

- **Age of Enlightenment:** a period of philosophical, intellectual, and cultural revolution in 17th and 18th-century Europe
- **Aggravating circumstances:** a circumstance or factor that makes the behavior seem worse or makes the offender more culpable
- **Bounded rationality:** the idea that offenders' rationality in their decision-making is constrained by both time and relevant information
- **Brutalization effect:** a phenomenon, observed in some research, of increased violence or homicide after death penalty sentences are carried out
- **Classical school of criminology:** one of the two major traditional paradigms in criminology that emerged during the Age of Enlightenment; theories under this paradigm assume crime is the result of humans' free will and rational decision-making
- **Deterrence:** in relation to crime, the prevention of criminal behavior due to the threat of consequences
- **Deterrence theory:** a criminological theory that posits that people will be deterred from committing crime if punishment is swift, severe, and certain
- **General deterrence:** all members of society being deterred from committing crime due to their understanding of the likely legal consequences
- **Hedonistic calculation:** the weighing of pain and pleasure that humans make in every decision they make; seek to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain
- **Mitigating circumstances:** a circumstance or factor that makes the behavior seem less bad or makes the person who has committed the offense less culpable
- **Neoclassical perspective:** a new perspective and more modern approach to classical school criminology that considers circumstances that affect choice
- **Panopticon:** an architectural design for a prison with a central guard tower surrounded by a circle of cells that allowed for actual, or perceived, constant supervision and deterrence of bad behavior
- **Positive school of criminology:** one of the two major traditional paradigms in criminology that emphasizes the scientific method and is grounded in the positivist philosophy; theories within this paradigm assume that crime is determined or predisposed, to some degree, by one's biology, psychology, or environment.
- **Positivism:** a philosophy stating that knowledge should be based on empirical evidence and what can be witnessed in research
- **Pre-classical justice:** the time period before crime and justice were studied scientifically and systematically when medieval societies viewed crime as the result of sin, demonic possession, or other supernatural causes and punished them severely or via religious interventions
- **Rational choice theory:** a criminological theory that posits that people weigh the pros and cons of their options and use a cost-benefit analysis to make their choices, including the choice to com-

mit crime

- **Routine activity theory:** a criminological theory that sees crime as a function of people's everyday activities and posits that crime occurs when a motivated offender, suitable target, and lack of capable guardians converge at one time and place
- **Social contract:** the voluntary relinquishment of some freedoms in exchange for order and safety provided by a sovereign government
- **Specific deterrence:** a specific individual being deterred from committing crime due to their experience being punished by the legal system previously
- **Trial by ordeal:** a medieval method in which the criminally accused would endure an experiment that "proved" whether or not they were guilty and if they were deserving of mercy

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Figure 3.1. "[Saint Anthony Abbot Tormented by Demon]()" by Sano di Pietro is in the [Public Domain](), courtesy of [Yale University Art Gallery]().

3.2 Pre-Classical Justice and the Birth of Criminology

Before the field of criminology existed, crime and justice were not scientifically or systematically studied. To capture this, the approach to crime and justice prior to the 17th century can be characterized as **pre-classical justice** or pre-Enlightenment justice. Medieval societies viewed crime as the result of sin, demonic possession, or other supernatural causes. Because early European societies were dominated by two major authority figures—the church and the aristocracy (the rich and powerful)—crime was dealt with through religious interventions, and the punishments were often based on the social status of the person who committed the offense. As a result, the same crime would be met with wildly different responses based on who was involved. Punishments were often physical and public in nature, ranging from time in the pillory (figure 3.2) to death by hanging. Carrying out these punishments in public added the element of public humiliation and served as a way to warn other community members of their fate if they committed the same offenses.

Figure 3.2. One form of pre-classical justice involved placing an offender in the pillory, a wooden contraption that left a person standing in an uncomfortable position while their arms and head were secured in the holes shown. Why do you think this was often done in a public setting?

The concept of "innocent until proven guilty," which you are likely familiar with, did not really exist during the pre-classical period. Even when people were subjected to a trial of sorts to determine their guilt, the trial itself could be cruel. A **trial by ordeal** was a method in which the accused would endure an experiment that "proved" whether or not they were guilty and if they were deserving of mercy. This might include locking someone in a cage in the elements for days or tying a weight to someone's legs and throwing them into water. If they lived, they were worthy of God's mercy, and if not, they must be guilty. Check out the video in figure 3.3 for a parody example of a trial by ordeal. As you can imagine, these were not very fair trials, and they certainly did not encourage rehabilitation. The lack of any consistent or effective method of responding to or preventing crime began to outrage citizens who were upset with the irrational system.

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https://youtu.be/rf71YotfykQ

Figure 3.3. This scene from the parody film *Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail* is a humorous example of how arbitrary the pre-classical justice system was. Transcript.

The Field of Criminology

The beginning of criminology can be traced back to two major paradigms or schools of thought: the classical school and the positive school. Remember that paradigms are perspectives or ways of thinking that are not necessarily right or wrong, true or false. The first—the **classical school of criminology**—has its origins in the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment. The **Age of Enlightenment** was brought on by the spread of education, philosophy, and new ways of thinking. In other words, people became enlightened. Also, as the middle class became larger, they gained more power. During the 18th century, revolutions in France and the American colonies led to the replacement of monarchies (ruling families) with democratic institutions of government. This put the power in the hands of the people. As a result, the Age of Enlightenment brought about a new era that focused on understanding and addressing human behavior, including crime.

The second major school of thought—the **positive school of criminology**—has its origins in the philosophy of **positivism**. This philosophy is grounded in the notion that knowledge should be based on evidence; in other words, if something is proven through evidence, one can feel positive or certain it is true. Positivism marked the start of the application of the scientific method to the study of human populations and social phenomena. During this time, criminologists tried to figure out crime through research that would show them the exact cause in a predictable and preventable manner.

The rest of this chapter will discuss more about the classical and positivist schools of thought, including the societal context, assumptions, and beliefs about crime within each paradigm. Most of the focus

in this chapter will be on the classical school and the theories that grew from it, while a more in-depth discussion of early positivist theories can be found in Chapter 4. Keep in mind that the early theories within these perspectives can and have evolved over time. Many are no longer considered valid due to their lack of scientific support or use of outdated methods, while others have drastically changed as our understanding of our social world's complexities has changed. Nonetheless, studying the foundations of criminology helps us understand the earliest attempts to apply the scientific method to the study of crime and the field's progression.

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Figure 3.2. Image by JamesDeMers is licensed under the Pixabay License.

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Figure 3.3. "[Monty Python and the Holy Grail – Witch Scene](#)" by [Molly E Druce](#) is licensed under the [Standard YouTube License](#).

3.3 Classical School of Criminology

As education, philosophy, and novel ideas spread through Europe during the Age of Enlightenment, the public became tired of the status quo and began heavily questioning the authority of the church. Many philosophers started arguing that humans were rational, thinking agents who possessed free will. This flew in the face of the church's claim that bad behavior (crime) was often the result of demonic possession, not individual, rational thought and choices. This new way of thinking caused an uproar because if crime was the result of rational decision-making, it could not be solved through religious intervention. The existing system was falling apart, and a new system needed to be developed. It was in this setting that the classical school of criminology was established.

Philosophers, social reformers, and other major thinkers who gained popularity and prominence during the Age of Enlightenment believed that humans were reasoning beings who made decisions based on their own self-interest and rationality (weighing the pros and cons of their actions). Consequently, rational choice, individual agency, and free will are at the core of classical criminology. With these ideas in mind, they proposed new methods of addressing crime and a new system of justice.

The social contract was an important element of this new way of looking at people's decision-making and behavior. The **social contract**, which is typically associated with theorists like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes (1651) and John Locke, is a view of social order that claims society must voluntarily give up some of their personal freedoms in exchange for public safety as provided by the government. Laws are still made with the social contract in mind. For example, we sit and wait at red lights, even when we are in a hurry, because there are negative consequences for running a red light, such as receiving a traffic ticket or getting in a collision. Theoretically, we have all collectively agreed that this inconvenience (restriction of our freedom to move about as we please) is worth it for our ensured safety (prevention of car accidents).

When we break the law, we break the social contract and may be harming other members of society. For the good of society, Enlightenment thinkers proposed ideas that they believed would get everyone to live in line with the social contract and not break the law. Although these philosophers and theorists believed it was important for the people to have a say in the government and justice system, "the people" primarily consisted of white landowning men and excluded the poor, women, persons of color, and other marginalized groups.

Cesare Beccaria and Deterrence Theory

Cesare Beccaria was a wealthy and powerful Italian nobleman who often gathered with peers to debate different issues and discuss legal reforms (figure 3.4). In 1764, he published his book *On Crimes and Punishments,* in which he argued for criminal justice reform. Beccaria believed that society should eliminate torture, secret accusations, and the death penalty. His writing was in response to the authoritarian government that he saw as unjust and arbitrary. Although Beccaria was Catholic, his ideas challenged

the Catholic Church's power and approach to punishment and led to him being labeled a blasphemous heretic.

Figure 3.4. Cesare Beccaria, an Italian philosopher, is considered one of the founders of the classical school of criminology.

Beccaria also provided a compelling defense for his idea that the purpose of punishment should be **deterrence**. In other words, Beccaria said punishment shouldn't be used simply to get revenge and should instead serve the greater good by discouraging criminal behavior in society. He believed that people would be deterred from committing criminal behavior if they feared punishment. At the same time, Beccaria emphasized that the punishment should not be as extreme and unpredictable as it had been. He argued that everyone needed to know both the agreed-upon laws—the social contract—and the consequences for breaking them.

Laying the foundation for **deterrence theory**, Beccaria further argued that punishment should be swift, certain, and severe in order to deter criminal behavior (figure 3.5). First, *swift* meant the consequence had to happen immediately (or as close to the crime as possible) so there was no mistaking the connection between the punishment and the crime. Second, and most importantly according to Beccaria, the punishment had to be *certain* or guaranteed. People had to believe they really would be punished if they were caught. Third, the severity of the punishment should be equal to the severity of the crime—it must be *proportionately severe*. In other words, the punishment should "fit" the crime. He believed that a punishment should only be as severe as necessary to deter crime and that anything beyond that was just cruel.
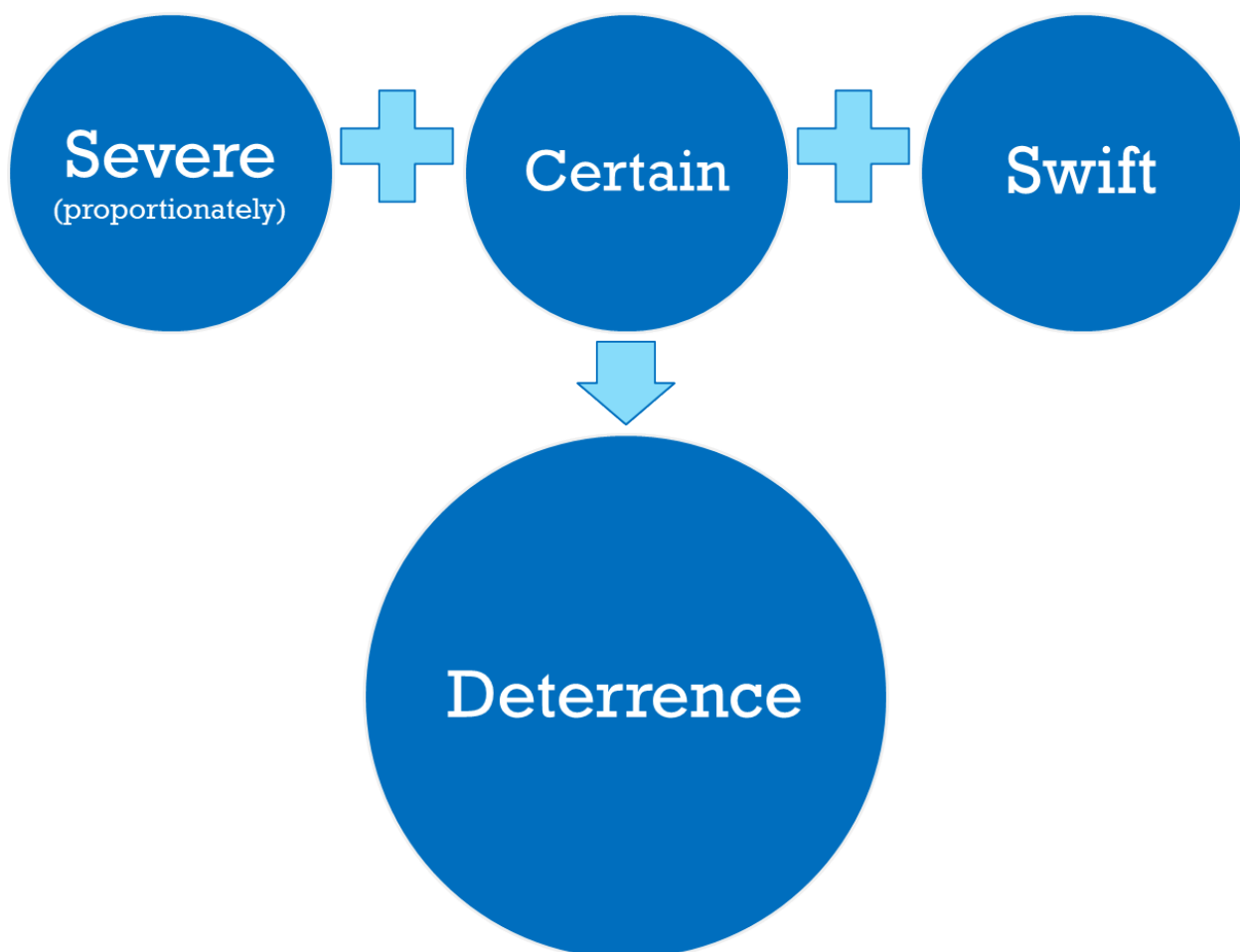

Figure 3.5. *Cesare Beccaria argued that responses to crime must be swift, certain, and proportionate to deter criminal behavior and ensure an orderly society. Why might these three variables be important elements of deterrence?*

Beccaria identified two equally important forms of deterrence: general and specific. **General deterrence** refers to circumstances in which individuals are discouraged from committing crime due to their perception of the certainty, swiftness, and severity of legal consequences. In other words, people who see someone be convicted and punished for a crime will not want to experience that themselves, so they will be deterred from committing the same act. **Specific deterrence** refers to circumstances in which individuals who were caught and punished are dissuaded from committing future offenses because of their personal experiences of those legal consequences. You can think of this as a *specific* person being deterred from committing crime because they do not want to face punishment again (or in some cases, because they are incarcerated and physically unable to commit a crime against society again).

Beccaria's book is essentially the origin of the classical school, and he is credited as being the father of the classical school of criminology. His ideas about deterrence not only became popular in Western Europe, but they were also woven into the fabric of the American legal system.

Jeremy Bentham and Rational Choice Theory

Jeremy Bentham (1970), who spread Enlightenment ideas in England, added to Beccaria's ideas with his work *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789 (figure 3.8). In it, he outlined his own philosophy that "nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure." He claimed that human beings were indulgent and selfish but also rational. In other words, he believed that in every decision faced, people would seek whatever promoted their pleasure and prevented their pain. This is known as the **hedonistic calculation**, or hedonism. Bentham saw this principle as existing in all matters of human behavior, including in the decision to commit crime.

Consequently, Bentham created a theory to explain human behavior and help prevent crime: rational choice theory. **Rational choice theory** claims that people weigh the pros and cons of their options and use a cost-benefit analysis to make their choices (figure 3.6). For example, when deciding whether or not to commit a crime, Bentham said someone would think through the benefits (pleasures) of a certain criminal act and balance those against the legal consequences (costs) they would face if they were caught. For example, someone might shoplift from a store if there is something they really want but cannot afford and they believe the risk of getting caught is low or the punishment is worth it to them.
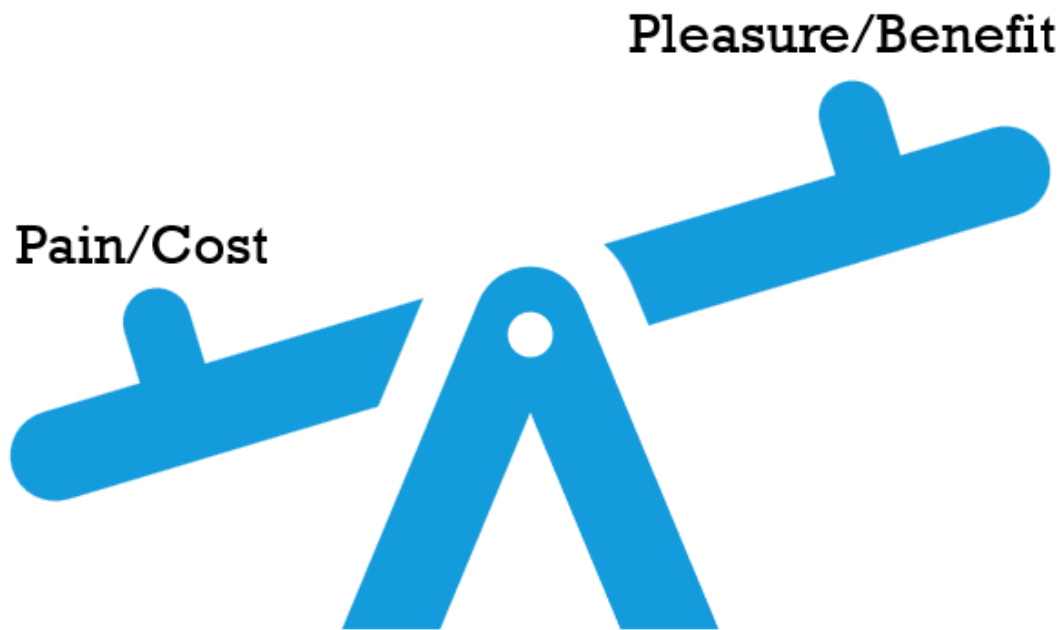
Figure 3.6. *Rational choice theory assumes that people weigh pain and pleasure, or costs and benefits, in their decision-making and always choose pleasure/benefit. What might this tell us about decisions to engage in crime?*

Bentham's rational choice theory is broader than Beccaria's proposal that punishment should be swift, certain, and proportionate to deter crime. Bentham looks at both the benefits and the consequences of criminal behavior that someone may consider, as opposed to only focusing on the punishment. Let's consider someone who is very hungry, has no money to buy food, and is in a market near food where no one is looking. In Beccaria's argument, the person must believe they will get caught no matter what and that their punishment will happen quickly, will occur without a doubt, and will fit the crime. Because they are rational and do not want to risk getting in trouble, they will not steal the food. In Bentham's argument, the person weighs the options of remaining hungry versus committing theft with only a small chance of getting caught. In this case, they rationally decide the benefits are worth the minimal risk of acceptable negative consequences.

In addition to laying out the rational choice theory of criminal behavior, Bentham is also well-known for the architectural design of a prison called the **panopticon** (figure 3.7). The term "panopticon" literally translates to "all-seeing" and is a bit of a mind trick devised by Bentham to keep people in order. The panopticon was designed so that a central guard tower was surrounded by a larger circle of cells. From the central tower, corrections officers could see into every cell at all times. The trick was that the people in the cells could not see into the tower, so they never actually knew whether they were being watched. They simply assumed that they were being monitored at all times. The idea was that this *perceived* constant supervision would have a deterrent effect on the people who were imprisoned, keeping them from committing bad behavior.
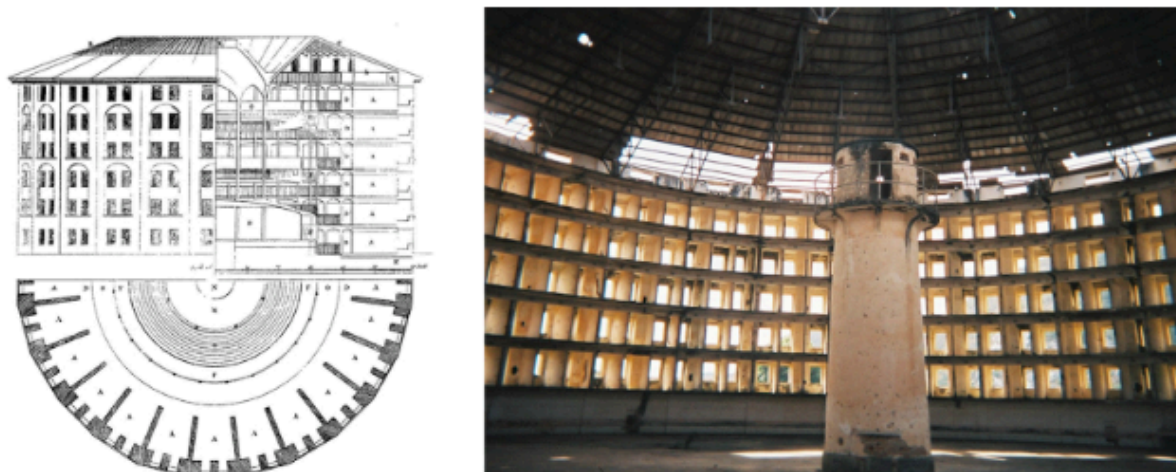
Figure 3.7. A is a drawing that includes the elevation, section, and plan of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison design. B shows a prison building at Presidio Modelo in Cuba that embodies Bentham's design. Finally, C is conceptual art of the prison from the film, Guardians of the Galaxy. How would the belief that you are being watched affect your behavior, especially if you were considering doing something illegal?

The panopticon's architectural design has influenced neighborhoods, apartment complexes, and fictional prisons. In addition, the concept behind the panopticon is very much prevalent in modern American society in other ways too. For example, security cameras or red light cameras are common in many areas. Some police departments place "dummy" vehicles—empty police cars—near busy streets to deter motorists from speeding. When you see a police or security tower with dark windows at a Target store

or sporting event, you are experiencing the panopticon in action! All of these things serve as deterrents to criminal behavior based on *perceived* continual supervision—if we think we may get caught, we are less likely to commit an offense.

Figure 3.8. Jeremy Bentham wanted his body to remain on display after his death, and the University College London (UCL) has honored this request. A shows his skeleton dressed in his clothes, with a wax head and hands, while B shows his preserved head with glass eyes. Not only is Bentham still physically with us, but his ideas have had a lasting impact on the U.S. legal and criminal justice system. If interested, you can learn more about his eccentric request on the UCL's website.

Although the philosophers who belong to the classical school of criminology made many assumptions about human nature and criminal behavior—for example, that humans had free will and were rational and hedonistic—their ideas preceded modern social scientific methods for testing these ideas. In addition, their texts were published as philosophical treatises focused on legal and social reform and included no attempt at scientific explanation. As a result, the ideas in Beccaria's and Bentham's writings were not tested empirically until much later, which we will discuss more later in this chapter. Nonetheless, Beccaria and Bentham's ideas were foundational to the legal system we still have in the United States.

Activity: Linking Rational Choice Theory and Policy

Read the Illinois Youthful Intoxicated Drivers' Visitation Program law and, as a group, answer the questions that follow (figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9. *Drinking and driving is a major safety issue in our communities. How might theory inform policy that can help us address impaired driving?*

Section 628 ILCS 5/11-501.7 Youthful Intoxicated Drivers' Visitation Program (source [Website])

1. As a condition of probation or discharge of a person convicted of a violation of Section 11-501 (Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs) of this Code, who was less than 21 years of age at the time of the offense, or a person adjudicated delinquent pursuant to the Juvenile Court Act, for violation of Section 11-501 of this Code, the Court may order the offender to participate in the Youthful Intoxicated Drivers' Visitation Program. The Program shall consist of a supervised visitation as provided by this Section by the person to at least one of the following, to the extent that personnel and facilities are available:

1. A State or private rehabilitation facility that cares for victims of motor vehicle accidents involving persons under the influence of alcohol.
2. A facility which cares for advanced alcoholics to observe persons in the terminal stages of alcoholism, under the supervision of appropriately licensed medical personnel.
3. If approved by the coroner of the county where the person resides, the county coroner's office or the county morgue to observe appropriate victims of motor vehicle accidents involving persons under the influence of alcohol, under the supervision of the coroner or deputy coroner.

2. The Program shall be operated by the appropriate probation authorities of the courts of the various circuits. The youthful offender ordered to participate in the Program shall bear all costs associated with participation in the Program. A parent or guardian of the offender may assume the obligation of the offender to pay the costs of the Program. The court may waive the requirement that the offender pay the costs of participation in the Program upon a finding of indigency.
3. As used in this Section, "appropriate victims" means victims whose condition is determined by the visit supervisor to demonstrate the results of motor vehicle accidents involving persons under the influence of alcohol without being excessively gruesome or traumatic to the observer.
4. Any visitation shall include, before any observation of victims or disabled persons, a comprehensive counseling session with the visitation supervisor at which the supervisor shall explain and discuss the experiences which may be encountered during the visitation in order to ascertain whether the visitation is appropriate.

Questions:

1. Given what you know about rational choice theory, do you think the Youthful Intoxicated Drivers' Visitation Program is an effective strategy for dealing with drivers under the age of 21 who are convicted of drunk driving? Explain your answer.
2. What is another policy that you might implement to get underage drivers to think about the potential consequences of drinking and driving? Remember, your policy has to be based on rational choice theory.
3. Do you think your policy would be more effective than the Youthful Intoxicated Drivers' Visitation Program? Defend your answer.

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Figure 3.4. "Cesare Beccaria incisione a bulino di Giuseppe Benaglia" is in the Public Domain.

Figure 3.7 *A*. "Panopticon" is in the Public Domain.

Figure 3.7 *B*. "Presidio-modelo2" by Friman is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

Figure 3.8. "Jeremy Bentham Auto-Icon" by Michael Reeve is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0; "Head of Jeremy Bentham" by Matt Brown is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Figure 3.9. "Stop drunk driving" by Quoteinspector.com is licensed under CC BY-ND 4.0.

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Figure 3.7 *C*. "Concept art for the Kyln" is included under fair use.

3.4 Positive School of Criminology

Positivism, the philosophy that knowledge should be based on empirical evidence shown in research, was developed by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1858), who is credited with founding the discipline of sociology. Influenced by positivism, those seeking to understand criminal offending could no longer propose ideas without providing some kind of proof. Early scholars in the positive school of criminology had to figure out how to gather data and analyze it in a way that might explain criminal behavior. The focus shifted from looking philosophically at why people committed crimes and the strategic use of punishment, to scientifically understanding potential internal reasons for criminal behavior.

Therefore, the positive school of thought was a major shift from both the ideas that external supernatural forces caused crime (pre-classical) or that criminal behavior was a choice (classical). Instead, positivist criminologists saw criminal behavior as something that was, to some degree, predetermined—or caused—by internal factors like one's biological or psychological makeup. These new researchers looked at medicine, hereditary, and evolution to try to understand offending behavior. They had some good ideas, but also some outlandish and harmful ideas. The origins of biological and psychological approaches to criminology, as well as more modern understandings, will be discussed in Chapter 4. Additionally, the positivist school has changed over time, and many theories now assess social factors in criminal offending. Biosocial theories, for example, are those that consider the impact of both biological (internal) and social (external) reasons for criminal behavior. Also, many modern criminological theories examine how economic, political, cultural, familial, and other sociological factors impact criminal offending. Some of these are better described as "sociological theories" and fit within a variety of subcategories that we will discuss later.

Developing Crime Statistics

It may be hard to believe, but statistics were not always used to explain patterns in criminal behavior. You have the positive school of criminology to thank for all the statistical methods we want you to learn now. They are the ones who brought this type of analysis into criminology.

Adolphe Quetelet, a Belgian astronomer and mathematician, was introduced to the statistical movement while in Paris (figure 3.10). Alongside French statistician Andre-Michel Guerry, Quetelet uncovered some significant patterns through the mapping of various statistical data (including crime) to geographical areas (Walsh & Hemmens, 2014). Quetelet initiated a government-backed census project, and they gathered data on various issues, including crime and other social factors. They then looked at relationships between statistical variables to figure out crime and social behavior during the 19th century. We do this a lot now, but it was a new practice then.

In 1825, France's Ministry of Justice began a project to gather statistical data on crimes, prosecutions, verdicts, and punishments in criminal courts. They also gathered data on the age, sex, and occupation of those accused and convicted of crimes. After the first report was published in 1827, a group of statisti-

cians, one of whom was Adolphe Quetelet, began to conduct independent analyses of the data (Beirne, 1987).
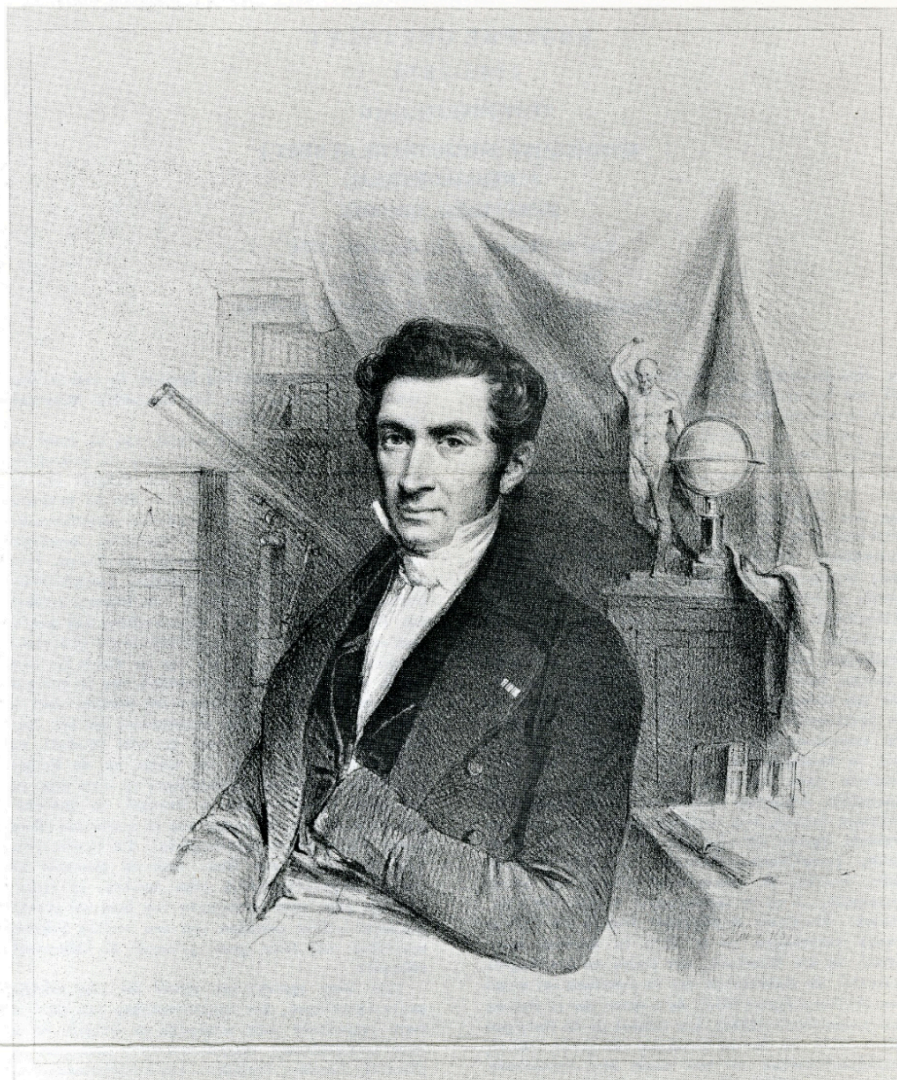
A. Quetelet (1796-1874)
(2.0.2.)

Through his analysis of these data and statistics, Quetelet figured out that crime rates were steady over many years. This led him to believe that human behavior (including crime) was similar to physics in that it obeyed certain rules.

Quetelet also developed the concept of the "average man"—an imaginary person who embodied statistical averages of a variety of human characteristics, such as height and weight. He also regarded the "average man" as the epitome of all physical, intellectual, and moral qualities. Quetelet wanted to statistically analyze who was committing crime and when they were committing crime. Remember scholars at this time were trying to figure out if there were biological explanations for criminal behavior. Quetelet believed he found some, at least in part. He observed that young people had the greatest propensity for crime. He also discovered links between crime and the seasons as he found many crimes occurred annually around the same time. Although there is not a specific theory to explain his findings, he is still a key part of the origins of criminology because he revealed a more sophisticated and nuanced look at crime that would later feed other theories.

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Figuur 3.10. "Quetelet, Adolphe (1796-1874); astronoom, wiskundige, socioloog, Madou, Jean Baptiste, Felixarchief, 12 12861 recto" by Jean Baptiste Madou is in the Public Domain, CC0 1.0.

3.5 Modern Application: How Is It Relevant Now?

So far, we have discussed how pre-classical justice led to the development of criminology. More specifically, we looked at how the classical school of thought and the positivist school of thought came to be. For reference, a portion of the table from Chapter 1 is included in figure 3.11 to help summarize the distinction among these paradigms. However, we have really only focused on the initial iterations of these theories and paradigms. Are these ideas still relevant today? If so, how and to what degree?

Figure 3.11/ A summary of the assumptions associated with pre-classical justice and the two primary criminological paradigms.

Paradigm	Assumptions
Pre-classical criminology	Crime is a result of paranormal forces or demonic possession. This outlook on crime is grounded in religion and superstition.
Classical school of criminology	Crime is a result of free will and an individual's choice to offend. This outlook on crime is grounded in personal choice. It was developed during the Age of Enlightenment.
Positivist criminology	Crime is a result of internal or external forces that can be biological, psychological, or sociological. This outlook on crime is grounded in determinism and the scientific method.

Resurgence of the Classical School

The idea that free will was the cause of crime became unpopular among scholars after the shift to positivism in the late 19th century. Particularly after Darwin (2004) introduced his theory of evolution, scientists and philosophers largely abandoned the classical school assumptions when studying crime. This lasted for about 100 years. However, the foundational idea of deterrence that is central to classical criminology became ingrained in justice systems during this time, especially in France and the United States. Then, in the 1960s, classical school theories experienced a rebirth among criminologists with a resurgence in research on deterrence. Attention to classical school criminology from a new perspective and more modern context is referred to as the **neoclassical**—*neo* meaning new—**perspective**.

Although the classical and neoclassical perspectives share the same basic assumptions—namely, that crime is the result of choice and free-will—there are slight differences. First, the neoclassical approach is more considerate of circumstances that can affect decision-making, such as age or disability. Second, due to a more complex understanding of factors that impact choice, the neoclassical approach is willing to apply different punishments based on **mitigating** or **aggravating circumstances**. In other words, a person who steals a car to get away from someone who is abusing them (mitigating) is not viewed as being as guilty as someone who steals a car for fun (aggravating). From a neoclassical perspective, those two people would not deserve the same punishment.

The classical and neoclassical schools have existed at the core of the American criminal justice system's assumptions and operations. While classical perspectives were abandoned by the academic world for a period of time, researchers finally began to study and test the ideas in the 1960s. Not only did this lead to empirical research on the classic deterrence theory and rational choice theory, but new concepts emerged as well.

Testing Deterrence

Recall that deterrence theory requires punishment to be swift, certain, and severe in order to have a deterrent effect. Initially, researchers testing deterrence theory conducted studies relying on objective measures of apprehension and punishment. Think back to the operational definitions we discussed in [Chapter 1](), and consider how these scholars tried to define and measure concepts like apprehension (getting caught) and punishment (the actual consequence of getting caught). To do this, they looked at anonymous data of arrests and sentencing to measure the actual certainty and severity of punishment for different crimes.

For example, sociologist Jack Gibbs (1968) compared the number of prison admissions for homicide to cases of reported homicide to determine the certainty of punishment. He also compared the number of prison admissions for homicide to the average length of prison sentences served for homicide to measure the severity of punishment. He then calculated the relationship between the certainty and severity of punishment and compared it to crime rates across the country to see what appeared to be working (or not). He found, as predicted by deterrence theory, that states with higher certainty and severity of punishment had lower crime rates, and states with lower certainty and severity of punishment had higher crime rates. This means deterrence seemed to be working as originally theorized.

Other research using similar methods also found a consistent deterrent effect of the certainty (or risk) of punishment on crime. However, many studies also found that the severity of punishment was directly related to crime rates—that is, states with higher severity of punishment had higher crime rates, whereas states with lower severity of punishment had lower crime rates (Paternoster, 1987). These findings did not support deterrence theory or what the classical school claimed would work to deter crime.

Later research relied on perceptual measures of punishment, or what people *thought* would happen to them if they were caught for committing a crime. These studies surveyed individuals and asked them about their perceptions of the certainty (and sometimes the severity) of punishment for hypothetical crimes. For example, to measure the certainty of punishment, Saltzman and colleagues (1982) asked participants, "Out of the next 100 people in (city name) who commit 'crime x,' how many do you think will be arrested?" Researchers using these types of perceptual measures would then analyze their relationships to self-reported crime (or intentions to offend). Like the earlier research with similar measures, this research also created support for the certainty effect that was claimed in deterrence theory (Nagin, 1998). Also, as was predicted by Beccaria and consistent with the earlier studies, perceived severity of punishment has only a weak relationship to whether or not someone would commit a crime (Paternoster, 1987; Apel & Nagin, 2011).

Over the past few decades, a lot of scholars have tested different claims of deterrence theory and even made changes to the theory as a result of what they learned. For example, Stafford and Warr (1993) looked at the effects of punishment someone experienced themselves (direct) compared to what they saw someone else experience (observed), and argued that deterrence is a learning process based on direct and observed experiences of not only being punished but also getting away with crime.

Research on the deterrent effects of sentences, particularly the death penalty, has produced contradicting results that sometimes make it difficult to draw concrete conclusions. However, taking the literature into consideration as a whole, some aspects of deterrence theory are more effective than others. While certainty of being caught and punished can decrease offending behavior, severity has been shown to have little to no impact on behavior. In fact, some researchers report on what they describe as a **brutalization effect**, or increased violence and homicide after death penalty sentences are carried out, that runs contrary to a deterrent effect due to punishment severity (Cochran & Chamlin, 2000).

Testing Rational Choice

Like deterrence, Bentham's rational choice theory has its origins in the classical school of criminology but was largely overlooked until the 1960s when it was revitalized by new research. The main argument of rational choice theory is that people who commit offenses consider the potential costs and benefits of various courses of action before making decisions about whether to commit crimes. Costs include, but are not limited to, formal (legal) and informal (social disapproval) sanctions. Benefits include a variety of potential rewards from criminal behavior, such as money, status, and power.

In considering the rational choice approach, economist Gary Becker (1968) described crime as being like any other economic behavior guided by the consideration of costs and benefits. The rational choice perspective was also elaborated on in greater detail by Cornish and Clarke (1986) in their book *The Reasoning Criminal: Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. They argued in favor of viewing people who commit crimes as being essentially the same as other reasoning individuals who do *not* commit crimes. In some situations, weighing the pros and cons reveals that the criminal option is the most logical choice.

Additionally, this newer take on rational choice acknowledges that people who commit offenses act with bounded rationality. **Bounded rationality** is the constraint of both time and relevant information on decision-making. People who commit crimes must make a decision in a timely fashion with the information at hand. They cannot wait forever, nor can they wait for more information before committing a crime. For example, if you were walking down a street and noticed a parked car with an open window, you may contemplate looking in. If you saw something inside, you may then consider stealing it. An entirely rational person may look around to see if there are any witnesses, try to determine if the owner is coming back soon, and so on. Ideally, you may wait until nightfall. However, waiting may cause you to miss your opportunity. Thus, you need to make a quick decision based on the relevant facts available at that time.

The rational choice perspective paints a unique portrait of human nature that depicts individuals as conscious, thinking, reasoning agents who act deliberately, making clear decisions and choices in their lives. It became more popular and influential because of the frequent findings in studies testing deter-

rence theory. Scholars found that informal sanctions (like negative reactions from family and friends) were more important to people in terms of influencing their intentions to commit crime than formal, legal consequences (Tittle, 1977). In other words, people place greater value on job loss, a tarnished reputation, and harm to their relationships with significant others than on the actual legal consequences of committing crime.

Routine Activity Theory

By the 1980s, technology was progressing at lightning speed, and more people were getting access to what was previously rare, including televisions, computers, and video games. The era was marked by greed and capitalism, making the divide between the "haves and have-nots" even more obvious. Marcus Felson and Lawrence Cohen looked at these changes through their criminologist lenses and saw some key changes to daily life that were affecting criminal behavior. For example, college enrollment was up, more women had joined the workforce and were no longer staying home with their kids, people had portable technology with them like never before, and far more people had cars that allowed them to go further and faster than ever before. All these changes majorly impacted the day-to-day life and routines of Americans.

Felson and Cohen (1979) coined the **routine activity theory** that sees crime as a function of people's everyday behavior (figure 3.12). They said that for a crime to be committed, three elements must exist: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the absence of guardianship (Cohen & Felson, 1979). For example, consider the scenario from earlier. Let's say you walked down a street, looked inside a car that had its windows down, and stole a cell phone that had been left inside. Routine activity theory would explain this as a convergence of a motivated offender (you), a suitable target (the accessible cell phone), and the lack of a capable guardian (no police or witnesses). In other words, the motivated thief is present near an easy target that is not adequately protected.

Figure 3.12. According to routine activity theory, crime occurs when three factors—a motivated offender, a suitable target, and no capable guardians—converge in one time and place.

Routine activity theory looks at our lifestyle and behavioral patterns to determine our risk of either committing a crime or becoming a victim of one. Some researchers criticize this theory for being "victim-blaming" since, instead of focusing solely on the motivated offender, the theory includes the victim and what the victim could have done differently to avoid being victimized. Studies show that some behaviors make people more vulnerable, such as excessive alcohol and drug use or walking in unpopulated areas at certain times. When a motivated offender is around, this theory claims such behaviors can create a suitable target if proper guardianship is not in place. Guardianship can take the form of security cameras, the presence of other people, good lighting, heightened awareness of your surroundings, locked doors, and any other tool at your disposal that may help keep you safe.

Routine activity theory has been used to explain the change in criminal activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first month of the lockdown, crime fell by 23% and researchers believe that drop was directly related to the population's mobility. Business closures and stay-at-home orders meant fewer people were outside of their homes. During the pandemic's restrictive times, home burglaries dropped, but commercial burglaries and car thefts rose. It could be said that the motivated offenders needed to find a suitable target that wasn't guarded, so cars and businesses became the focus. Residential burglaries decreased by 24%, while nonresidential burglaries rose by 38%. Since people weren't leaving their homes, cars stayed parked for a longer period of time, and in some cities, the rate of car thefts doubled during the pandemic.

Impact on Policy

Deterrence theory has had a significant impact on the administration of justice and criminal justice policy in the United States. Deterrence theory was especially popular among politicians and others during the "tough on crime" era of the 1980s and 1990s and is still used in political campaigns today. During the 1980s and 1990s, voters, legislators, and policymakers across the United States rejected the idea of rehabilitating individuals who had committed crimes. Instead, they began advocating for tougher sentences, longer prison terms, and other harsh penalties (like mandatory minimum sentences), with deterrence as their justification. Programs like "Scared Straight" were designed and implemented to scare "delinquent" youth by confronting them with the harsh extremes of imprisonment. Other correctional programs, such as boot camps, were designed to be as mentally and physically unpleasant as possible.

Unfortunately, the record on such deterrence-oriented programs is quite clear: increasing the harshness of punishment is an ineffective and inefficient approach to deter crime (Apel & Nagin, 2011). In other words, it does not work. Specifically, the evidence shows that, on average, incarceration has either no effect or actually increases crime, casting significant doubt on specific deterrence (Nagin et al., 2009). Also, boot camps, Scared Straight, and other juvenile "awareness" programs have been shown to be ineffective at best and criminogenic (crime-generating) at worst (Petrosino et al., 2003).

Learn More: Does D.A.R.E. Deter Drug Use?

The popular anti-drug D.A.R.E. program of the 1980s and 1990s has been one of the most widely used programs aimed at deterring drug use among youth (figure 3.13). D.A.R.E. was a school-based program aimed at preventing drug use among elementary school-aged children through a curriculum that was taught by police officers. Rigorous evaluations of the program show that it was ineffective and sometimes actually increased drug use in some youth. The cost of this program was roughly $1.3 billion dollars a year (about $173 to $268 per student per year) to implement nationwide (once all related expenses, such as police officer training and services, materials and supplies, school resources, and so on were factored in).

Figure 3.13. *Fifth-grade students in South Carolina who graduated from the 10-week D.A.R.E. program in 2015.*

A newer version of this program, keepin' it REAL (kiR), emerged in the first decade of the 2000s and takes a broader approach to decision-making beyond just substance use. Some studies have shown potential benefits from this program, including deterring alcohol use and vaping (Hansen et al., 2023). How-

ever, more research will be needed to determine if the newer program can achieve long-term deterrence for youth.

If you have experience with D.A.R.E. or keepin' it REAL, reflect on what you think did or did not work.

Although some deterrence programs have failed, our understanding of deterrence has also produced some effective methods for reducing crime. Think of cameras, patrol cars, and other tools that make people think they are more likely to be caught speeding and get a ticket. As you have probably experienced, the presence of a camera or patrol car makes people slow down (at least until they are out of sight of the police car). Some research has shown that the certainty of apprehension has a stronger, larger, and more consistent impact on decreasing crime than the severity of punishment (Paternoster, 1987). With this in mind, cities will use police crackdowns and other strategies that increase the certainty of apprehension to reduce crime. Probation programs that rely on frequent drug testing and swift, certain, and fair sanctions for people who violate the conditions of their probation by using illicit drugs or alcohol, such as Hawaii's Opportunity Probation with Enforcement, have been shown to reduce criminal reoffending (Kleiman, 2009).

In general, research has shown that increasing the actual or perceived risk of apprehension or punishment has at least a short-term deterrent effect on crime. Research is less clear about the long-term effect of deterrence on crime.

Although it shares the same assumptions about human nature as deterrence theory, the rational choice perspective offers a broader framework for understanding criminal decision-making because it considers a wider array of influences than just criminal justice apprehension and punishment. This has been particularly useful in the development of practical solutions to address crime. Specifically, situational crime prevention techniques, such as the use of lighting and security cameras, have been used widely in the public and private sectors to increase the risk of apprehension. Studies of these tools consistently show that crime decreases when the appearance of a higher likelihood of getting caught increases.

Activity: Routine Activity Theory in Modern America

Figure 3.14. Have you ever seen a sign like this in an apartment complex, mall parking garage, or grocery parking lot? This is an example of putting routine activity theory to work to prevent crime.

Let's think about how routine activity theory might operate in our current society (figure 3.14). First, take a look around your own local community. Identify an area—a street, public space, neighborhood, parking garage, or somewhere else—where a motivated offender might be likely to commit a crime. In two to three sentences, explain why this area is conducive to crime according to routine activity theory. Take a photo of this space to share with your classmates (optional). Then, still using routine activity theory, discuss how we might be able to decrease the risk of crime occurring in that location. Do you think that routine activity theory helps prevent crime in modern America?

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 3.14. "[Cocoa Beach at Lori Wilson Park – Flickr – Rusty Clark (5)](#)" by [Rusty Clark](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

3.6 Conclusion

The two traditional and primary paradigms in the field of criminology, the Classical School and the Positivist School, have roots in 17th and 18th-century Europe, but they have continued to influence justice systems around the world and in the United States (figure 3.15). Some early theories in these schools of thought have been debunked, while others have been built upon and continue to be tested by modern criminologists. As we discuss throughout this book, it is important to always keep in mind the origin, context, and use of these theories. Wealthy, educated, well-connected, white men in power largely founded the field of criminology and were the ones who determined what was criminal, undesirable, and punishable. The next chapter will dive into the early biological and psychological theories of the positivist school of thought and how the field now uses and views such approaches.

Classical School of Criminology
Key theorists: Cesare Beccaria, Jeremy Bentham, Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson
Key concepts: rationality, choice, free will, deterrence
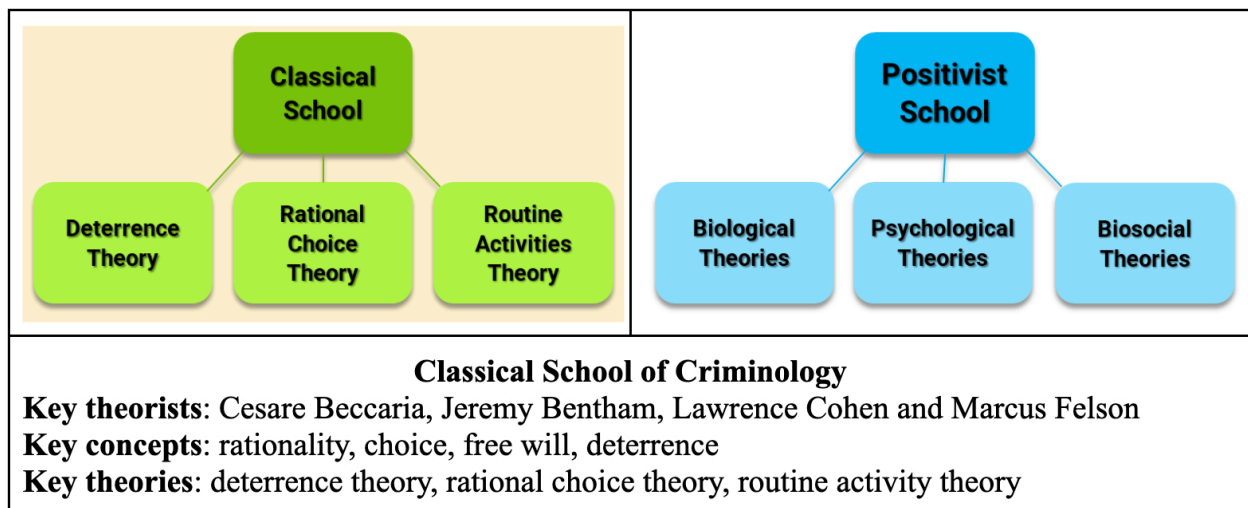**Key theories**: deterrence theory, rational choice theory, routine activity theory

Figure 3.15. These diagrams simplify the basic categorization of the theories and two traditional criminological paradigms described in this chapter. Additionally, the key theorists, concepts, and theories of the classical school are listed. Image description available. Image description.

Chapter Summary

The origins of criminology are found in two traditional schools of thought: the classical and positive schools. Theories in the classical school of criminology all assume that people are rational, self-interested, and carefully choose whether or not to commit criminal behavior. The classical school takes more

of a philosophical approach to preventing or responding to crime. The goal is deterrence, but when crime happens anyway, the response is punishment. Cesare Becarria said any response to criminal behavior must be certain, swift, and severe (proportionate to the crime) in order to have both a general and specific deterrent effect. Jeremy Bentham argued through his rational choice theory that the benefits of committing a crime could not outweigh the punishment because people weigh the pleasure and pain associated with their actions when making decisions and choose the option that maximizes pleasure.

Theories in the positive school of criminology assume that criminal behavior is due to forces beyond an individual's control, such as their biological or psychological makeup. Because this paradigm was influenced by the positivist philosophy, criminologists applied the scientific method, even if it was less rigorous than today's standards, to the study of crime.

Some of the early classical and positivist criminological theories were poorly constructed, rooted in prejudice, or not empirically tested. Consequently, not all of the early theories are considered valid anymore. However, others have been updated, tested, or reconfigured to apply to modern society and criminal behavior. Nonetheless, learning about the origins of the field is important to understanding how it has—or has not, in some cases—evolved and impacted our current criminal justice system.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. Look back at the activity from Chapter 1. Do you have a better understanding of these differences now? How might your answers differ after reading this chapter?
2. Do you think that people possess free will or that their behavior is due to forces beyond their control, such as their biology or environment? What implications does this have for the way society treats people who have broken criminal laws? How do your own perspectives and biases contribute to your understanding of criminal behavior and society's reaction?
3. What impact have Cesare Beccaria's ideas had on the criminal justice system in the United States? What about Jeremy Bentham's ideas?
4. Do you think the concept behind the panopticon is effective at deterring unwanted/bad behavior? Why or why not?
5. From the positivist school perspective, how might we be able to manipulate or change human behavior? What about *stopping* criminal offending? What ethical considerations are relevant?

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BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Figure 4.1. The TV shows CSI: Crime Scene Investigation and Criminal Minds have been popular crime dramas in the 21st century. Both highlight the role of science—namely forensics and psychology—in the crime investigation process, but how much do they really tell us about criminology?

Contents of This Chapter:

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4

4.1 Chapter Introduction

What do you think of when you see the terms biology and psychology in relation to crime? Do shows like *CSI* or *Criminal Minds* come to mind (figure 4.1)? Biology and forensics are important for criminal investigations and processing crime scenes, just like criminal profilers rely on psychological knowledge and training. However, to truly understand how these fields have contributed to our understanding of criminal behavior, we have to go back a lot further than 16 television seasons.

As philosophers and prominent thinkers began utilizing scientific study and considering factors beyond choice in behavior, biological and psychological theories of crime emerged. Early positivist criminologists looked at individual factors, including personality traits, genetics, disorders, and psychological development, to understand offending behavior. In full disclosure, it is critical to note that many of the theorists and theories discussed in this section have since been falsified or otherwise discredited. Once these theories were put to rigorous scientific examination, many did not hold up. However, they played an important role in the history of criminological thought, laying the foundation for later developments in the understanding of and response to crime.

In this chapter, we will explore how criminal behavior has been studied in the context of the brain, body, mind, and intelligence. We will first discuss some of the earliest attempts at uncovering biological and psychological reasons for crime and the impact of Charles Darwin's work on the field of criminology. We will also look at 19th and 20th century research on biology and psychology's influence on offending behavior, the social and political drivers behind this research and its biased outcomes, and the racist and problematic crime control policies that became popular as a result. Finally, we will explore the biological and psychological approaches that are still relevant, including a new look at the age-old debate of nature versus nurture.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Locate the foundation of biological and psychological understandings of crime in terms of the race, gender, and societal status of the theorists.
2. Critique the concepts of criminal behavior being predetermined by the brain, body, or mind.
3. Analyze the broader context of what led to early biological and psychological theories being embraced at their time in history.
4. Analyze the link between theory and policy, and the potentially harmful implications for people of color and marginalized populations.
5. Explain the modern interpretation of biological and psychological influences on crime.

6. Describe the arguments around nature versus nurture as they relate to criminal behavior.

Key Terms

- **Atavism:** Lombroso's outdated theory that individuals who committed crime were a less evolved and more primitive species
- **Born criminals:** Lombroso's term for people who chronically engaged in criminal offenses and had a collection of physical, psychological, and functional anomalies (see stigmata) and were unable to change their behavior because they were stuck in an earlier stage of evolution (see atavism)
- **Craniometry:** the outdated idea that brain and skull size could tell us about one's intelligence, behavior, and personality
- **Criminal personality theory:** Eysenck's theory used to explain the links between personality and crime
- **Criminaloid:** Lombroso's term for people who were not life-long criminals and whose criminality could be explained by a variety of factors, such as disease or environment
- **Eugenics:** prejudiced beliefs and practices that aim to control the human gene pool by controlling reproduction and/or eliminating populations deemed inferior
- **Intelligence quotient (IQ):** intelligence as captured by tests; IQ tests are philosophically and contextually controversial, particularly due to their use in supporting the eugenics movement.
- **Modeling:** behavior that results from people observing and imitating others.
- **Phrenology:** outdated theory claiming that different areas of the skull corresponded to different personality, behavioral, or mental functions and that bumps on the skull could tell you about the corresponding traits
- **Physiognomy:** the outdated study of individuals' facial features as a way of assessing character or criminality
- **Psychoanalysis:** Freud's therapeutic application of psychological theories of the importance of the unconscious mind on behavior
- **Scientific racism:** an ideology that "appropriates the methods and legitimacy of science to argue for the superiority of white Europeans and the inferiority of non-white people whose social and economic status have been historically marginalized"
- **Somatotyping:** Sheldon's theory that body type was hereditary and corresponded to differences in personality
- **Stigmata:** Lombroso's term for any features that deviated from the norm, such as physical, psychological, or functional anomalies, and could indicate one's atavism (see atavism)

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Figure 4.1. "Criminal Minds Logo" and "CSI Logo" are in the Public Domain.

4.2 Crime in the Brain

When positivism emerged, many scientists and philosophers studied biological features, structures, and how they influence behavior. In the earliest departure from the classical school assumptions, criminologists wanted to understand how individual traits might explain why some people committed crimes and others did not. The idea that genetics, biological makeup, and the brain determined one's criminality became a major assumption in the early and mid-1800s.

One biological explanation that found its footing at this time was the idea of *moral insanity*, which referred to habitual, uncontrollable criminality committed without motive or remorse. The three earliest proponents of this concept were Philippe Pinel in France, Benjamin Rush in the United States, and James Cowles Prichard in England (Rafter, 2004).

Pinel was the medical director of two asylums in France. He was interested in finding medical causes of moral insanity and was very careful about applying the scientific method as precisely as possible. In his 1801 book, *Treatise on Insanity*, he labeled five types of mental illness, including melancholy, dementia, idiocy, and madness with and without delirium.

Working during this same time and with similar interests was American physician Benjamin Rush. He is credited with developing a model of mental and moral functioning. In his 1812 book, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, Upon the Diseases of the Mind,* he described *moral faculty* as the ability to both distinguish between good and evil and to choose good. According to Rush, individuals suffer from either anomia, or total moral depravity, in which both the moral faculty and the conscience stopped functioning; or micronomia, a partial weakness of the moral faculty in which the individual remains aware of their wrongdoing.

James Cowles Prichard built on both of these earlier concepts in his 1835 publication, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind.* According to Prichard, the causes of criminal behavior and poor moral judgment are psychological and either inherited (biological) or from brain damage. In fact, he advocated for compassion and reform in the treatment of those with mental illness, including those who committed crimes.

This is a bold move away from the classical school of criminology because it indicates that the foundational concepts of deterrence will not actually prevent or stop crime. If some people are simply born or through trauma become unable to think rationally, they will not be able to weigh costs and benefits. Basically, Pinel, Rush, and Prichard believed and promoted that criminal behavior was not a decision, but was predetermined due to abnormal biology. They advocated for individualization of treatment, institutionalization, and other forms of care, not punishment.

Craniometry and Phrenology

Following the new ideas about mental capabilities came a movement to better understand the brain itself. Two scientific studies became popular: craniometry and phrenology. **Craniometry** is the idea that brain and skull size can tell us about one's intelligence, behavior, and personality. Craniometrists would mea-

sure the circumference of their subjects' skulls, or weigh the brains if they were using deceased subjects, and make determinations about who was "superior" or "inferior." According to most craniometrists, white or Western European individuals were superior to other ethnic groups. Not only were these claims baseless and rooted in racism, but the methodology that led to such conclusions was flawed as the researchers typically knew who the brains or skulls belonged to before taking the measurements.

Similarly, **phrenology** was a theory claiming that different areas of the skull corresponded to different personality, behavioral, or mental functions (figure 4.2). Supporters believed that bumps on the skull indicated the shape of the brain underneath and the corresponding traits. Although it has been debunked and is widely regarded as pseudoscience today, phrenology was a popular idea during the first half of the 19th century.
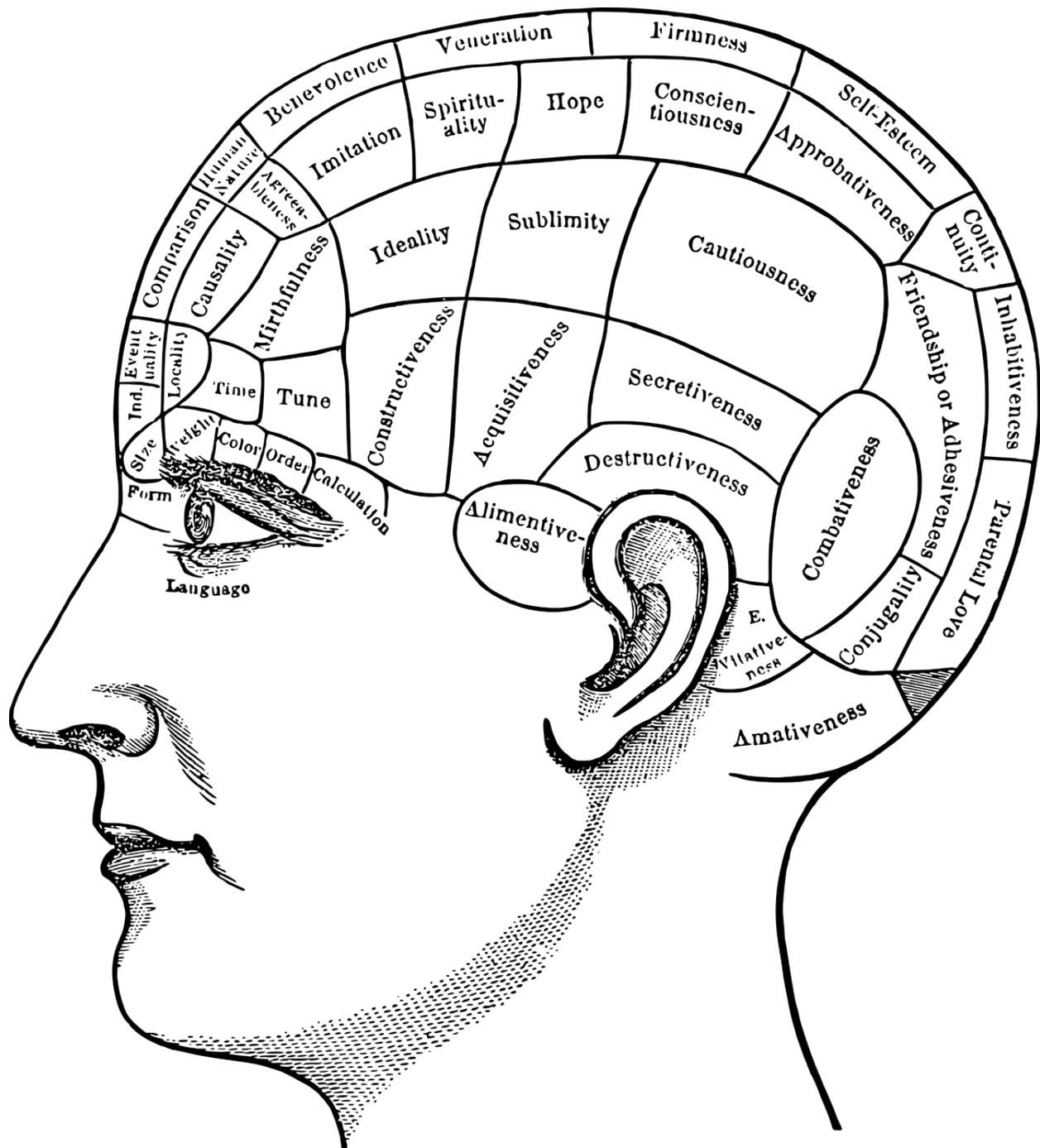
Figure 4.2. The image here shows a map of phrenology's brain region labels. How might belief in the accuracy of these labels affect how an individual deals with criminal behavior?

The founder of phrenology, German researcher Franz Joseph Gall, collected skulls in the early 19th century, interviewed a variety of people from different social classes and vocations, studied and made casts of their heads, and then attempted to correlate traits with specific areas of the skull. According to his

phrenology theory, criminal behavior was attributable to overdevelopment of the region of the skull responsible for "destructiveness."

The growth of this concept can be partially explained by a Vermont railroad worker named Phineas Gage (figure 4.3). During what is easily one of the worst days at work in history, an explosion drove an iron rod into Gage's cheek, through his brain, and out the top of his skull (Harlow, 1848). Miraculously, he lived to tell about it, but his personality and character changed. That made people, including Gall, want to find out more about the area of Gage's brain that was pierced and why it had an effect on his behavior.

Figure 4.3. *A photograph of railroad worker Phineas Gage with the rod that pierced his brain. Gage is an early example of society's tendency to make changes in policy or practice based on one extreme case. Can you think of other examples like this in modern society?*

Through his research, Gall popularized the idea that criminal behavior was due to a physical abnormality or defect in the brain, not free will or anything that could be controlled. Furthermore, according to phrenology, these defects were not permanent, but instead were possible to address through treatment or self-regulation. For that reason, those believing in phrenology advocated for rehabilitation rather than punishment or deterrence. In fact, they believed brutal punishments could even make defects worse and weaken the "good" parts of the brain, like those responsible for kindness.

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Figure 4.2. "Physiognomy Phrenology Head" by Gordon Johnson is licensed under the Pixabay License.

Figure 4.3. "Photograph of railroad worker Phineas Gage with the railroad spike that pierced his brain" from the collection of Jack and Beverly Wilgus, and now in the Warren Anatomical Museum, Harvard Medical School, is in the Public Domain.

4.3 Crime in the Body

In the mid 1800s, the study of individuals' facial features, known as **physiognomy**, became another popular way of assessing character or criminality. Unsurprisingly, and similar to craniometry and phrenology, distinctions in features among different racial and ethnic groups were deemed indicative of superiority and inferiority. The racist idea that white people were the superior race drove early attempts to find physical and biological differences that could support such claims.

In 1859, English naturalist Charles Darwin published his major work *On the Origin of Species,* in which he laid out his theory of evolution. He argued that all animals are descendants of a common ancestor and the diversity of species is the result of evolution, which occurred through a process of natural selection or "survival of the fittest." In a later work, *The Descent of Man* (1871), among his arguments about the origins of humankind, Darwin said that virtue and vice tended to run in families. In other words, he said that moral sense was something that was likely inherited (Darwin, 1871).

Around this same time, the notion of "degeneracy," or the idea of backward evolution ("devolution"), became popular and was used to explain not only criminality but also poverty and disability, including mental illness and physical and intellectual disabilities. This is where the term "degenerate" comes from and it continues to mean immoral and corrupt. In this argument, people with any physical, mental, or intellectual ailments and those who committed crimes were undesirable, unwelcome, and making humankind regress. Although Darwin's work on evolution and natural selection was not specifically aimed at understanding criminality, it helped set the stage for some of the earliest and most prominent positivist theories of crime.

Learn More: Degeneracy in the Family Tree

The concept of degeneracy was promoted by several white, male, European psychiatrists and physicians who worked in asylums and prisons. In America, this concept caught on quickly with the work of Dugdale and Goddard. Richard Dugdale came out with his 1877 study of the "Jukes" family. Dugdale documented the various forms of degeneracy that supposedly proliferated across several generations of a single New York family. On the basis of his "Jukes" report, Dugdale argued for the forced sterilization of women he decided should not be allowed to have children. He also believed that degeneracy could be altered through the environment, so he promoted the notions of public welfare and education of people in lower socioeconomic classes.

Similarly, Deborah Kallikak (figure 4.4) came to fame in 1912 when American psychologist Henry Goddard (1912) made her and generations of her family an example for his argument in favor of controlled human reproduction. He believed anyone with undesirable characteristics should not be allowed to reproduce. Goddard claimed Deborah's family and, in fact, generations of Kallikaks had produced people who had low incomes, engaged in criminal acts, were mentally ill, and had intellectual disabilities; in other words, criminality and "inferiority" could be passed down just as eye color or hair color. He argued

that, had the women in this family been stopped from having children, society could have been saved money and protected from harm.

In his book, Goddard claimed to have traced the Kallikak family back generations to determine the exact point in which the gene pool was sullied. The patriarch of this family tree, Martin Kallikak, had an affair with a barmaid. According to Goddard, the children produced with his wife were "good," and the children produced with the barmaid were "bad," a condition that lasted for generations (figure 4.5).

DEBORAH AT THE SEWING MACHINE.

Figure 4.4. This photo shows Deborah Kallikak at the New Jersey Home for the Education and Care of Feebleminded Children. Much like the "ugly laws" we discussed in Chapter 1, using dehumanizing labels can allow people to justify reprehensible behavior.

Goddard ran an institution for "feebleminded" children. Feebleminded, an outdated term that is now recognized as offensive, was used to describe those with intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental illness. It was there he supposedly studied Deborah Kallikak, the great-great-great granddaughter of Martin and the barmaid. He allegedly traced the family tree to find that the descendants of Martin and his wife were intelligent, morally upstanding, successful members of the community. In contrast, Goddard claimed that those who descended from the tryst with the barmaid were morally repugnant criminals or, at best, a drain on society. His book was a huge success and was used worldwide to justify the forced sterilization or murder of those determined to be undesirable. His legacy is deeply intertwined with Nazi genocide and the American eugenics movement, which we'll discuss later in this chapter.
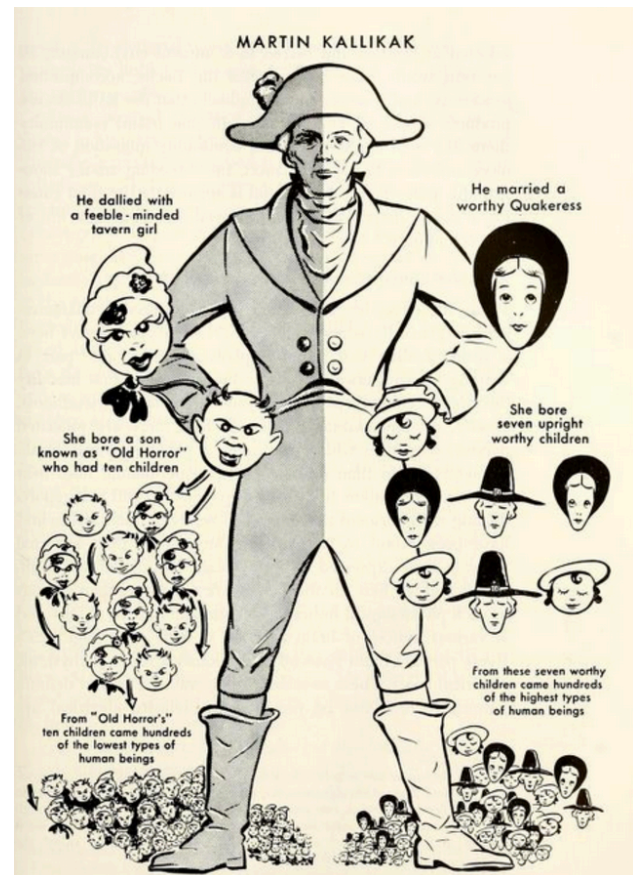

Figure 4.5. This caricature of the Kallikak Family tree as described by Goddard uses cruel language and irrational claims to justify forced sterilization of people he did not believe should be allowed to have children. His legacy is a great example of how horrible claims (like that of the superpredator in Chapter 2) can cause great harm.

Lombroso and Born Criminals

In the late 1800s, Cesare Lombroso's work was taking Europe by storm. He is most closely associated with the origins of the positive school of criminology and is considered one of the earliest theorists to use the scientific method to study crime (Rafter, 2009). Unfortunately, the work he produced and the harm he caused with both his research practices and conclusions far overshadow any legitimate contributions he made to science.

Lombroso was a doctor employed by the Italian military, and he worked in asylum and prison institutions (Rafter, 2006). There, he conducted autopsies on people convicted of crimes. He documented and compared the physical characteristics of criminals and noncriminals by comparing the bodies of people who had been convicted of crimes to those in the Italian military. In his book *The Criminal Man*, Lombroso (1876) argued that criminals were distinct from noncriminals due to pathology, or abnormal physical and psychological characteristics.

Influenced by Darwin and the earlier proponents of "degeneracy," Lombroso theorized that criminals suffered from a pathology known as **atavism**. According to Lombroso, an atavist was someone who was less evolved than the rest of society, and people who commit crimes were the most primitive among us. He described the most atavistic humans as sharing physical features, such as bulky jaw bones, small heads, prominent brows, darker skin, or larger ears. Essentially, he viewed any features that deviated from what

he deemed the norm as stigmata that could indicate one's atavism. In later years, Lombroso expanded this to include characteristics such as having tattoos, lacking remorse, or having a family history of epilepsy. In other words, Lombroso defined **stigmata** as physical, psychological, and functional anomalies (figure 4.6.; Ferrero, 1911; Mazzarello, 2011).

Lombroso believed that people who chronically engaged in criminal offending and had a collection of these stigmata were stuck in an earlier stage of evolution and were unable to change or stop offending. He referred to these individuals as **born criminals** and advocated for their incapacitation so they could not commit crimes or reproduce. In extreme cases, Lombroso even argued in favor of their deaths, but for those who had less severe physical abnormalities, he believed there was a chance of rehabilitation. **Criminaloids**, as he referred to them, were similar to "normal" people, and their criminality could be explained by a variety of factors, such as disease or environment (DeLisi, 2012; Rafter, 2006). Lombroso updated his theory over the course of five editions of his book, which was published in Italy between 1876 and 1897 and was very influential across Europe and in the United States.

Fig. 1. — P. R., voleur napolitain.

Fig. 2. — B. S., faussaire piémontais.

Fig. 3. — BOGGIA, assassin.

Fig. 4. — CARTOUCHE.

Fig. 5. — G. MARINI, femme de brigand.

Fig. 6. — DESRUES, empoisonneur.

Impr. Camilla et Bertolero.

TYPES DE CRIMINELS.

Lombroso's work has been widely criticized for several reasons. First, some of the physical characteristics that were said to distinguish born criminals from noncriminals could be explained by environment (e.g., poor nutrition) rather than heredity. Second, many of the physical characteristics Lombroso identified as physical stigmata were characteristics common in marginalized racial or ethnic groups. Third, subsequent research refuted many aspects of Lombroso's theory. Nonetheless, his work became foundational to the positivist approach to criminology.

Sheldon and Somatotyping

Adding to the discussion of bodies and crime, American psychologist William Herbert Sheldon believed someone's personality—and, therefore, criminality—could be identified by their body type. This theory is called **somatotyping,** and Sheldon made it somewhat popular in the 1940s and 1950s. He thought that body types and their corresponding characteristics were genetic and related to the way tissue layers developed. Based on the focused development of one's *endoderm* (the first layer of tissue, which includes the internal organs), *mesoderm* (the middle layer of tissue, which includes muscles and bones), and *ectoderm* (the outer layer of tissue, which includes the skin and nervous system sensors), Sheldon (1954) believed one of the following three body types would result (figure 4.7):

- The ectomorph body build (thin, lean, delicate) was associated with an intellectual, introverted personality. He thought these people would be neurotic, artistic, and shy.
- The mesomorph body build (compact, athletic, muscular) was associated with an aggressive, extroverted personality. He thought these people would be competitive, risk-taking, and adventurous.
- The endomorph body build (soft, round, overweight/obese) was associated with a sociable, easygoing personality. He thought these people would be funny, lazy, and affectionate.

According to Sheldon, mesomorphs had the highest likelihood of being criminals. To test his theory, he assessed thousands of photos of nude male college students and sorted them into categories based on 17 different body measurements (Sheldon et al., 1940). He created a scoring system that would produce a three-number scale to indicate the amount of endomorphy, mesomorphy, and ectomorphy that was present in a person. According to Sheldon, a "bad" body was proof of a bad personality, and society should prevent bad bodies from producing more bad bodies.
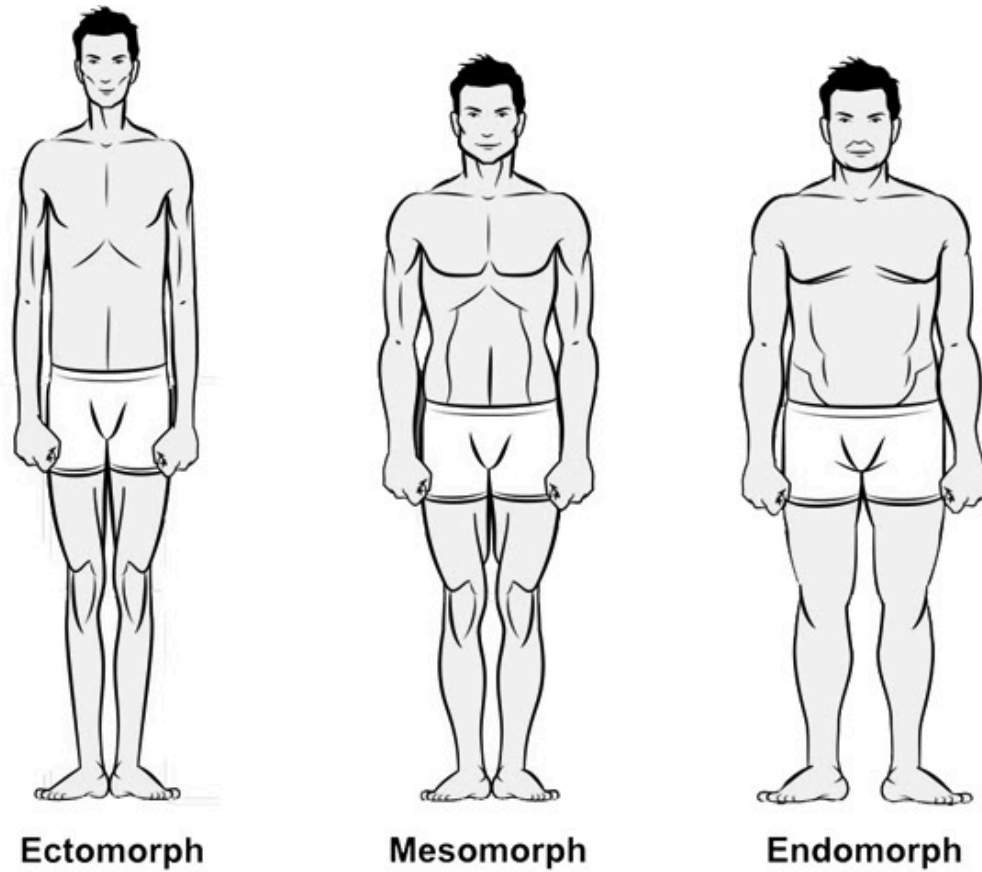
Figure 4.7. *Comparison of body types identified by Sheldon.*

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Figure 4.6. "Plate 6 of Cesar Lombroso's L'Homme Criminel" is in the Public Domain, courtesy of the Wellcome Collection.

Figure 4.7. "Bodytypes" by Granito diaz is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

4.4 Crime in the Mind

Psychologists have contributed to the field of criminology by trying to figure out how personality traits, patterns in thinking, the subconscious mind, and mental illnesses or disorders may contribute to criminal behavior. Some psychological theories imply that humans lack agency, meaning that our behavior is out of our own control to a degree, while others point to predispositions toward certain behaviors that may lead to criminality. As you will see in later chapters, concepts and research from the field of psychology have influenced and been integrated into many theories of criminal offending.

It is difficult to talk about criminality or "abnormality" in the field of psychology without first mentioning Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. He developed psychodynamic theories that use **psychoanalysis** to explain human behavior. Psychodynamic theories are formed around the following basic assumptions:

- Unconscious motives drive our feelings and behavior.
- Our feelings and behaviors as adults are rooted in our childhood experiences.
- We have no control over our feelings and behaviors since they are all caused by our unconscious, which we cannot see.
- Personality is made up of the id (primitive and instinctive), ego (decision-making), and superego (learned values and morals).

Psychoanalysis examines one's childhood and tries to better understand their unconscious mind and motivations. According to Freud, the unconscious is where unpleasant memories and explosive emotions accumulate as repressed memories and emotions. In other words, what happened to us in the past can guide our behavior, even if we are not aware of the connection. In order to help someone change their behavior, Freud thought it was essential to access and understand their repressed memories via psychoanalysis. According to Freud, individuals are not aware of what determines their behavior. This is in contrast with the concept of "free will" that was part of the classical criminological theories discussed in Chapter 3.

German-British psychologist Hans Eysenck (1967) combined the study of behavior, biology, and personality to explain criminality, and formed the **criminal personality theory.** He suggested that certain inherited characteristics make crime more likely, but he did not believe that criminality itself is an inherited trait. Eysenck argued that behavior and personality traits can be either learned (conditioned) or genetic (inherited). He believed that psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism are important personality traits in relation to crime and how we control it. Neurotic extroverts are people who require high stimulation levels from their environments and whose sympathetic nervous systems respond quickly to stimuli. Psychotic extroverts are described as cruel, insensitive to others, and unemotional. Most of Eysenck's work has since been rejected, but that did not stop his influence on the work of others.

Bandura and Criminal Modeling

The idea that criminal behavior can be learned is important to many theories, many of which will be discussed in Chapter 6 since they heavily emphasize social interactions in the learning process. However, at the core of all learning theories are the mechanisms by which we learn. We will start here with one of the first theorists to see a direct link between observation and aggressive behavior.

Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura studied learning and centered his research on the learning of aggression. His famous Bobo doll study (figure 4.8) in the 1960s involved children first watching an adult attack a plastic clown punching bag named "Bobo." The children were then placed in a room with the Bobo doll where they copied the behavior, even using the same tools and words in their attacks. This study illustrated that people are capable of learning by simply watching others and observing the results of their actions. Bandura called this observational learning, or **modeling**. Later variations on his Bobo doll study led him to clarify the modeling process as involving attention to the model (e.g., the person modeling the behavior), retention of what was learned, motivation to imitate what was learned, and reproduction of the learned behavior (Bandura, 1977). This is just one mode of learning. We will discuss others and how they relate to crime theory in Chapter 6 alongside the theories they heavily influenced.

Figure 4.8. Albert Bandura's Bobo doll experiment famously illustrates how children can learn through modeling behavior.

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Figure 4.8. "Bobo Doll Deneyi" by Okhanm is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

4.5 Crime and Intelligence

The act of trying to measure intelligence has a disturbing history in the United States and beyond. One of the first official measures of intelligence, the **IQ** or **intelligence quotient** test, originated with French psychologists Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon in 1905. They were tasked with ascertaining whether there was a link between mental capacity and behavioral issues in school children. IQ was determined by dividing actual age by mental age and then multiplying by 100. A score of 100, give or take 15 points, was considered average. If someone scored higher than 115, they were considered to be very smart. If someone fell below 85, they were considered unintelligent and were eventually labeled as problematic and having a disability. When mapped out (figure 4.9), IQ scores create a shape known as a bell curve.
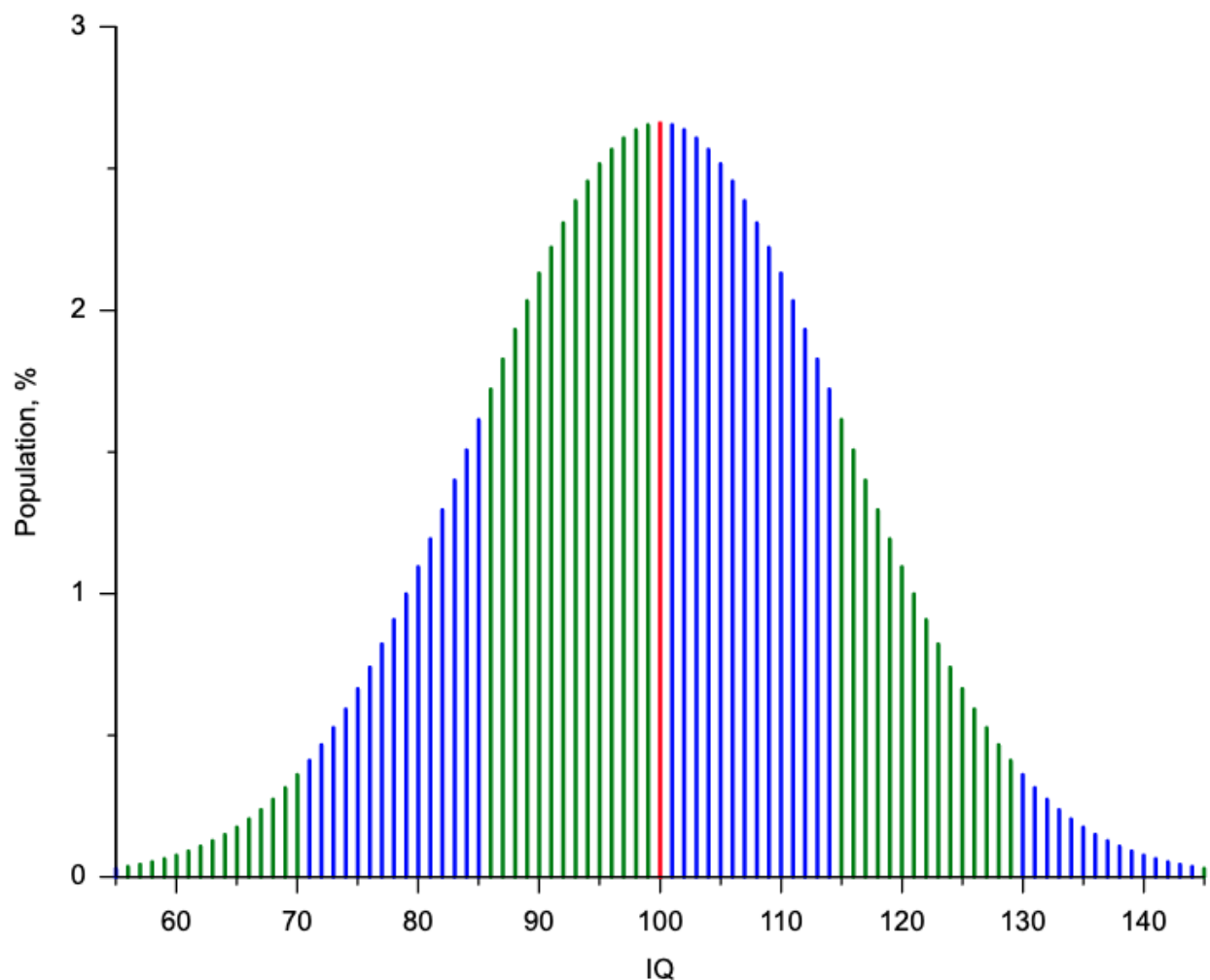

Figure 4.9. Most of the population falls in the middle part of the curve, with IQ scores between 85 and 115. How useful do you think an IQ score is in modern society?

Although the initial intentions were good, and Binet believed that IQ could be increased through training and education, the IQ test took a different shape in the United States. Henry Goddard, whom we discussed earlier in [Learn More: Degeneracy in the Family Tree](#), began his notorious work with the French Binet-Simon IQ test, translated it, and modified it for his own purposes in the United States in the early 1900s. Goddard advocated for isolating, incarcerating, institutionalizing, or sterilizing people he deemed to be "mental defectives." He used his updated IQ test to support these beliefs. In 1912, he published the study titled *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, which was discussed earlier. Goddard, having spent time with youth who had committed offenses, claimed that at least half of all criminals are mentally defective. In this manner, he created the supposed link between intelligence and crime. Goddard later admitted that his study was deeply flawed, but this was after the results had already influenced future research and even policy.

In 1929, American psychiatrist M.H. Erickson conducted a large study and discovered a link between IQ and crime, but his research showed that some crimes require a *greater* IQ than others. However, Erickson believed that the link between IQ and crime was indirect and that intelligence did not appear to be a causal factor in producing criminals in society. Further challenging the relationship between IQ and criminality, sociologist Edwin Sutherland published a study in 1931 that contradicted the possible connection between IQ and crime. Sutherland compared the IQ scores of adults who had committed offenses to those of army draftees and found that the two groups had nearly identical IQ levels. The army draftees represented the general population, which is something the previous studies had failed to measure and compare. Sutherland argued that if the average IQ of the general population was not known, then it would be impossible to claim it has any effect on human behavior. He concluded that intelligence was *not* a generally important cause of delinquency (Sutherland, 1931). In spite of Sutherland's research, the debate over the link between IQ and crime continued for the next 40 years.

IQ, Criminality, and Racism

In 1961, psychologist Arthur Jensen divided intelligence into two different categories: associative learning and conceptual learning. Associative learning is the simple retention of input or the memorization of facts and skills, such as when you study for an exam and memorize facts you know will be on the test. Conceptual learning is the ability to manipulate and transform information input or problem-solving, such as when that same test has open-ended questions that ask you to think critically about a challenge and offer up possible solutions.

Jensen tested children of color in the 1960s and reached two conclusions. First, Jensen concluded that 80% of intelligence is genetic, and the remaining 20% is due to environmental factors. This claim spoke directly to the "nature versus nurture" debate, with Jensen arguing that nature (genetics) has more influence on intelligence than nurture (the environment in which a child is raised). Second, he claimed that while all races were equal in terms of associative learning, conceptual learning occurred with a significantly higher frequency in white children than in Black children. This research led Jensen to incorrectly conclude that white people were inherently more able to engage in conceptual learning than Black people. Similarly, Nobel laureate and physicist William Shockley (1967) stated that the difference between

Black American and European American IQ scores was due to genetics. He claimed that genetics might also explain the variable poverty and crime rates in society.

In 1994, psychologist Richard Hernstein and political scientist Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, which soon became controversial. In the book, they conclude that low IQ is a risk factor for criminal behavior. In particular, they claim the more experience white men have in the criminal justice system, the lower their IQ. Hernstein and Murray suggest that low intelligence can lead to criminal behavior by being associated with the following experiences:

- lack of success in school and the job market
- lack of foresight and a desire for immediate gains
- unconventionality and insensitivity to pain or social rejection
- failure to understand the moral reasons of law conformity

They argue that it is cognitive disability rather than economic or social disadvantage that creates crime. Because of this, they state that policy should focus on cognitive problems instead of social problems, such as unemployment and poverty.

Hernstein and Murray's study received criticism because of their outdated views of intelligence and their claim that it is difficult to increase IQ scores, despite there being evidence to the contrary. They also explained high crime among Black Americans as being due to inherited intellectual inferiority. What Hernstein and Murry failed to consider were alternative criminogenic risk factors, such as the impact of systemic racism on school quality. By portraying people who committed offenses as criminals because of cognitive disadvantage, their research justified repressive crime policies that focused primarily on the individual and not the environment.

It is important to note the research and theories making claims about intelligence and race have been disproven and determined to be both racist and misleading (figure 4.10). These claims are part of the **scientific racism** ideology that "appropriates the methods and legitimacy of science to argue for the superiority of white Europeans and the inferiority of non-white people whose social and economic status have been historically marginalized" (National Human Genome Research Institute, 2022). Nonetheless, we look at IQ testing in a book on criminology because these factors were used in deciding whether or not someone was a criminal. This label not only led to people being incarcerated or institutionalized, but it also led to their murder. For example, in Virginia it was legal to forcibly sterilize someone with a low IQ score, and in Nazi Germany, it was legal to murder children with scores below average. All of this horror was part of the eugenics movement (discussed in the next section) in which the criminal justice system and criminologists played a key role.

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> *https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=523#oembed-1*

https://youtu.be/W2bKaw2AJxs

Figure 4.10. If you want to learn more about the history of IQ tests, watch this brief video, "The Dark History of IQ Tests" [Streaming Video]. Transcript.

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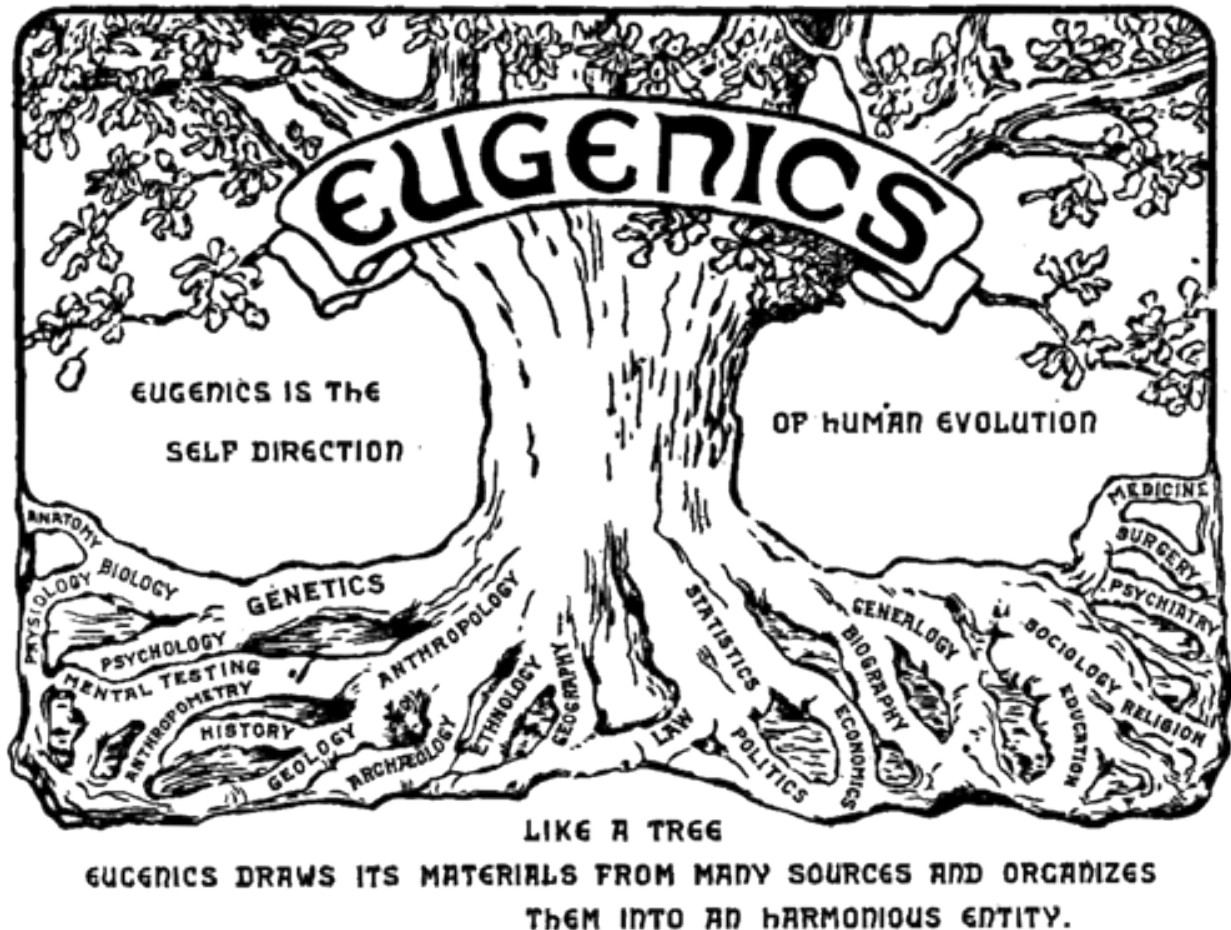
4.6 Eugenics as Crime Policy

Figure 4.11. This image was the logo for the second International Eugenics Congress, which was held in New York in 1921. The eugenics movement sought to determine the "superior" human traits and control reproduction among those who didn't make the cut. Do you see any similar ideas or trends in the modern United States?

One result of early investigations into the role of the brain, body, and mind in criminality was the idea that "inferior" people could be eradicated from society. Prejudice combined with poor and/or deeply biased methodologies produced research results that upheld white supremacy and patriarchal ideals. English anthropologist Francis Galton argued that "criminal nature tends to be inherited," citing Richard Dugdale's study of the Jukes family as justification. Galton coined the term **eugenics**, which refers to manipulation of the human gene pool by controlling reproduction and/or eliminating populations deemed inferior. By preventing individuals of "degenerate" stock from procreating, he believed that eugenics could reduce crime and other social ills in later generations (figure 4.11).

The eugenics movement was largely fueled by the idea that we could identify the inferior people through IQ testing. For a more modern comparison, think of standardized tests. Initially, these may

appear fair since they are standard and given to everyone. However, there are a variety of factors that these tests fail to account for. For example, learning disabilities that have nothing to do with innate intelligence or critical thinking capabilities, but that impact individuals' ability to read or respond quickly, can affect test scores. General anxiety or anxiety related to testing may also impact test scores. Furthermore, language abilities can impact test scores. If you are an American who speaks English, you probably wouldn't score as high on an exam given in French or on an exam that you took in Ireland, where cultural differences have filtered into the English spoken there. Any time we see differences between populations in society, we have to look at the entire picture to understand those differences because they do not occur independently of culture, social structure, and legal systems (especially those meant to oppress certain groups).

The idea of eugenics grew popular throughout American society with alarming ease. It led to the passage of laws permitting forced institutionalization and sterilization of low-income individuals, particularly women. This practice was upheld in the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Buck v. Bell* (1927), which allowed the forced sterilization of Carrie Buck. Buck, a woman with an intellectual disability, was held in a state institution for the "feeble-minded." Her case followed Goddard's work on Deborah Kallikak that was described earlier in this chapter. Citing the rationale for the decision, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes famously stated "three generations of imbeciles are enough." Many people at the time believed the claims of Goddard, Dugdale, Lombroso, and others about the dangerous potential of undesirable genetics and had no qualms about infringing on reproductive rights. Some of these ideas were even read by Adolf Hitler and used as justification for many of the atrocities committed by the Nazi Party.

Learn More: Is Crime Really Abnormal?

Crime has long been considered the abnormal choice or the result of abnormal individual characteristics. By default, the study of offending behavior and violence typically asks, "Why do these people commit crime?" rather than "Why do these people *not* commit crime?" But is criminal behavior really abnormal? Is it really only committed by people who are somehow significantly different from the rest of us?

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) looked at what he determined to be our most vital needs in connection with what motivates our behavior. For example, consider how hard it is to concentrate on anything else when you are really hungry. He introduced the hierarchy of needs table in 1943 (figure 4.12).

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, he argued that humans are motivated by goal accomplishment and that our needs are mentally prioritized in order of importance, from basic needs to self-fulfillment needs. However, the hierarchy is not a strict sequence, meaning our focus does not move directly from food to security to friends. Rather, people focus on generally satisfying their lower-priority needs before they focus on reaching for the higher-priority needs.

That being said, physiological needs must be satisfied first. Food, clothing, shelter, and sleep are basic needs of survival. For example, people experiencing homelessness have unmet basic needs for shelter and often food and water, which affects their motivations and behaviors.

Figure 4.12. Consider the order of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. How is your behavior affected when your basic needs are not met? Image description available. *Image description.*

Safety needs are usually tied to your environment, such as home, school, or wherever you are currently. If students are experiencing problems at home, such as arguments, addiction, or abuse, or if they live in a neighborhood that is dangerous or noisy to the point that it disrupts their physiological need for rest, they will likely have a hard time concentrating on their education.

Love and a sense of belonging apply to family and friend relationships. Research has shown that we need face-to-face interactions to accomplish a sense of love and belonging. One of the biggest issues faced by individuals in prison, for example, is not violence but rather the loss of freedom and connection to family. Self-esteem centers on respect for others, confidence, respect from others, and accomplishment. Self-esteem can be found in our need to succeed, but it also can be fostered by being appreciated or acknowledged by others.

The needs that have been discussed so far can be viewed as deprivation needs. Basically, if these needs are not met, then the individual will not be motivated to focus on the highest needs in the pyramid. Self-actualization is a need that is tied to the ability of an individual to realize their own potential through self-improvement. Maslow suggests that very few individuals ever attain this level.

Consider how the hierarchy of needs applies to the study of crime. We can view any undesirable behavior, including crime, as a response to an unmet need. In other words, someone has found an alternative route to meet a need that is not being met in a prosocial manner. For example, if someone does not have consistent and reliable access to food, they may steal some. Food is a basic need that must be met; thus, crime becomes part of survival. Certain approaches to crime control, such as the eugenics movement, fail to acknowledge factors like physiological needs that might impact criminal behavior.
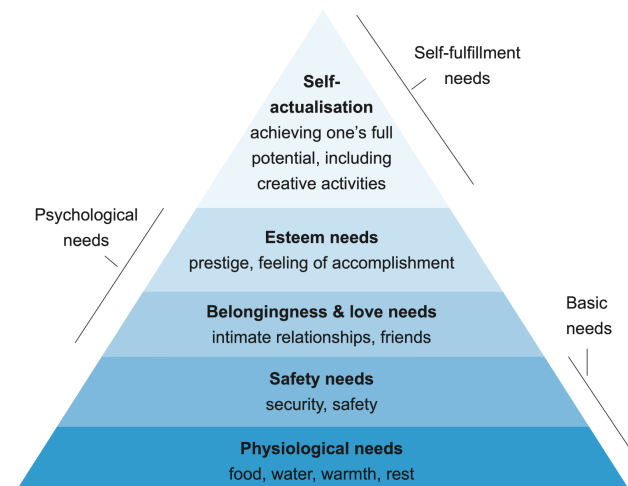
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4.7 Modern Application: How Is It Relevant Now?

So many of the early biological and psychological approaches to criminal behavior were flawed and grounded in societal norms and biases. You may be thinking, what can these fields contribute to our knowledge of crime? While some consider individualistic approaches to criminology to be useless, others have adopted new perspectives in studying the influence of biology and psychology on crime.

Important studies in this field have evolved over time, starting with the family studies in the early 1900s. Most of these, similar to the work Goddard did, were purely observational in nature and were not rigorous. Twin studies and adoption studies became popular throughout the 1900s and allowed us to better analyze the nature versus nurture debate (figure 4.13). For example, Sarnoff Mednick (1984) studied the criminal behavior of adopted boys in Denmark over a couple of decades. He found that criminality of the biological parents had a greater predictive effect on the future offending of biological children than the criminality of adopted parents. However, the strongest predictor of criminality was when both biological and adoptive parents had been convicted of crimes.

Mednick concluded that biological and environmental factors contribute to criminality and that the nature versus nurture dichotomy was actually incorrect. Instead, he argued that the *interaction* between biology and environment is key in understanding criminal offending. This nature *via* nurture approach, often referred to as a biosocial approach, is the common perspective among modern researchers and theorists today. Biological or psychological traits may be seen as contributing to behavior or putting someone at a predisposition for certain behaviors (including crime), but most modern theorists do not see biological or psychological traits alone as *causing* crime.

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> *https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=525#oembed-1*

https://youtu.be/JMlJcOSRX-8

Figure 4.13. Watch this brief video on nature versus nurture [Streaming Video], which discusses twin studies and how your genes can help shape who you are. Transcript.

Research on the role of the body, brain, and mind in criminality are expansive, including studies on genetics, hormones, neurotransmitters, chromosomal or sex-linked abnormalities, nutrition and substance use, stress, psychological disorders, traumatic brain injuries (TBIs), and the nervous system. It would be impossible to explore all of this research here, but we will look at a few topics to get an idea of how biological and psychological aspects can become risk factors for crime.

Mental Illness and Crime

People with mental illness are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. To the extent that mental illness leads to behaviors that violate the norms and standards of a particular society, people with mental illness would be expected to have a higher rate of contact with the criminal justice system. Some mental illnesses include criminal behavior as part of their diagnostic criteria, including antisocial personality disorder, psychopathy, psychosis, and substance abuse disorders.

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is the personality disorder most strongly linked with violence. It is defined by a continual remorseless disregard for the rights of others, including repeated criminal acts, impulsiveness, irresponsibility, deceptiveness, and aggression. To be diagnosed with this disorder, the person must have exhibited aspects of antisocial behavior prior to age 15, such as aggression toward people or animals, theft, or property destruction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Psychopathy, on the other hand, is characterized by two main factors: 1) interpersonal and emotional traits, such as manipulation, grandiosity, and impaired empathy, and 2) antisocial behavior and lifestyle traits, such as impulsive behavior, sensation seeking, and a parasitic lifestyle. Research generally indicates that psychopathy involves brain-based differences that impact emotional and cognitive functioning. It is associated with high reoffending rates and treatment resistance. If you want to learn more about a researcher with a "psychopathic brain," read or listen to ["The Scientist and the Psychopath" \[Website\]](#).

Psychosis is a condition that impacts how your brain processes information and is present in some severe mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, and mood disorders, such as depression and bipolar disorder. The vast majority of individuals experiencing breaks from the shared reality of the general population do not engage in aggressive or criminal behavior. In fact, people with mental disorders are more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators (Elbogen & Johnson, 2009). Psychosis can generate specific hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things that do not exist, and delusions, during which a person experiences strongly held but false beliefs that may include paranoid ideas about being persecuted (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In rare cases, the nature of the hallucination or delusion can lead to inappropriate self-defense or other criminal behavior that would be understandable in light of the beliefs held during a psychotic break. Although some psychosis can lead to violent behavior, far more often, people with active mental illnesses are charged with minor offenses that begin a long cycle of involvement with criminal justice systems.

Finally, substance abuse disorders are characterized by difficulties reducing substance use, thus causing problems in one's personal and work life (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Aside from the criminal behavior inherent in prohibited substance use, the tripartite conceptual model (Goldstein, 1985) outlines three main ways that substance use is connected to violent criminal behavior:

- Systemic crime: Related to the drug trade, including selling drugs and the associated violence
- Economically compulsive crime: Results from people engaging in money-making crime to support their substance use
- Psychopharmacologically-driven crime: Occurs when the substance itself affects the brain and behavior, resulting in crime or violence

Today, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM–5*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is used in North America to diagnose mental disorders. The *DSM-5* describes mental disorders, their symptoms, and the criteria for diagnosing them. However, as most research that informs the *DSM-5* has involved predominantly white Americans, it is acknowledged that there is limited evidence of the cross-cultural validity of the *DSM-5*. Furthermore, connections between mental illness and crime are never direct lines, and may simply be another risk factor among many.

Biology and Crime

As behavior is highly complex, in almost all cases, a behavioral trait will be influenced by a large number of genes, not just two or three. Therefore, "a gene for crime," or for any complex behavior, cannot exist. However, some traits that predispose one to potentially criminal behavior (e.g., low self-control), might be passed down from parent to child. Additionally, the brain controls all behavior, and we are beginning to understand how imbalances in certain brain chemicals can affect health and behavior. For example, low levels of serotonin, a behavioral inhibitor that regulates the stress response in the brain, have been linked to impulsive-aggressive behavior. People with a head injury that causes damage to their frontal lobe often lose their social graces, self-control, and patience, and they may experience personality changes, develop anxiety or depression, demand instant gratification, or have poor planning skills (Lane et al., 2017). Child abuse commonly results in head injury, and even a mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) may result in lasting behavioral change.

A consistent finding in crime studies is a gender difference in offending behavior. Generally speaking, men commit more crime, especially violent crime, than women. There are many ways to assess this difference; some are specifically related to gender (sociological explanations) and others are related to sex and hormones (biological). For example, testosterone, a male sex hormone, has long been associated with impulsive and violent behavior. Newer research also finds that cortisol, the stress hormone, may be related to criminal offending as well (Armstrong et al., 2022). While some studies suggest that the level of hormones like testosterone is associated with criminal behavior regardless of gender (Dabbs & Hargrove, 1997), sociological understandings also point to society's expectations and socialization of boys and girls, factors we will explore more in later chapters.

Activity: Policy Case Study—Adam Lanza

Figure 4.14. Adam Lanza was an adult when he murdered multiple children and adults in Connecticut, but could this have been prevented in his childhood?

In 2012, 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed his mother before going to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and killing 20 first-graders and six adults (figure 4.14). He died by suicide shortly after the tragedy.

As a child, Adam struggled with development in language, communication, and sensory processing. He also exhibited repetitive behaviors and motor difficulties. Reports show discussion of autism spectrum disorder (sensory processing disorder), anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Classmates described him as socially awkward and "fidgety," and he could not stand to be touched or near other kids in the classroom.

Throughout his childhood, he had bouts of bad mental health, but mental health professionals who worked with him did not indicate that he would be a threat to others. His parents divorced when he was 16, and about a year later, Adam quit talking to his father. His mental and physical health started to deteriorate again after he graduated from high school. At the time of the shooting, Adam was 6 feet (182.9 cm) tall and weighed 112 pounds (50.8 kg).

After the shooting, police learned that Adam had obsessions with mass murder, cannibalism, and taxidermy that had intensified when he joined obscure online communities. Before committing the mass shooting spree, his internet activity included checking the school's security measures, indicating that the crime was planned. His family had guns, and he had grown up going to the range with his father so he knew how to use the weapons.

Questions to contemplate and discuss:

- In what ways might our understanding of both biological and psychological factors in offending behavior help us have a more comprehensive picture of Adam Lanza's actions?
- What ethical considerations come into play when analyzing biological and psychological factors in a case like this one?
- How might our treatment of cases such as this one impact stigma around mental health and/or disability?
- How should we balance the need for public safety with the rights and treatment of people who may exhibit concerning behaviors?
- What preventative measures or actions could be taken to address the interplay of biological and psychological factors in potential future cases?

(Koughan, 2013; Breslow, 2013).

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4.8 Conclusion

The evolution of research in psychology and biology and how criminal behavior has been attributed to individual characteristics highlight some of the ethical concerns associated with this approach to criminology. Our bodies, brains, and minds are all important in understanding behavior, but they are just pieces of the puzzle. We are social creatures living in social worlds with constructed systems and institutions. It is important to consider context and explore all factors related to crime, especially when attempting to prevent or treat crime through policy. The eugenics movement illustrates the danger with placing too much emphasis on individual characteristics, especially when the supporting research is prejudiced.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored some of the origins of research and theories in the positivist school of criminology. Specifically, we looked at biological and psychological approaches to understanding crime that included research on the body, brain, and mind. Early research and theories were often fraught with methodological issues and sometimes driven by biased ideologies, but they were nonetheless important in establishing a move away from classical perspectives.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of policy concerns, especially in relation to the eugenics movement that became popular in the United States in the early 1900s as a crime control measure, and more modern approaches to understanding biology and psychology in criminal behavior. The biosocial approach, which acknowledges the interaction of biology and psychology with environment, is the standard for criminologists studying the impact of individual characteristics now.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. What evidence do twin and adoption studies provide regarding the heritability of criminal

behavior?

2. Take an IQ test [Website]. What does it say about your likelihood to commit crime according to the theories discussed in this chapter? Do you think intelligence has any influence on whether or not a person commits a crime? Explain.

3. Take a psychopath test [Website]. What does it say about your likelihood to commit crime according to the theories discussed in this chapter?

4. Which do you believe has more influence on someone's personality and behavior—nature or nurture?

5. How can Maslow's hierarchy of needs be used to help support policy and public safety in society?

6. Do you think it is ethical for criminologists to study the biological basis for criminal behavior? Why or why not? How might modern criminologists who study the biological basis of crime avoid contributing to harmful policies such as the eugenics movement?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- This four-part series, Mysteries of Mental Illness [Website], by PBS explores the science of mental illness and how it has developed over time.
- This NPR *Fresh Air* interview [Website] shares the research of Adrian Raine on brain scans of people who have committed murder. (2014).
- The National Center for State Courts [Website] provides information on mental-health courts.

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SOCIAL STRUCTURAL AND STRAIN THEORIES

Figure 5.1. *The field of sociology has been incredibly influential in the development of criminological theories. So many elements of our lives—family, culture, demographics, relationships, religion, education, politics, the legal system, and more—are part of the equation for many sociological approaches to understanding crime.*

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5

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This is where we will start to investigate the many sociological approaches to understanding crime (figure 5.1). A lot of criminological theories are nestled under a sociological umbrella, meaning that they apply a sociological lens to the study of crime and assess the influence of sociological concepts, such as poverty or power, on offending behavior. While these theories fit under the positivist paradigm, it is easier and more practical to make sense of them by learning about *categories* of theories. There are many ways to categorize theories, and there is often a lot of overlap between them. As we study each theory, think about the similarities and differences between the theories and categories.

The remaining chapters, particularly this chapter and Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, will look at theories that take a sociological approach to understanding crime to some extent. Compared to the classical, neoclassical, biological, and psychological approaches to criminal behavior, these theories will prioritize societal factors in criminal offending. Specifically, we will look at social structural and strain theories, social learning theories, subcultural theories, social control theory, and social interactionist theories. Chapter 8 will explore more critical perspectives.

In this chapter, we will discuss the concept of anomie and societal development to set the stage for strain theories. We will also discuss the establishment of The Chicago School and the theoretical thinking that came out of it. Finally, we will assess how these theories have impacted criminology as a field and how they are still relevant.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Locate the foundation of social structural and strain theories in terms of the race, gender, and societal status of the theorists.
2. Explain the creation of seminal (classic) sociological understandings of crime.
3. Evaluate how social structure is important in understanding behavior.
4. Understand the social and political context in which classic sociological theories developed.
5. Analyze the influence of society on criminal outcomes.
6. Recognize the influence of sociological theories on policy.

Key Terms

- **Anomie:** a state of normlessness in society, especially during societal transition
- **Broken windows theory:** a theory that claims the environment of a particular space signals its health to the public and that signs of dilapidation and decay attract more serious crime
- **Collective efficacy:** the ability of a community to mobilize their existing social networks toward common goals, especially against crime, in their communities
- **Concentric zone theory:** a theory that takes an ecological approach to understanding city structure and crime by sectioning a city like the circles on a dart board and finding that the zone in transition, which exists between the area where people work and the area where they live, is the most criminogenic
- **General strain theory:** a theory that posits different types of strain, felt at the individual level, can lead to frustration and negative emotions that may lead to crime if someone does not have adequate coping skills to deal with those strains
- **Relative deprivation:** the idea that inequality and the gaps between wealth and poverty in a single place can lead to negative perceptions of one's situation and result in crime
- **Social disorganization theory:** the theory that neighborhoods with weak community controls caused by poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity will experience a higher level of criminal and delinquent behavior
- **Social structure:** the framework and relationship between institutions, groups, and norms in a society; all the things that make up a society
- **Strain theory:** a theory that assumes a society has conventional goals and means to achieve them and that people who are unable to achieve conventional goals due to blocked opportunities experience structural strain and may adapt in a way that involves criminal behavior

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5.2 The Social Structure

Auguste Comte, a French engineer turned philosopher, is often credited for coining the term sociology and founding the positivist movement. Rather than studying individuals and individual influences on behavior, Comte and other early sociologists were interested in a broader understanding of our society and culture. They wanted to study the ways that societies formed and functioned, how social structures influenced behavior (especially at a group level), and how cultures came to attribute meaning to behavior. Deviance and crime—remember the difference from [Chapter 1](#)?—are significant parts of these topics, so this is where sociology meets criminology. Many criminological theories are rooted in sociological thinking, and many also incorporate elements from the other approaches we have already discussed in this book.

First, what does social structure actually mean? In sociology, **social structure** refers to the framework and relationship between institutions, groups, and norms in a society. This includes social class, politics, economy, religion, behaviors, values, and more. So essentially, social structure is all the things that make up a society. It is a key concept in the field of sociology. See the following Learn More section for a current example of social structural concerns. Social structural theories of crime emphasize differences between groups in society, such as class, education, gender, race, or ethnicity. Distinctions between groups can be created by both formal (e.g., laws) and informal means (e.g., peer interactions).

We must again consider the social position of these theorists as they examine social structures. Early sociology, like criminology, prioritized the work of white men almost exclusively. This means that the lens through which societies and cultures were initially assessed typically came from a privileged position at best. Social norms and expectations such as traditional gender roles were embedded in many early attempts at explaining society and culture. We know that social norms change as societies change and progress, so definitions of deviance have certainly changed since many of these theories were introduced. We need to always consider what people are deviating *from* and according to *whom*. This is not to say these theories are wholly wrong or without value. Rather, it is a reminder to keep the theorists' personal perspectives or biases (and your own) in mind.

Learn More: Attacking the Capital

On January 6, 2021, the world watched as American citizens stormed the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. (figure 5.2). Tensions had been high for months. The country was still in the grips of COVID-19 and had just experienced a summer filled with protests against police brutality of the Black community. Following the nationwide presidential election in November of 2020, Trump supporters began talking about a coup.

On January 6th, a joint session of Congress was in the Capitol formalizing the election of Joe Biden by officially counting and recording the electoral college votes from each state. This is a process that is led by the vice president and has occurred in every presidential election in U.S. history. Interestingly, when Donald Trump was elected president, Joe Biden was serving as vice president and led the same ritual to formalize that

Figure 5.2. On January 6, 2021, a crowd of Trump supporters rioted and attacked the U.S. Capitol, many of whom later received various criminal charges. What are some things that were happening in society at the time that might have contributed to these particular people choosing to storm the capitol?

election. In 2021, the vice president was Mike Pence, and he refused to participate in Trump's claims that the election had been stolen and Biden's victory should be rejected.

While Congress was conducting its responsibility in the Capitol, Donald Trump spoke at a rally from which thousands marched down the street to the Capitol building. At least 2,000 of these individuals breached the security measures and entered the building. Many participated in vandalizing and looting in the Senate chamber and several offices, assaulting Capitol police officers and reporters, and searching for members of Congress while making threats of harm (including the murder of Vice President Mike Pence).

During this insurrection, five people were killed and 138 police officers were injured. Later, four more officers who survived that day died by suicide. In the time since, over 1,000 of the participants have been charged with federal crimes for the attack. As of July 2023, 629 of those had pleaded guilty and 127 had been found guilty at trial. Many of those convicted for their actions on January 6th were charged with sedition, a slightly lower charge than treason.

In this chapter, we look at theories about how society affects or even causes crime. There was a lot of upheaval in the country and society around the time of this particular event. We are going to talk about how different sociologists have attempted to explain criminal behavior and its link to social structures.

Durkheim and Anomie

Émile Durkheim was a French sociologist in the 1890s who viewed economic or social inequality and crime as natural and inevitable in society (figure 5.3). In fact, he thought that crime was not only normal, but necessary because it provided essential functions, such as defining a society's moral boundaries and creating bonds among members through shared ideas of right and wrong. In other words, criminals are created by and symbolic for society.
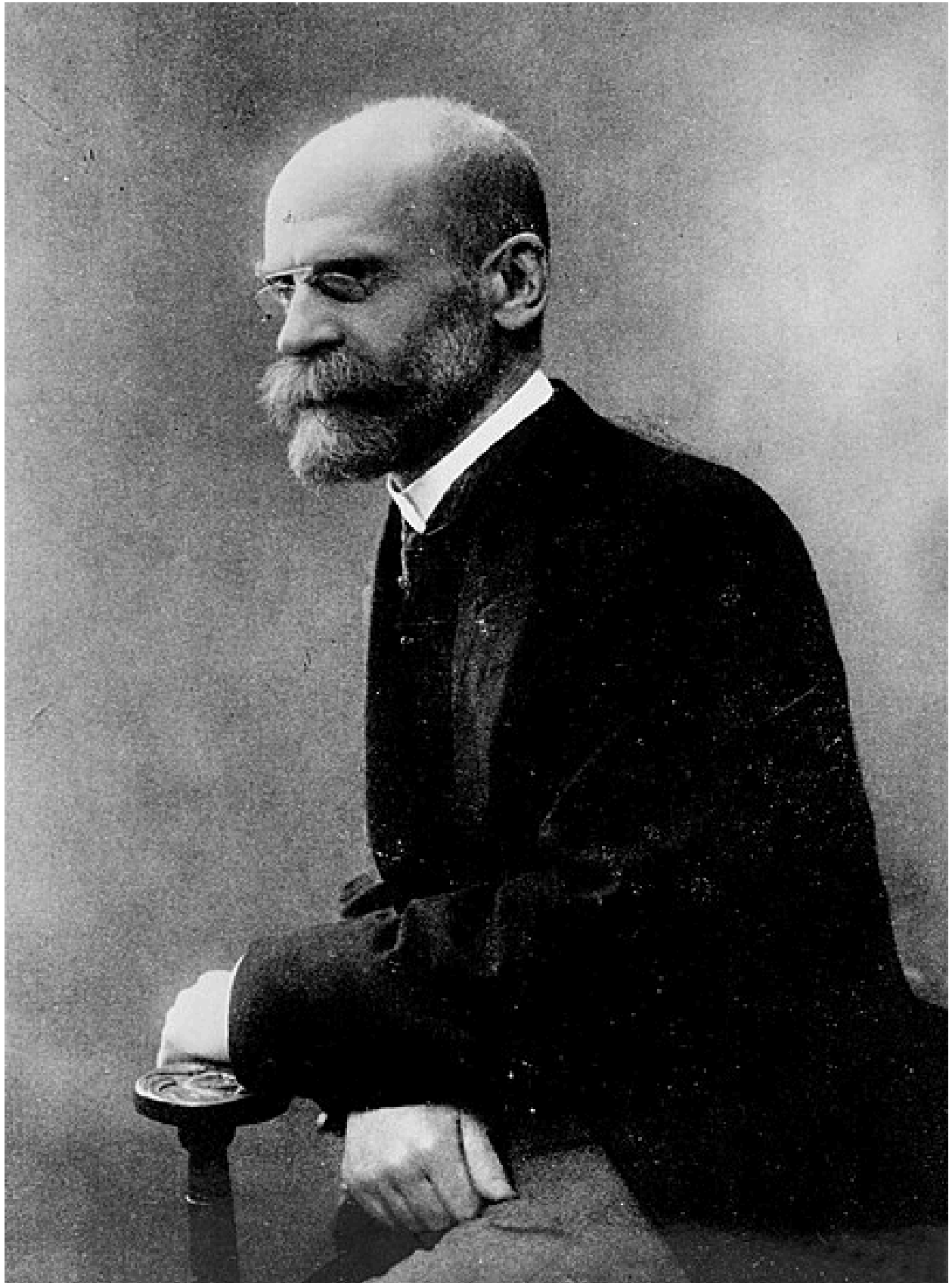
Figure 5.3. Émile Durkheim had a major impact on the sociological approach to criminology.

In his book *Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim (1997) explained societal development as moving from societies that were mechanical to societies that were organic. He described *mechanical societies* as primitive and agrarian, with all members performing the same basic functions based on gender roles. The constant, routine interaction between members of a small and tight-knit community led to strong uniformity in values, or a collective conscience. However, as a society like this develops, industrializes, and grows, it cannot function the same way. Labor has to be distributed and specialized. For example, most of us probably buy most of our groceries from a store and work a variety of non-farming jobs to afford them. In other words, we no longer perform the same duties as some of us are farmers, hair stylists, or bank tellers. When societal growth happens, people have to rely on other groups of people. This is when a society transforms into an *organic society*.

As a society grows and collective conscience fades, laws have to regulate interactions between people and help maintain some form of solidarity. On a smaller but relatable scale, think about the difference between working on a group project with two classmates versus eight classmates; you probably need more ground rules as the number of people increases. Durkheim saw the instability that could occur during the transition between society types as a state of normlessness, or **anomie**. Because this period lacks rules for behavior, Durkheim saw this as a prime time for social problems, such as crime, to thrive.

Durkheim's sociology is much broader than the study of crime, but his work set the foundation for the future of criminological theory (Boyd, 2015). In Durkeim's book *Suicide* (2002), he used statistics to demonstrate that suicide rates differed across social groups and that this pattern was relatively stable over time. Suicide rates were higher among industrial and commercial professions than agricultural ones, higher among urban city dwellers than people who lived in small towns, and higher among divorcees than married people. He believed that the differences in suicide rates among groups could be linked to anomic social conditions.

Strain Theories

One of the main theorists who was influenced by Durkheim's work was Robert K. Merton. Merton (1938) took the concept of anomie and applied it specifically to American society. He thought many human appetites originated in the culture of American society rather than naturally. It is helpful to consider what was happening in the country at the time Merton was doing his work. The country had recently experienced the Great Depression (1929–1939) followed by World War II (1939–1945). After these two global catastrophes, the United States was financially better off than anywhere else as it was the global leader in the worldwide economy. During this time, soldiers returned home from war to free higher education (through the G.I. Bill) and a new residential construction boom that made for affordable and easily accessible housing. They also participated fully in the baby boom, which further boosted the economy.

All of this contributed to the rise of the "American Dream," which many imagined as a blissful, white, nuclear family (mom, dad, and two kids) that owns a house with two cars in the driveway, a picket fence, and a dog (probably a golden retriever). However, no matter how you conceptualize the American Dream, most people would define it as achieving economic success in some form. The culturally approved method of obtaining the American Dream is through hard work, innovation, and education, especially a college degree. Merton recognized that this fantasy life is not available to everyone because the structure of American society is restrictive, and some people or groups are not given the same opportunities to achieve this cultural goal. When there is a disjunction between the goals of a society and the appropriate means to achieve those goals, anomie may result (figure 5.4).

When someone does not achieve a desired societal goal, they may feel strain or pressure. Merton claimed that everyone in American society was socialized to desire the same goals, regardless of their background. Consequently, those in lower socioeconomic classes are the most likely to experience obstacles to success and the resulting strain. This is the basis of Merton's strain theory. Adolphe Quetelet, the theorist discussed in [Chapter 3](#) who studied crime rate trends in France, would call this **relative deprivation**, which is inequality and gaps between wealth and poverty in a single place. Quetelet thought that this condition created opportunities for crime.

Figure 5.4. New York is known for its flashy advertisements, but we no longer need to walk the streets of Time Square to be bombarded with advertisements. Our phones and social media platforms are teeming with ads that try to persuade us to make new purchases to stay happy and relevant. How do you think this might relate to strain theory?

Let's stop and really think about this idea. Imagine a kid living in a high-income household. That child is likely to live in a nicer neighborhood with good recreational and health-related resources. They may have access to private schools, tutors, and extracurricular activities that result in a better education and higher chances of getting into college. Rather than taking a low-paying after-school job to help pay the bills or cover some of their own expenses, a kid from a higher-income family may be able to volunteer their time or work in unpaid positions, which could give them access to career networks. From the very beginning, a higher socioeconomic status and social class provides individuals with opportunities that help them get closer to reaching our institutionalized goals. Those in lower socioeconomic classes do not have those same opportunities. And this is before even considering how racism, sexism, and other prejudices affect childhood and available opportunities.

For a very real and current example of relative deprivation, think about the giant gap that exists between the "haves" and "have-nots." There is a growing divide between even the "have somes" (the middle class) and the rich. According to the Federal Reserve, the richest 1% of Americans hold 31.3% of the wealth in the entire United States. For comparison, the poorest 50% of Americans hold less than 2.4% (Federal Reserve, 2023).

Merton's Adaptations

Now, let's get back to Merton's theory and why goals, means, blocked opportunities, and relative deprivation matter for crime. Merton identified five different ways that people adapt to the goals of a society and the means to achieve those goals (figure 5.5). They include conformity, ritualism, innovation, retreatism, and rebellion.

Figure 5.5. Merton focused on the structural strain that could result when certain individuals or groups were not granted opportunities in society or were prevented from being able to achieve conventional goals through conventional means. Which of these five adaptations resonates with you the most?

Adaption to Structural Strain	Want the American Dream? (Goals)	Follow conventional societal rules? (Means)
Conformity	Yes	Yes
Ritualism	No	Yes
Innovation	Yes	No
Retreatism	No	No
Rebellion	Reject culture and strive for change—may use legitimate or illegitimate means to do so	

According to Merton, conformists are the people who embrace both a society's conventional goals and the means of achieving them. In other words, conformists desire all the things that come with the American Dream and they take the "ideal" route to get there, such as by going to college and getting a well-paying respectable job. Merton believed that this was the most common adaptation when anomie is absent in a society. However, there are other ways that people may adapt, especially if they do not have the same ability to achieve the goals through the accepted means.

Ritualists are not really concerned with becoming wealthy or meeting other major societal goals. However, they are still content with or enjoy the traditional practices in society. An example of ritualists might be people who run a "mom and pop" local business. Perhaps ritualists feel safe following societal expectations even if they do not aim to, or simply are unable to, attain the ultimate goals.

Innovators are people who very much want to reach conventional goals but reject or are incapable of reaching them through socially accepted means. Think of someone like Mark Zuckerberg or famous YouTuber PewDiePie; neither of these individuals followed the traditional means of achieving wealth, but they certainly attained the institutional goals (figure 5.6). Although these examples included legal routes, innovation is the adaptation that is most closely linked with crime. If you aren't one of those types who make it big by following conventional means, what other routes might you take? For many, the answer might be selling drugs, stealing, or defrauding people out of their money. The popular show *Breaking Bad* is a great example of innovation as an adaptation to blocked opportunities.

Figure 5.6. *A shows famous YouTuber PewDiePie, and B shows infamous "Scarface" gangster Al Capone. What do these two people have in common? According to Merton's strain theory, both can be described as innovators since their means of achieving institutional goals were not particularly conventional.*

There is one thing that separates retreatists from rebels. Neither are after the conventional goals or means of society, but rebels substitute alternative goals and means. For example, these may be radicals and revolutionaries who call for alternative lifestyles and a new social order. After George Floyd was murdered in 2020, a group protesting police brutality established the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone

(CHAZ), later known as the Capitol Hill Organized Protests (CHOP) in a Seattle neighborhood (Holden, 2023). The people engaged in this demonstration illustrate Merton's rebellion adaptation. In contrast, retreatists are "in the society but not of it" (Merton, 1938, p. 677). In other words, retreatists withdraw from society and may be voluntarily or involuntarily unhoused, survivalists, people in addiction, or people with severe mental illness. A stereotypical "pothead" who drops out of high school is a classic example.

Let's put all of these concepts together. Merton saw U.S. society as having agreed-upon conventional goals and means to achieve them that most people embrace. However, in an unequal and inequitable society, not everyone can access either the means or goals, and this causes (structural) strain. While crime can occur among more than one adaptation to such circumstances, Merton saw innovators as the most crime-prone because they still want to achieve institutional goals but their access is blocked. These are the components and concepts that constitute **strain theory**. Figure 5.7 illustrates how the way someone adapts may lead to criminal behavior.

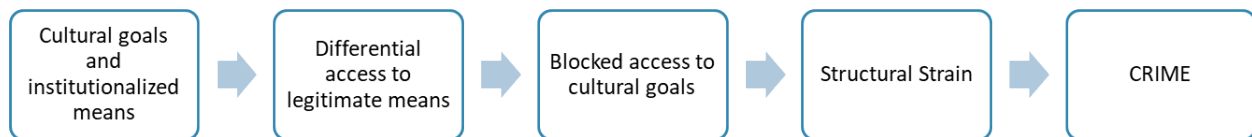| Cultural goals and institutionalized means | → | Differential access to legitimate means | → | Blocked access to cultural goals | → | Structural Strain | → | CRIME |

Figure 5.7. This diagram shows how crime occurs according to Merton's (structural) strain theory.

Activity: Kai and Adaptations to Strain

In 2013, Caleb Lawrence McGillvary, who is known better simply as "Kai," became an internet sensation when his interview with a reporter went viral (figure 5.8). In it, Kai describes how he stopped a man, with whom he had been hitchhiking, from further injuring a person after hitting them with his car. In 2023, Netflix released a documentary about Kai titled *The Hatchet Wielding Hitchhiker* that explored his life, crimes, and fame.

> 🖼 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=533#oembed-1*

https://youtu.be/ckfBGdZoR_0

Figure 5.8. Watch the popular interview that catapulted Kai into internet fame, and answer the discussion questions that follow. Content warning: This interview contains adult language and discussion of sexual assault and murder. Transcript.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think Kai has conventional goals according to Merton's strain theory?
2. Do you think Kai is following conventional means according to Merton's strain theory?
3. Which of Merton's adaptations do you think Kai best fits? Explain.
4. What societal factors do you think contribute to Kai's behavior? Explain.

Agnew's General Strain Theory

Taking Merton's ideas about structural strain resulting from imbalances in society, Robert Agnew (1992) applied the concept of strain to people of all social classes and economic positions to explain crime. He identified strains that occur at the individual level rather than focusing on the broader, structural level of society as Merton did. Such sources of strain include:

1. failure to achieve positively valued goals
2. removal of positively valued stimuli
3. presentation of noxious (negative) stimuli

The first type of strain is quite similar to what Merton described: the inability to achieve a goal that you desire, such as wealth, due to blocked opportunities. The other two types of strain that Agnew identified sound complicated but are quite simple. The removal of positively valued stimuli means losing something you like. This could include getting laid off from your dream job, losing a loved one or pet, moving to a new city away from your friends, or even experiencing your parents' divorce. Presentation of noxious stimuli refers to something unwanted entering your life. Examples of this might include experiencing abuse or discrimination from a loved one or acquaintance, developing health problems, or getting a new boss who is a major jerk. Agnew believed situations like these could cause strain on a person, even if they were anticipated or vicariously experienced by imagining the feelings of someone who was directly impacted.

Importantly, Agnew did not claim that these types of strain directly caused crime. Instead, they led to a negative affective state that could include anger, depression, disappointment, or fear. It is the negative affective state that leads to crime, especially among those who do not have support to help them cope, escape painful situations, or boost their self-confidence. See figure 5.9 for an illustration of Agnew's **general strain theory**.
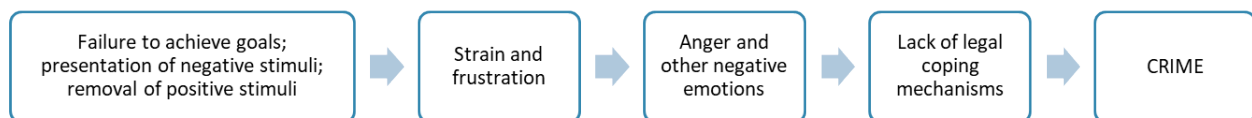
| Failure to achieve goals; presentation of negative stimuli; removal of positive stimuli | ⇨ | Strain and frustration | ⇨ | Anger and other negative emotions | ⇨ | Lack of legal coping mechanisms | ⇨ | CRIME |

Figure 5.9. This diagram shows the route to crime according to Agnew's general strain theory.

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 5.3. "Émile Durkheim" is in the Public Domain.

Figure 5.4. "people in street at nighttime" by Andreas M is licensed under the Unsplash License.

Figure 5.6 *A.*"PewDiePie at PAX 2015 crop" is in the Public Domain, CC0 1.0.

Figure 5.6 *B*. "[Al Capone-around 1935](#)" is in the [Public Domain](#), courtesy of the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

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Figure 5.8. "[Kai, Hatchet Wielding Hitchhiker, Amazing Interview w/ Jessob Reisbeck](#)" by [Jessob Reisbeck](#) is licensed under the [Standard YouTube License](#).

5.3 The Chicago School

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Chicago was one of the fastest-growing cities as it experienced a huge influx of people, especially immigrants from various foreign nations. Throughout the 1900s, sociologists at the University of Chicago were witness to the interplay among different groups. So many theories came out of the University of Chicago during the 20th century that they became known collectively as The Chicago School. The Chicago School focused on urban settings, bringing to the forefront many new theories that centered urban America.

Robert E. Park, an American urban sociologist, spent his professional career studying human behavior as it pertained to human ecology, race relations, assimilation, migratory patterns, and social structure. Along with his colleagues, noted sociologists Ernest W. Burgess, and R. D. McKenzie, he published the book *The City* (1925). In it, they liken a city to a living organism, with interactions between humans and their natural environments acting in both a shared and conflicting manner, depending on a group's location within the city.

It was Burgess, however, who proposed the **concentric zone theory**, which states that a city's design is conducive to criminal behavior within its zone of transition, which is the space between the areas where people work and where they live. In simpler terms, a city can be seen much like a target board, with multiple concentric circles surrounding a central hub (figure 5.10). Each circle is specific to its municipal function (manufacturing, city business, residential, etc.).

The Concentric Zone Model

- Suburbs ········· **Commuter Zone**

- Single Family Tenements ·········
- **Residential Zone** ·········
  - Single Family Homes
  - Yards / Garages

Working Class Zone

Transitional Zone ·········
  Recent Immigration Groups
  - Deteriorated Housing
  - Factories
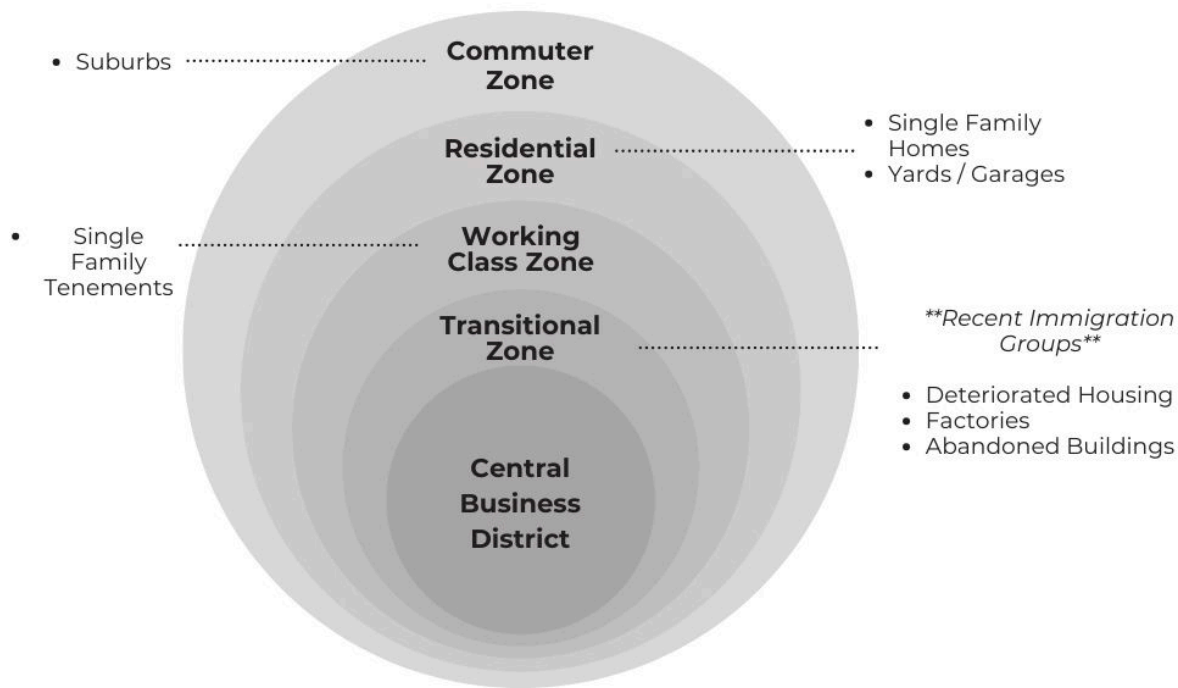 - Abandoned Buildings

Central Business District

Figure 5.10. The concentric zone model, often attributed to both Park and Burgess, uses concentric circles to explain city development and spread. Just as a plant might spread and invade the surrounding area, so too did Chicago, according to these early Chicago School theorists. Image description available. Image description.

Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory

In the 1940s, sociologists Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay took what they had learned as students of Park and Burgess and developed their own theory. They began to plot the addresses of juvenile court-referred boys and noticed that many of the addresses were located in the zone of transition (zone 2). Upon further investigation, Shaw and McKay noticed three qualitative differences in the transitional zone compared to other zones. First, the physical status included the invasion of industry and the largest number of condemned buildings. When many buildings are in disrepair, population levels decrease. Second, the population composition was also different. The zone in transition had higher concentrations of foreign-born and Black heads of families. It also had a transient population. Third, there were socioeconomic differences. The transitional zone had the highest rates of welfare, the lowest median rent, and the lowest percentage of family-owned houses. Interrelated, the zone also had the highest rates of infant deaths, tuberculosis, and mental illness.

Shaw and McKay believed the zone in transition led to social disorganization. Social disorganization is the inability of social institutions to control individuals' behavior. Consequently, their theory, **social disorganization theory,** claims that neighborhoods with weak community controls caused by poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity will experience a higher level of criminal and delinquent behavior. Since the zone in transition had people moving in and out at such high rates, social institutions (like family, school, religion, government, economy) and community members could no longer agree on essential norms and values. As earlier stated, many residents were from different countries. Speaking different languages and having different religious beliefs may have prevented neighbors from talking to one another and solidifying community bonds. As described by Durkheim, socially disorganized communities lack a collective conscience as well as the ability to mobilize their social networks against crime, also known as **collective efficacy** (Sampson et al., 1997).

Overall, Shaw and McKay concluded that crime and delinquency were the result of lacking economic opportunities and the breakdown of social control in families, neighborhoods, and communities (figure 5.11). They were two of the first theorists to put forth the premise that community characteristics matter when discussing criminal behavior. Rather than seeing criminal behavior as coming from dangerous people, they saw it as coming from dangerous places, regardless of the specific individuals who live there.
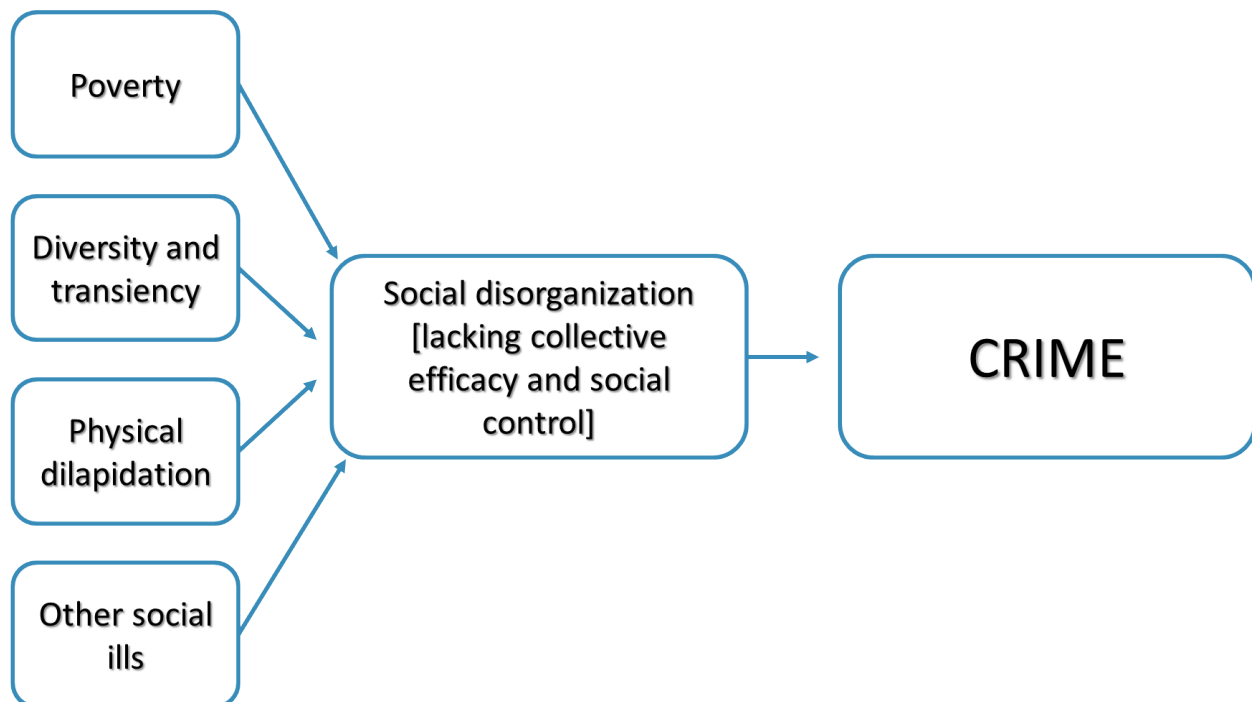

Figure 5.11. This diagram shows the cause of crime according to Shaw and McKay's social disorganization theory.

Learn More: Does Social Disorganization Theory Work Outside of the City?

Historically, crime rates have been lower overall in rural communities than in urban metropolitan areas (figure 5.12). Relying on social disorganization theory's conceptual origins, there is a tendency to assume that urban communities are "disorganized" and rural communities are "organized." In fact, this theory has been used to help explain the difference in crime rates between urban and rural areas. Initially and intuitively it makes sense that small towns, where everyone knows each other, would have shared beliefs, higher levels of collective efficacy, and perhaps better social control over unwanted and criminal behavior. However, a deeper dive exposes problematic assumptions, methodological issues, and many other considerations that have to be addressed when making such a comparison.

Figure 5.12. The structure of rural communities is quite different from that of Chicago in the 1940s. Do you think a crime theory that was developed to understand crime in the city can be applicable outside of the city?

First, rural areas have long been painted as simple, peaceful, and without crime. While there are surely elements of this in the countryside, the assumption that crime just doesn't happen in rural areas is inaccurate and has been harmful to the study of rural areas. Rural communities have been largely excluded from criminological research. Theories have been primarily based on urban populations, limiting their ability to explain crime in non-urban spaces. For example, neighborhoods and streets have often been used as units of measurement when testing social disorganization theory, but do we see the same type of community organization in rural areas where many acres may separate homes?

Research aimed at testing social disorganization theory picked up in the 1960s and has remained pretty consistent since then. Researchers have found that many components of social disorganization theory, such as residential stability and home ownership, social network cohesion, poverty, and family disruption, can indeed be applied to crime in rural areas (Bouffard & Muftic, 2006; Lee, 2008; Moore & Sween, 2015). Other researchers, such as Kaylen and Pridemore (2013), found support for the link between disorganization and crime, but they concluded that the factors causing disorganization in rural settings differ from those that are traditionally thought to produce disorder in an urban context.

Critics of social disorganization theory highlight definition issues with the term "disorganization" and argue that communities that are traditionally deemed to be disorganized may still be organized—just in ways that oppose broader societal norms (Harkness et al., 2022). In other words, some communities and cultures may actually embrace certain types of crime or accept violence under certain circumstances. For example, a perceived threat to one's masculinity in a highly patriarchal community might lead to violence that the community views as acceptable. Or, a community that financially thrives off a locally organized drug distribution operation may choose to protect and facilitate that behavior. In other words, high collective efficacy in a community does not always result in the absence of criminal behavior.

Taken together, applying social disorganization theory to rural areas brings us back to the original idea that place matters in understanding crime.

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Figure 5.10. "The Concentric Zone Model" by Jessica René Peterson and Mindy Khamvongsa, Open Oregon Educational Resources, is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Figure 5.11. "Diagram of Shaw and McKay's Social Disorganization Theory" by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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Figure 5.12. "Nursery with red buildings in rural Washington County, Oregon" by M.O. Stevens is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

5.4 Modern Application: How Is It Relevant Now?

Both strain theories and social disorganization theory are considered classic criminological theories, and they continue to be tested and adjusted. We will address other theories that stem from The Chicago School in other chapters, but this section will provide brief insight into the relevance of the theories discussed in this chapter.

Strain theory is useful for explaining particular types of crime, especially those focused on making money. However, it is less useful for explaining crimes that are non-utilitarian, such as breaking windows, spray painting walls with graffiti, and shoplifting small items that are readily discarded after the act. Another critique of Merton's theory pertains to crimes committed by bankers and executives. People who engage in corporate crime often have access to institutional means, and many hold degrees from highly respectable universities. In response, Murphy and Robinson (2008) propose an additional mode of adaptation to anomie and strain—maximization—to describe those who combine both legitimate and illegitimate means in their pursuit of wealth and privilege.

The Chicago School approach remains influential today, but there are nevertheless some important limitations to their findings. While the concentric zone model may have worked for Chicago, it is not characteristic of all cities. The idea of disorganization itself has also been criticized. While such neighborhoods may look disorganized to outsiders, for those who live within them, there is a definite order made up of informal associations and networks. Despite these criticisms, Sampson and Groves (1989) provide empirical support for Shaw and McKay's (1942) approach by measuring the relative degrees of social disorganization within neighborhoods and showing some correlation with respective crime rates.

In relation to the environment and community characteristics as the source of crime, many other theories have evolved that look at the criminality of places rather than people. One example that has been particularly controversial is **broken windows theory** (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). According to this theory, the environment of a particular space signals its health to the public, including potential vandals (figure 5.13). Environments filled with disorder, such as broken windows or graffiti, indicate an inability for the neighborhood to supervise itself, therefore leading to an increase in criminal activity (Ranasinghe, 2011). The theory posits that by maintaining an organized environment, individuals are dissuaded from causing disarray in that particular location. Instead of focusing on the built environment, policies and practices substantiated by the broken windows theory overwhelmingly emphasize undesirable human behavior as an environmental disorder prompting further crime (Beckett & Herbert, 2008).

Figure 5.13. *Broken windows theory posits that physical signs of dilapidation send signals about a community that are conducive to crime. How does this image make you feel?*

For example, civility laws, which originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, effectively criminalize activities considered undesirable, such as sitting or lying on sidewalks, sleeping in parks, urinating or drinking in public, and begging (Beckett & Herbert, 2010). Civility laws are an attempt to force the individuals doing these and other activities to relocate to the margins of society. Not surprisingly, these restrictions disproportionally affect unhoused people (Beckett & Herbert, 2008). Additionally, the practice referred to as broken windows policing was adopted by law enforcement agencies across the country. Broken windows policing requires police to focus on petty crimes that indicate disorder, with the assumption that this will reduce more violent crime. This form of policing negatively impacts people living in diverse and impoverished communities. Aggressive enforcement through citations or arrests for low-level crimes strained residents' already thin finances and reduced their trust in the police (Childress, 2016). Overall, this theory and form of policing has been praised and incorporated into many agency's strategies, but its impact has been disproportionate.

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5.5 Conclusion

Looking at these sociological theories of crime shows how difficult it is to really answer the question of what causes criminal behavior. Social structure encompasses so many aspects of life, and it is impossible to isolate one factor for study. However, with the goal of understanding society's role in crime, one thing is clear: different groups have very different experiences in the United States, and that extends to crime and the notion of justice. In the following chapters, we will continue to explore different ways in which criminologists have attempted to explain the impact of society on offending behavior.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we started exploring sociological theories of crime. Early concepts in the field, such as Durkheim's anomie, which refers to normlessness during societal transition, influenced the development of theories that are still examined today. Social structural theories see that the institutions, culture, and patterns of relationships in a society impact and can cause human behavior, including crime. For example, the distance between what someone wants to achieve and what they are actually able to achieve leads to strain. Merton's strain theory, which is focused on the structural level, claims that discrepancies between conventional goals and means lead to strain, and sometimes people adapt and take alternative routes to get to the goals they want. Agnew added to Merton's ideas by identifying new types and ways of experiencing strain at an individual level.

The Chicago School is a collection of theories that came from theorists in Chicago during a time of rapid change and growth. Park and Burgess took an ecological approach to understanding city growth and compared it to that of plants. The resulting zones in an urban setting were linked to various social ills, including crime and deviance, which were most prominent in zone two. Shaw and McKay extended the work of Park and Burgess to establish social disorganization theory. This theory claims that neighborhoods with weak community controls and no collective efficacy due to poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity will experience a higher level of criminal and delinquent behavior.

Strain theories and social disorganization theory are still applicable today and have had a lasting impact on the field of criminology. Concepts and ideas from these theories have inspired similar approaches in new theories and crime prevention policies.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how Merton's strain theory differs from Agnew's general strain theory. Why is Merton's theory referred to as *structural* strain theory?
2. What are some examples of institutional or conventional means and goals in the United States now? How do you think they influence conformity or deviance?
3. What is the significance of the City of Chicago in The Chicago School theories?
4. How do factors like poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability contribute to increased crime rates, according to theories in this chapter?
5. How might different theories in this chapter explain the importance of American culture in criminal offending behavior?
6. Watch the CrashCourse Sociology video, Social Stratification in the US [Streaming Video]. How is the concept of social stratification relevant to the theories discussed in this chapter?
7. What are the ethical considerations in terms of social justice and human rights in implementing policies based on social structural criminological perspectives?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- A synopsis of key factors in Merton's strain theory [Website].
- The Chicago School of Criminology [Streaming Video]: A video example of the theory of social disorganization/Chicago School perspective.

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SOCIAL LEARNING, INTERACTIONIST, AND SUBCULTURAL THEORIES

Figure 6.1. *Do you remember the first time you cooked a meal for yourself or your friends? Chances are good that your ability to do so stemmed from a combination of family and cultural influences, Google searches for recipes, and TikTok videos. In other words, you learned how to cook from a variety of influences and social interactions. The ways in which we learn criminal behavior do not differ that much from any other learned behavior.*

Contents of This Chapter:

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6

6.1 Chapter Introduction

Take a moment to reflect on the last few tasks you completed before reading this chapter. Maybe you reviewed your notes from a lecture, made a meal, or scrolled through your social media accounts (figure 6.1). Each of these are distinct actions, yet they all rely on one underlying thing—learned behaviors. As students, you figure out how to effectively study and process information from courses, understand how to read a recipe and combine the ingredients into a meal, and generate content, pictures, or videos to portray your life in the way you want. These behaviors were also not learned in a vacuum; you are surrounded by friends, fellow students, family, and other acquaintances who have talked about or shown you their study habits, cooking skills, or social media engagement. Through these associations and social interactions, you learn behaviors. The social nature of our day-to-day lives has direct implications for our understanding of antisocial behavior.

While Chapter 5 focused on broad macro-level approaches to explain how social structure can impact criminal behavior, this chapter will look more closely at learning and social interactions. First, we will explore theories that borrow concepts from the field of psychology to make sense of crime as a learned behavior. We will also look at theories that emphasize the importance of social interaction and reaction in understanding criminal behavior. Finally, this chapter will investigate the influence of culture, discussing how deviation from mainstream culture and adherence to subcultures can impact criminal offending.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Locate the foundation of social learning, interactionist, and subcultural theories in terms of the race, gender, and societal status of the theorists.
2. Explain the creation of seminal (classic) sociological understandings of crime.
3. Compare the different ways in which people learn criminal behavior.
4. Analyze the influence of social interactions and reactions on criminal behavior.
5. Evaluate how a response to mainstream culture can lead to the development of subcultures that promote or accept criminal behavior.
6. Assess ethical concerns associated with the policy implications of social learning, interactionist, and subcultural theories.

Key Terms

- **Classical conditioning:** a learning process in which an automatic conditioned response is paired with a stimulus
- **Code of the street:** Anderson's theory that Black street culture places a high value on respect, which can lead to conflicts between community members
- **Cultural deviance theory:** Miller's theory that the lower class have their own subculture and that parents in this group socialize their children into six focal concerns that run counter to mainstream culture
- **Differential association theory:** Sutherland's theory that criminality is learned through a process of interaction with others who communicate criminal values and advocate for the commission of crimes
- **Differential opportunity theory:** Cloward and Ohlin's theory that juvenile gang formation depends on the neighborhood type and both the legal and illegal opportunities within it
- **Labeling theory:** the theory that societal reaction and the application of stigmatizing labels can lead to someone becoming deviant/criminal.
- **Operant conditioning:** a learning process in which reinforcements and punishments guide behavior
- **Social learning theory:** Burgess and Akers's theory that people learn attitudes and behaviors conducive to crime in both social and nonsocial situations through positive reinforcement (rewards) and negative reinforcement (punishments)
- **Status frustration theory:** Cohen's theory that four factors—social class, school performance, status frustration, and reaction formation (coping methods)—contribute to the development of gangs and delinquency in juveniles
- **Subculture:** a group that shares a specific identity that differs from the mainstream majority, even though they exist within the larger society
- **Subculture of violence theory:** Wolfgang and Ferracuti's theory that certain norms and values, such as violence being an expected and normal response to conflict, are part of working-class communities and help explain violent crime
- **Symbolic interactionist theory:** a theory that, in part, posits that people take on roles when interacting with others
- **Theory of imitation:** Tarde's theory that crime is the result of imitating or modeling the behaviors of others

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Figure 6.1. "[friends eating lunch in diner](#)" by [danielcgold](#) is licensed under the [Unsplash License](#).

6.2 Crime as Learned Behavior

Learning is a key component of many criminological theories. The field of psychology provides explanations for mechanisms of human learning that have been adopted by criminologists attempting to understand criminal offending behavior. Additionally, some theories, categorized as interactionist theories, suggest that criminal behavior is learned through our interactions with others. These explanations emphasize group membership (such as belonging to a clique like the "plastics," "geeks," or "jocks" at school) and relationships in the socialization process. The learning process is especially important in theories that address behavior, gang development, and crime among youth.

One of the first theorists to associate crime with learning was Gabriel Tarde. He was a French sociologist and criminologist who tried to figure out how people became criminally involved. In his book *The Laws of Imitation*, Tarde (1903) argues that people do what they know, which he calls the theory of imitation. According to the **theory of imitation**, people who commit crimes are simply modeling the deviant behaviors they see around them. When it was published, this theory contradicted the commonly held belief that people who broke the law were simply bad people. Tarde's theory was an important idea because it suggested that if criminal behavior was learned (imitated), then it could also be unlearned.

According to Tarde, imitation is the source of all progress that occurs, both good and bad. Tarde said people are influenced by those they have a close relationship with or at least by those they observe regularly, such as family members, neighbors, friends, and teachers. For this reason, Tarde named close contact as the first of his three laws of imitation.

The second law concerns the imitation of superiors by inferiors. Tarde said people are influenced by those who have power or are in positions of power. The person in the inferior position (such as a child, employee, or the new kid in school) may want to see themselves as "superior" and might imitate the behaviors and attitudes they see in those who hold power (such as their parents, boss, or the cool kid in school).

The third and final law of imitation is insertion. This means that the new behaviors that were learned through imitation replace the person's old behaviors. Tarde believed people would observe someone else, want to be more like them, copy their behaviors, then adapt the behaviors to make them their own. In other words, the new behavior is customized and personalized as it replaces the old behavior.

Tarde's ideas might sound familiar if you recall our discussion in [Chapter 4](#) of Bandura's Bobo doll experiments. Bandura's work was much later than Tarde's theorizing and used experimentation to support the idea that violent behavior could be learned and modeled. He saw family members, others in one's subculture, and models provided by the mass media as primary teachers in observational learning. Even though research has never produced a direct link between violence on television and long-term violent behavior in individuals, Bandura was a frequent critic of the violence that appeared on television and in movies. His belief was that among individuals who are already aggressive, observing aggression will influence future aggressive behavior.

How exactly is this link between observation and behavior formed? If watching a television show or playing a video game is not enough to directly cause similar behavior, then how strong is the *learned* portion of criminal offending? Two scientists—one a physiologist and one a psychology student—discovered key aspects of learned behavior by studying animals. In the late 19th century, Ivan Pavlov was trying to

study digestion in dogs when he noticed that the dogs' reactions to food were changing over time. Based on his observations, he set up an experiment in which he would ring a bell before feeding the dogs. He noted that eventually, the dogs began salivating in anticipation of their food when they heard the bell (figure 6.2). This experiment illustrates the process of **classical conditioning** in which an automatic conditioned response is paired with a stimulus.

Figure 6.2. *The reaction by Pavlov's dogs illustrates the chain of events in classical conditioning. How might classical conditioning relate to criminal offending?*

Classical conditioning relies on the idea that certain responses are natural and do not require learning. For example, dogs will salivate or get excited when they see and smell food (unconditioned stimulus). However, Pavlov discovered that these natural responses can be manipulated. He got dogs to salivate in response to a neutral stimulus (the ringing of a bell) that on its own elicited no response from the dogs. In other words, the bell was just a bell until Pavlov followed it with food. Once the dogs learned to associate it with food, they would salivate at the sound of the bell (conditioned response). He repeated this over and over again so that the dogs eventually started to salivate at the sound of the bell even when food was not present. We can see a similar response by Dwight in the hit show, *The Office* (figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. *In an episode of The Office, Jim gives Dwight an Altoid every time his computer audibly reboots. Eventually, Dwight puts his hand out in anticipation of an Altoid every time he hears the computer reboot. In this example of classical conditioning, what is the neutral stimulus?*

B.F. Skinner took the basics of Pavlov's experiment of connecting a neutral stimulus (the bell) to positive reinforcement (the food) and expanded upon these ideas through experimentation on rats and pigeons. He saw that classical conditioning was limited to existing behaviors that are reflexively elicited and that it did not account for new behaviors. He saw behavior as being motivated by the consequences we receive for the behavior: the reinforcements and punishments. In other words, if a person or animal does something that brings about a desired result, they are more likely to do it again. If they do something that does not bring about a desired result, they are less likely to do it again. Skinner was describing **operant conditioning**.

In operant conditioning, the reinforcements and punishments for behavior can be positive or negative. Positive and negative do not mean good and bad. Instead, positive means you are adding something, and negative means you are taking something away. Reinforcement means you are increasing a behavior, and punishment means you are decreasing a behavior. Reinforcement can be positive or negative, and punishment can also be positive or negative. All reinforcers (positive or negative) increase the likelihood of a behavioral response. All punishers (positive or negative) decrease the likelihood of a behavioral response.

Now let's combine these four terms: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment (figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4. Skinner believed that we learn to associate a behavior with its consequences, and reinforcements and punishments can make behavior more or less likely to occur. If you want to learn more about how Skinner tested this idea using rats in a Skinner box, you can view "Skinner's Operant Conditioning: Rewards & Punishments" [Streaming Video].

	Reinforcement	**Punishment**
Positive	Something is *added* to *increase* the likelihood of a behavior (getting a reward). For example, a child is given a piece of candy when they clean their room.	Something is *added* to *decrease* the likelihood of a behavior (getting something bad). For example, a student is scolded for texting in class and stops as a result.
Negative	Something is *removed* to *increase* the likelihood of a behavior (something bad is removed). For example, your car stops beeping when you put on your seatbelt.	Something is *removed* to *decrease* the likelihood of a behavior (taking away something good). For example, a parent takes away a child's favorite toy, so the child stops whining.

Studies have shown that behavioral conditioning is rarely this straightforward and can easily backfire. For example, research has shown that spanking can increase aggressive behavior and that the more a parent spanks a child, the more likely the child is to defy the parent (Gershoff et al., 2016). Antisocial behavior and aggression have been linked to excessive use of positive punishment. This type of punishment may also contribute to cognitive and mental health problems. It can teach avoidance behavior and, for many, create a goal of simply avoiding punishment rather than learning the intended behavior. For further clarification on the difference between types of conditioning, the video in figure 6.5 is a great resource.

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https://youtu.be/H6LEcM0E0io

Figure 6.5. If you are struggling with understanding the difference between classical and operant conditioning, check out this helpful four-minute video, "The Difference Between Classical and Operant Conditioning" [Streaming Video]. Transcript.

The learning and interactionist theories discussed in the following sections of this chapter all assume that criminal behavior is learned from others through interaction. They incorporate psychological understandings of the learning process and behavioral conditioning, as previously discussed, into their assumptions. More specifically, these theories assume that criminal behavior is transmitted between groups and generations, and they emphasize the importance of the relationship between "learner" and "teacher" or reinforcements and punishments. Let's start with differential association theory and social learning theory to see how all of this comes together.

Sutherland's Differential Association Theory

Now recognized as one of the most important criminologists of the 20th century, Edwin H. Sutherland (1947), developed **differential association theory**. Sutherland aimed to establish an individual-level sociological theory of crime that refuted claims that criminality was inherited. Sutherland explored the role of the immediate social environment, which was often discounted in broader macro-level theories, and suggested that behavior was primarily learned within small group settings. Importantly, Sutherland sought to articulate a formal theory by presenting propositions that could be used to explain how individuals come to engage in crime. In his *Principles of Criminology* textbook, Sutherland articulated the following nine propositions:

1. **Criminal behavior is learned**. Stated differently, people are not born criminals. Experience and social interactions inform whether individuals engage in crime.
2. **Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in the process of communication**. This communication is inclusive of both direct and indirect forms of expression.
3. *The principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups.* The important and key people in your social life are where such learning processes occur.
4. **When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes.** The learning process involves both instruction on how to commit crimes and why they might be committed.
5. **The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.** Definitions encompass an individual's attitude toward the law. Attitudes toward the legality of crimes, deviance, or antisocial behavior can vary.
6. **A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law over definitions unfavorable to violation of law.** The balance of exposure to definitions favorable or unfavorable to the law is the primary determinant of whether an individual will engage in crime. If exposed to more definitions that are unfavorable to the law, individuals will be more likely to engage in crime.
7. **Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority, and intensity.** Not all associations (or interactions) are created equal. How often one interacts with a peer, how much time one spends with a peer, how long someone has known a peer, and how much prestige we attach to certain peers determines the strength of a particular association.
8. **The process of learning criminal behavior by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.** Learning is a process not specific to crime but to all behavior. Thus, the mechanisms through which we learn how to behave at work or in our families are the same general mechanisms that impact how we learn crime.
9. **While criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values, since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same needs and values**. Behaviors can have the same end goal. However, the means to obtain this goal can vary. Selling drugs or working at a retail store may both reflect the need to earn money; thus, we cannot

separate delinquent or non-delinquent acts by *different* goals. Other factors (e.g., the balance of definitions one is exposed to) determine whether or not a person engages in a specific behavior (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978 p. 80-83; italics specify text as originally written and we have used bold text to emphasize important points).

The primary component of the theory is the role of differential association(s). Individuals have a vast array of social contacts and intimate personal groups with whom they interact. Figure 6.6 depicts some examples of sources of social influence, including friends, family, siblings, neighbors, and co-workers. All of these people serve as sources of social influence, but the extent of their influence depends on the factors that characterize the interactions (e.g., frequency, duration, priority, and intensity). Not all peers/associates have the same level of influence. Consider your own social world. Who do you spend the most time with, trust more, look to regularly for help? These individuals comprise your intimate personal group that facilitates the definitions you might have regarding deviant or prosocial behavior. For instance, an individual whose friends are extremely important to them and that they have known for multiple years would be anticipated to have a greater degree of influence on that individual's behavior than would a new acquaintance from class or work. Overall, research demonstrates that affiliation with delinquent peers can explain the initiation, persistence, frequency, type of offending, and desistance (Elliott & Menard, 1996; Fergusson & Horwood, 1996; Matsueda & Anderson, 1998; Thomas, 2015; Warr, 1993, 1998).
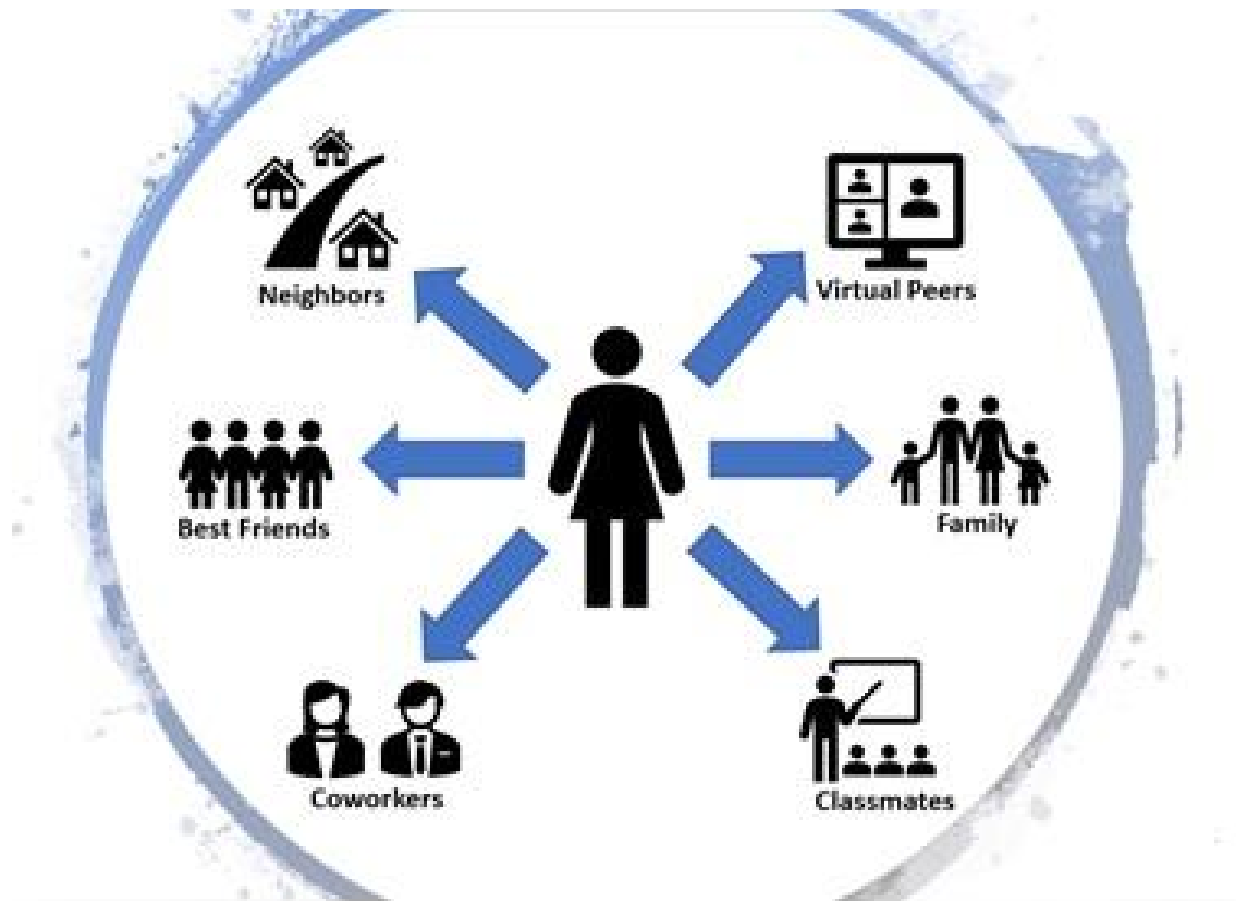
Figure 6.6. *This diagram shows the variations in sources of intimate others who can exert social influence according to differential association theory.*

The effect of affiliation with deviant peers on criminal outcomes is attributable in part to how these sources of social influence inform the degree of definitions that are favorable or unfavorable toward the law. Although Sutherland did not clearly operationalize the concept of definitions at the time, it is generally understood that definitions reflect the attitudes favorable to crime that enable individuals to approve or rationalize behavior across situations (Akers, 1998). For example, definitions, or ideas, that are favorable to crime include "drinking and driving is fine" or "don't get mad, get even." Definitions that are not favorable to crime include "play fair" or "I must rise above insults and ignore them." Individuals who internalize and accept definitions that are more favorable to crime will be more likely to actively participate in criminal behavior (figure 6.7).
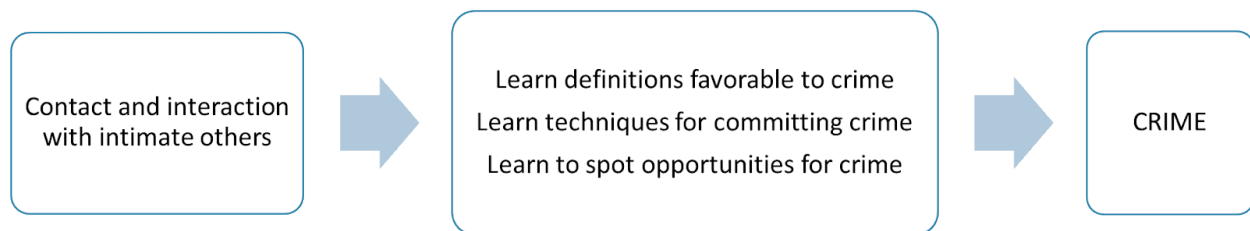
Figure 6.7. This diagram shows the path to crime according to Sutherland's differential association theory.

At its core, differential association theory relies on the basic assumptions of classical conditioning that people learn to associate stimuli with certain responses over time. When Sutherland was theorizing about crime, the public generally saw people who committed crimes as abnormal. To Sutherland, criminal behavior was not about free-willed choice or abnormality but occurred due to what one learned from their close peers. His proposal that anyone could become a criminal through normal learning mechanisms was quite shocking.

Burgess and Akers' Social Learning Theory

While Sutherland (1947) developed one of the most well-known theories, one limitation was his description of precisely how learning occurred. In the eighth proposition of differential association theory, Sutherland (1947) states that all the mechanisms of learning play a role in learning criminal behavior. This suggests that the acquisition of criminal behavior involves more than the simple imitation of observable criminal behavior, but Sutherland does not fully explain exactly how definitions from associates facilitate criminal behavior. Robert Burgess and Ronald Akers (1966) reformulated the propositions developed by Sutherland into what was initially called differential reinforcement theory. Akers (1998) eventually modified differential reinforcement theory into its final form, **social learning theory**.

Social learning theory is composed of four main components: 1) differential associations, 2) definitions, 3) differential reinforcement, and 4) imitation. The first two components are nearly identical to

those observed in differential association theory. Differential association was expanded to include both direct interactions with others who engage in criminal acts and more indirect associations that expose individuals to various norms or values. For example, friends of friends who may not directly interact with an individual still exert indirect influence through the reinforcing behaviors and definitions of a directly tied friend. Definitions were similarly described as the attitudes or meanings attributed to behaviors and can be both general and specific. General definitions reflect broad moral, religious, or other conventional values related to the favorability of committing a crime, whereas specific definitions contextualize or provide additional details surrounding one's view of acts of crime. For example, a general definition of crime may reflect an individual's belief that they should never hurt someone else, but the use of substances is acceptable because it does not harm anyone else. Recent efforts have also underscored that attitudes toward crime can be even more specific and depend on situational characteristics of the act (Thomas, 2018, 2019). For instance, an individual may hold the general definition that they should never fight someone. However, they may adopt a specific definition that suggests that if someone insulted their family or started the conflict, then perhaps fighting is acceptable.

Borrowing from principles of operant conditioning, Burgess and Akers (1966) argued that differential reinforcements are the driver of whether individuals engage in crime. This concept refers to the idea that an individual's past, present, and anticipated future rewards and punishments for actions explain crime. If an individual experiences or anticipates that certain behaviors will result in positive benefits or occur without consequences, the likelihood that the behavior will occur will increase (figure 6.8). This process is comprised of four types of reinforcements or punishments:

1. positive reinforcement: reinforcements that reward behavior, such as money, status from friends, and good feelings, will increase the likelihood that an action will be taken
2. positive punishment: a negative or aversive consequence, such as getting arrested, injured, or caught, that occurs after a behavior is exhibited decreases the likelihood it will happen again
3. negative reinforcement: reinforcements that help a person avoid the negative consequences of a behavior, such as avoiding getting caught, arrested, or facing disappointment from others, and increase the likelihood that an action will be taken
4. negative punishment: the removal of a positive reinforcement or stimulus after an undesired behavior occurs to decrease the likelihood a person will engage in the behavior again; for instance, if a child gets into a fight with a friend, their parent may take away their cell phone, cut off their Netflix access, or remove other privileges.

Lastly, imitation, the mimicking of a behavior after observing others doing it, is often what facilitates the initiation of behavior. Once the behavior has been engaged in, imitation plays less of a role in the maintenance of or desistance from that behavior.
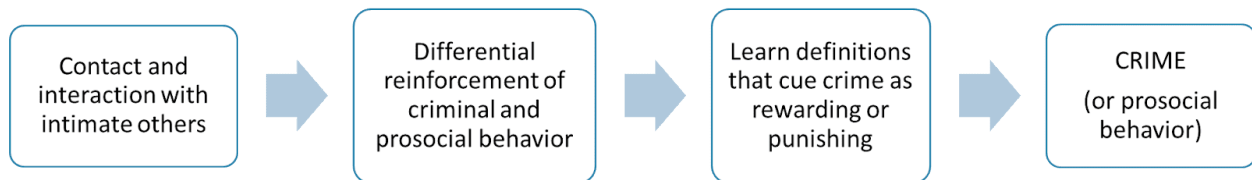
Figure 6.8. This diagram illustrates how crime is learned according to Burgess and Aker's social learning theory.

You can think of social learning theory as the combination of differential association theory with the concepts of operant conditioning. While differential association theory does not address *how* learning happens, social learning theory does. It emphasizes the importance of reinforcements and punishments to the learning process for crime and other behaviors.

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6.3 Can Societal Reaction to Crime Cause More Crime?

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 62% of people released from prison in the United States in 2012 were rearrested within 3 years, and 71% were rearrested within 5 years, which sheds doubt on the argument that sanctions and punishments deter criminal behavior (Durose & Antenangeli, 2021). There is also a collection of conflicting research showing either that the experience of incarceration has no effect on future criminal offending (Nagin et al., 2009) or that it increases the likelihood of someone reoffending. Still other research shows that not subjecting people to formal punishments like incarceration makes them less likely to offend later in life (Petrosino et al., 2010). Simply put, a bunch of research shows that the classical perspective offers a conflicting and incomplete explanation of criminal behavior.

What might contribute to reoffending behavior? Taking a more holistic approach in which society's reactions to criminals are considered offers another explanation for criminal behavior and, especially, for continued criminal offending (recidivism). Important to this perspective is the sociological idea of the "looking-glass self." According to Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, the self is developed based on how we see ourselves, how we think others see us, and how other people actually see us.

Imagine that you go to a job interview and are confident, but when you get there, the interviewer seems uninterested and bored. You might start to think that they doubt your abilities and think you are not a good fit, even if the interviewer believes you do have the skills for the job. As you adopt your *perception* of what they think about you, your perception of self can change too; you might walk in feeling confident and leave feeling defeated and unqualified.

What do our thoughts of self have to do with criminal behavior? Because our sense of self is influenced by interactions with others, we know and conform to others' expectations of us. Sociologist Erving Goffman referred to this as role performance. Such performance is one component of **symbolic interactionist theory,** which in part posits that people take on roles when interacting with others. Think about how you present yourself and your life on Instagram versus LinkedIn. You probably present yourself differently to your friends and family than you do to professional contacts as a way of managing your image and the way people perceive you (figure 6.9). However, the process of role-taking can also result in criminal behavior. Furthermore, the way that people react to our presentation of self can lead to us being viewed as criminal.
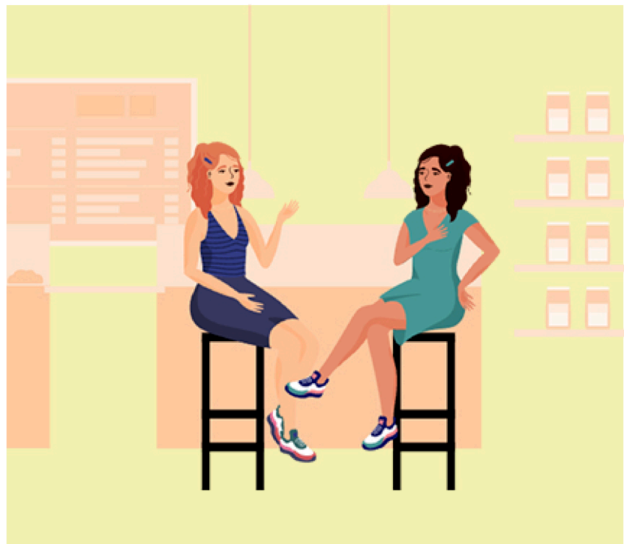
Figure 6.9. *The way we present ourselves on different social media platforms illustrates role-taking and our attempts to manage our self-image. Your photos and posts across all platforms may represent you, but how would you feel if your followers on Instagram and LinkedIn suddenly switched? Do you present different versions of yourself to different audiences?*

Learn More: Conforming to Criminality

For centuries, researchers have been trying to understand how people can commit deplorable acts and why they do so. The Nazi genocide in World War II was a motivator for a lot of this research because it was (and still is) a struggle to understand how so many people went along with what the Nazis were doing.

Psychologist Solomon Asch thought people were just conforming for their own protection. He conducted a study on conformity in the 1950s. His study focused on a fake "vision test" in which a group of students were asked to look at three lines and decide which line matched the length of the reference line (figure 6.10). What he was really studying was whether participants would change their answers to match (conform) with others in the group. Asch found that 75% of the participants conformed at least once, and 5% conformed every time. Asch's study showed how conformity is overtrained in our educational system. Think back to elementary school and how conformity was rewarded. We are taught to conform, and as a result, going against a group is difficult for most.

In 1961, Stanley Milgram followed up Asch's experiment with his own that focused on obedience (figure 6.11). Milgram tried to answer the question of whether or not it was possible that many of the Nazis had simply been obediently following orders. The experiment setup was simple. There was a teacher and a learner. Unbeknownst to the "teacher," the "learner" was a plant in the study (an actor) and knew what was going on. The teacher would read a list of words, and the learner had to recall a particular pair from a list of four possible choices. If the learner missed an answer, the teacher was supposed to give them an electric shock. Although the learner was not actually hooked up to a real machine that would produce a shock, the teacher believed that they were. When the teacher paused, not wanting to shock the learner (who had previously revealed that they had been checked out for heart issues), the facilitator of the experiment would say, "The experiment requires you to continue," "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and finally, "You have no other choice but to continue." Even after the learner screamed, 65% of the participants in the teacher role continued to shock the learner up to the highest level (450 volts), and all the participants in the teacher roles continued administering shocks up to 300 volts. All the teachers shocked the learner at least once. Milgram (Mcleod, 2023) later explained in 1974, that his most important finding in this study was the "extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any length on the command of an authority."
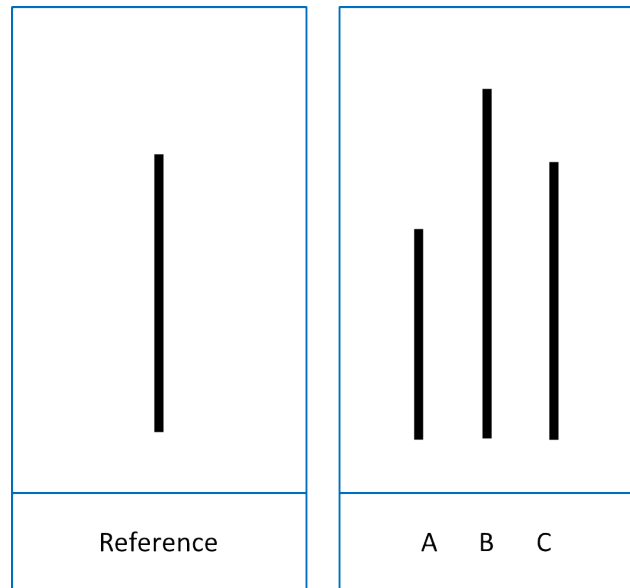

Figure 6.10. An example of what the participants would have seen in Asch's study, in which they had to select whether line A, B, or C most closely matched the reference line. Have you ever questioned yourself or chosen something you normally would not because everyone else did?

In 1971, Phillip Zimbardo conducted the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment in which college student participants were randomly assigned the roles of either "guard" or "prisoner." In this study, the guards quickly began using their power to brutalize and humiliate the prisoners. The experiment was designed to last 2 weeks, but because of the trauma experienced by the participants, it was stopped after only 6 days. In this experiment, participants were not guided by an authority figure but rather by their own belief of how they were supposed to behave in their specific roles. If you want to learn more about this controversial study, you can watch the 8-minute video in figure 6.12.

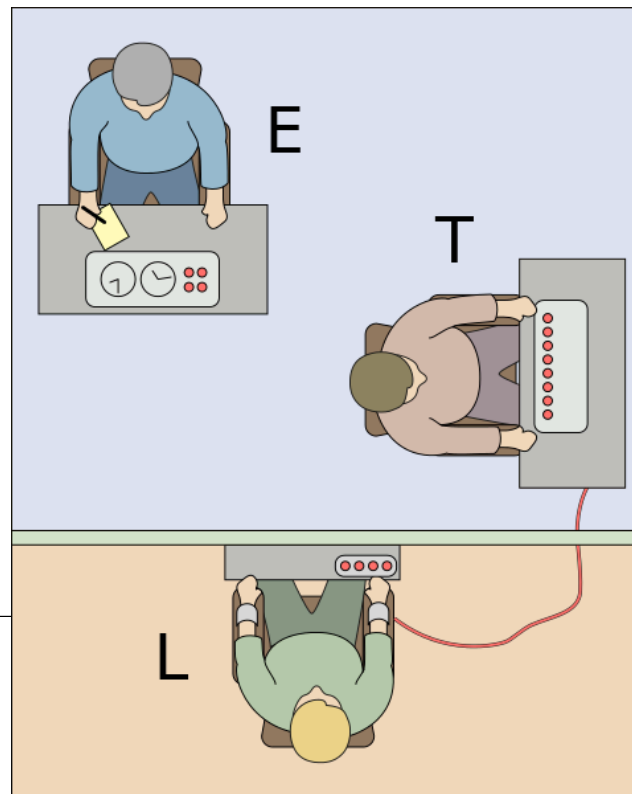*One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=547#oembed-1*

Figure 6.11. *This image is an illustration of the Milgram experiment. The experimenter (E) convinces the subject ("Teacher" T) to give what they believe are painful electric shocks to another subject ("Learner" L), who is actually an actor.*

https://youtu.be/oAX9b7agT9o

Figure 6.12. The Stanford Prison Experiment, although unethical by modern standards, remains a famous investigation into our conformity behavior. Transcript.

These studies exemplify the significance of social interaction and reaction, role performance and identity management, and our tendencies to conform our behavior based on social expectations or pressure.

Labeling Theory

Rooted in the ideas of self-presentation and symbolic interactionism, American sociologist Howard Becker (1963) believed that "deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender." In other words, according to Becker's **labeling theory**, someone only becomes deviant or criminal once that label is applied to them (figure 6.13). This can occur through negative societal reactions that ultimately result in a tarnished and damaged self-image and negative social expectations.

In an earlier formulation of labeling theory, Frank Tannenbaum (1938) referred to the process wherein a stigmatizing label may lead a person to start seeing themselves as a criminal. This occurs through "a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and

self-conscious" the criminal traits in question (Tannenbaum, 1938, p. 19-20). He calls this process the dramatization of evil. In this drama, the specialized treatment a young person is given by the police and courts is instrumental in leading them to see themselves as a criminal.

Sociologist Edwin Lemert expanded on the concepts of labeling theory and identified two types of deviance that affect identity formation. *Primary deviance* is a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others. Speeding is a deviant act, but receiving a speeding ticket generally does not make others view you as a bad person, nor does it alter your own self-concept. Individuals who engage in primary deviance still maintain a feeling of belonging in society and are likely to continue to conform to norms in the future.

Sometimes, in more extreme cases, primary deviance can morph into secondary deviance. *Secondary deviance* occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after their actions are labeled as deviant by members of society. The person may begin to take on and fulfill the role of a "deviant" as an act of rebellion against the society that has labeled them as such. For example, consider a high school student who often cuts class and gets into fights. The student is reprimanded frequently by teachers and school staff, and soon enough, they develop a reputation as a troublemaker. As a result, the student starts acting out even more and breaking more rules. The student has adopted the "troublemaker" label and embraced this deviant identity. Secondary deviance can be so strong that it bestows a master status on an individual. A *master status* is a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual. In other words, a person can be resocialized into a deviant role and their identity based on social reaction to and labeling of an initial deviant act. Some people see themselves primarily as doctors, artists, or grandparents, while others see themselves as people who beg, commit crimes, or use drugs.

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https://youtu.be/QHSvZZ1pnm0

Figure 6.13. This 5-minute "Labeling Theory" [Streaming Video] video provides a helpful summary of labeling theory. Transcript.

To illustrate how important the label is in continued criminal behavior, consider this example. A high school student steals an SAT-prep book, doesn't get caught, uses it to get a great score on the SATs, gets into and graduates from a good college, goes to law school, and later becomes a successful judge. The initial deviance or primary deviation did not really affect the student or their future. On the other hand, let's assume the student was caught stealing the book, and the store owner pressed charges. When everyone at school finds out, parents and teachers might make comments about the student's lack of integrity or character. The resulting criminal record (formal label) and reputation (informal label) could impact the student's scholarship opportunities, make college dreams less accessible, and cause anxiety about the now uncertain future. As a result of not attending college, the student starts to feel inferior to classmates who did and begins selling drugs on the side to make more money, leading to an arrest for distributing illicit substances.

In this example, we can see how the social reaction to the student's primary deviance and the resulting formal and informal labels impacted the student's future offending behavior. Such a process can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies in which a person acts in line with the label that has been placed on them because they start to conform to others' expectations of them. Many teen and young adult comedies (figure 6.14 *A* and *B*) explore related ideas of role performance, presentation of self, and labeling theory in action.
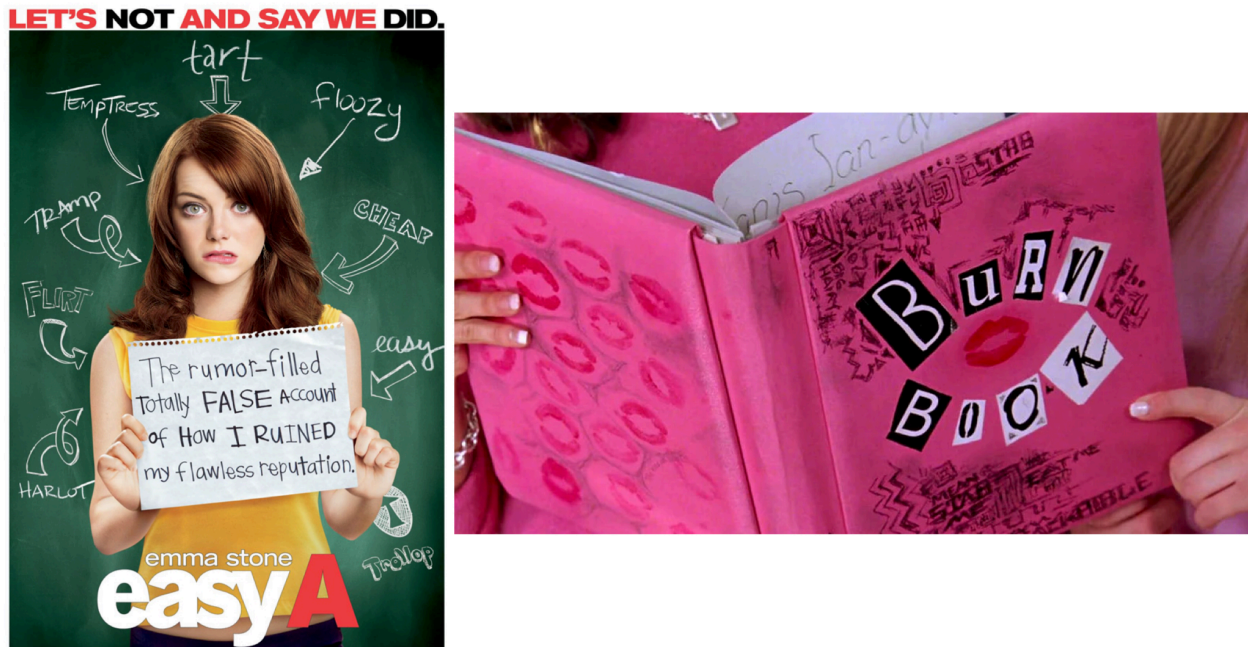

Figure 6.14. A shows the movie poster for Easy A, and B shows a still of the "Burn Book" from Mean Girls. These films illustrate the power of informal labels and how they can impact behavior and identity. Have you ever purposely tried to defy or embrace a label that a friend, family member, teacher, or classmate placed on you?

Labeling theory may help us better understand the high rate of recidivism in the United States that was discussed previously. One of the most difficult labels in society for people to see past is the label of the "criminal." Labeling theory suggests that once an individual is labeled, they may begin to identify with that label, and continue to engage in behaviors consistent with those labels. In other words, criminal sanctions may backfire because labeling someone as a "delinquent" or "criminal" may actually increase their future delinquency and criminal behavior. (figure 6.15)
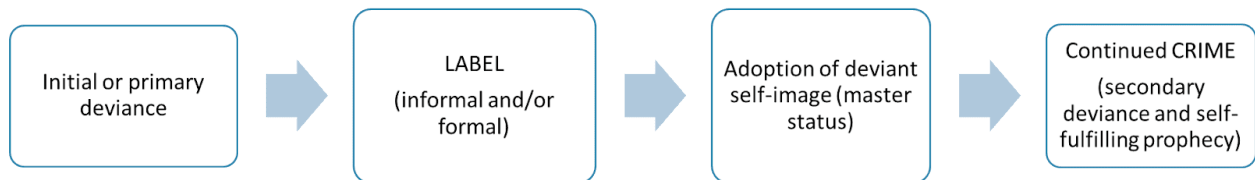
Figure 6.15. This diagram shows the way that societal reaction can lead to continued crime according to labeling theory.

Activity: Rosenhan on Being Sane in Insane Places

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https://youtu.be/D8OxdGV_7lo

Figure 6.16. Watch the video "Rosenhan—Being Sane in Insane Places" [Streaming Video], and discuss the following questions with your classmates. Transcript.

1. What emotions, images, or characteristics come to mind when you hear the terms "insane" or "sane"?
2. How does this study relate to labeling theory?

3.   Think about the time and context in which Rosenhan's study took place. How can culture and time impact what is considered deviant behavior?
4.   What are some terms used to describe people who commit crime or become involved in the criminal justice system that might become stigmatizing labels?
5.   How might Rosenhan's study relate to the experience of being incarcerated in prison?

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6.4 Subcultural Theories of Crime

Culture consists of tangible things that you can touch as well as ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. The style of our buses in the United States compared to those in other countries becomes part of our culture, just as our norms about how close you should stand to other passengers on the bus are part of our culture (Conerly et al., 2024). Societies have a mainstream culture consisting of the conventional norms and status quo. Oftentimes, subcultures will also be present in a society. **Subcultures** are groups that share a specific identity that differs from the mainstream majority, even though they exist within the larger society (Conerly et al., 2024). Subcultural theories of crime view crime as a result of either conformity to a subculture or rebellion against the mainstream culture.

First, take a look at the context in which many of these theories developed. Following the housing boom and baby boom of the 1950s, the United States moved into an era of revolution in the 1960s and '70s. Many social norms were challenged, ranging from rebellions against mainstream music and clothing to larger demands for change in civil rights for marginalized groups. Inequalities were brought out into the open and sociologists took notice.

Merton's strain theory, as we discussed in [Chapter 5](#), made a lot of sense to some criminologists in this setting, and they began to see how well it fit with certain groups or situations. Scholars within The Chicago School expanded the notions of strain and anomie, building upon Merton's work, to explain how this might apply to everyday life for a broader population. Many subcultural theories combine elements of structural theories with components of learning and interactionist theories to explain how subcultures develop and may facilitate criminal offending. In this chapter, we will discuss theories on the subculture of violence, cultural deviance, and the code of the streets, as well as criminological explanations of gang formation, including status frustration theory and differential opportunity theory.

Deviating From the Dominant Culture

The dominant culture in a society is promoted as the only acceptable way to live, behave, and believe, whether or not smaller groups who are not represented in this dominant majority agree. The norms and values of the dominant culture are even considered "right" when they contradict what is actually preferred by smaller, less powerful groups. These other groups often develop their own subcultures, which may not align with the dominant culture and are considered deviant.

Among the sociologists in The Chicago School, the subcultures they witnessed in urban Chicago were the subject of much of their research. Most of the (especially early) theorists were part of the dominant culture in the United States. However, it is in this area that Black scholars were finally able to gain prominence by explaining what the experience is like from inside a subculture, rather than looking in from the outside as many white scholars did.

For decades, W.E.B. Du Bois, a Black sociologist working in the early 1900s, was excluded from discussions on criminological and sociological theories because of his race. Many of his assertions were later claimed by or credited to white scholars who made similar arguments. He also struggled to get published

in academic journals and major periodicals because they did not accept work from Black scholars. His work did not become truly appreciated in the mainstream until nearly 100 years after it was presented. Du Bois studied crime in Black communities long before those in The Chicago School began their work. Du Bois is noted for his theories on racial injustice, the social construction of crime, and the criminalization of Blackness. He argued that Black communities experienced racist social and economic exclusion, creating an area where crime was one of the few options for survival.

Later, when Shaw and McKay published their social disorganization theory in the 1940s, they were given credit for discovering much of what Du Bois had already described. His work still gets conflated with theirs, despite the fact that Shaw and McKay looked at social control within neighborhoods, whereas Du Bois recognized the societal systems that caused the phenomena that led to social disorganization in the first place. He argued that resolving issues of racial exclusion, oppression, and economic injustice would drastically reduce criminal behavior. For some criminologists,these mechanisms of marginalization explain the development of subcultures that embrace or facilitate criminality.

The Subculture of Violence and Cultural Deviance Theory

Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti (1967) developed the **subculture of violence theory**, which states that certain norms and values in working class communities can explain violent crime. According to these researchers, violence is an expected and normalized response to conflict in these communities. It is not viewed negatively, but rather as just the way things are done. For this reason, Wolfgang and Ferracuti claimed people in this subculture are always prepared for interactions to turn violent. There is no guilt associated with the violence, according to Wolfgang and Ferracuti, and it is typically encouraged and valued. However, reacting to situations with violence is a learned behavior, which means it can be unlearned.

Walter Miller also believed that the entire lower class in America had its own subculture, with values and norms that differed from those of mainstream America. Miller's (1958) **cultural deviance theory** claims that lower-class parents socialize their children into six focal concerns that run counter to mainstream culture, including trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy (figure 6.17). According to Miller, adhering to these values is simply an act of conformity to the subculture held by the lower class. However, such adherence leads to delinquency and crime.

Figure 6.17. This table shows the six values that Miller's cultural deviance theory says lower-class families embrace. According to Miller, conformity to these values can result in delinquency and crime.

Focal Concern (Value)	Meaning
Trouble	The value of being able to get yourself out of your own personal problems; can actually elevate your social status within the subculture
Toughness	The value of strength and ability and willingness to fight, especially to uphold your social reputation
Smartness	The value of being able to outsmart or con others to achieve material gains (street smarts)
Excitement	The value of thrill-seeking, especially as a way to escape the mundane existence of being in the lower class
Fate	The belief in destiny and luck; can disregard accountability and responsibility for one's actions especially as many in the lower class do not believe they will live long lives
Autonomy	The value of independence and not being controlled by anyone

The Code of the Streets

"It's easy to be judgmental about crime when you live in a world wealthy enough to be removed from it. But the hood taught me that everyone has different notions of right and wrong, different definitions of what constitutes crime, and what level of crime they're willing to participate in."
Trevor Noah, South African comedian, political commentator, and former host of *The Daily Show*

In 1999, Elijah Anderson, a Black sociologist, studied Black neighborhoods in Philadelphia building on the work of W. E. B. Du Bois. In his book, *The Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City,* he named and detailed aspects of street culture that he said stresses a hyperinflated notion of manhood centering on the idea of respect. According to Anderson, respect was defined as being treated right or being granted deserved deference.

In this street culture or **code of the street**, a man's sense of worth is determined by the respect he can command in public. Anderson found that since these young Black men lived in a subculture that was violent due to lack of jobs and basic public services, stigma related to race, and hopelessness, an individual could not back down from any threat, no matter how serious. Also, since economic and social circumstances limited opportunities for legitimate success, many of these men tried to find alternative ways of making money to provide for their families (similar to the innovators in Merton's strain theory). As Trevor Noah suggested, the environment can alter what behavior is deemed acceptable.

In his research, Anderson identified two types of Black American families who resided in the inner-city: *decent* families and *street* families. Decent families embraced middle-class and mainstream norms, while street families fully embraced "street" culture, which was characterized by violence, aggression, and lawlessness. He claimed that standing against "middle-class decency" was ingrained in the code of the streets. The code, or rules and norms of the inner city, helped individuals achieve success on the streets but harmed their ability to achieve socially accepted (and legal) success (figure 6.18). This made for a dif-

ficult transition for individuals who wished to leave "the life" but lacked the skills to achieve success in a society where one does not benefit from being street-smart (figure 6.19).
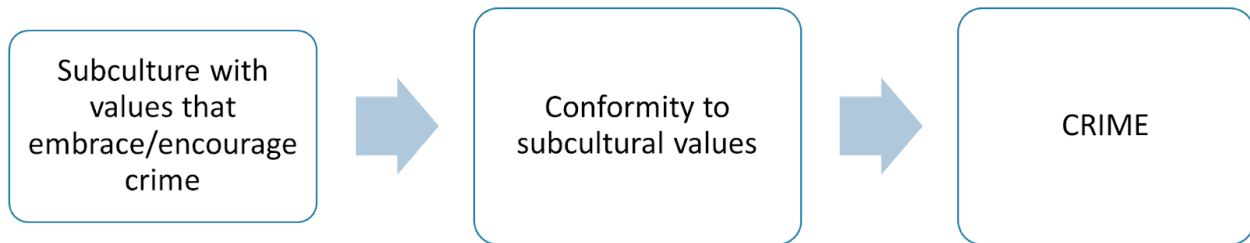

Figure 6.18. *This diagram shows the way that many subcultural theories explain how conformity to a separate value or belief system can lead to crime.*

Activity: Exploring Anderson's Code of the Street

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=549#oembed-1

https://youtu.be/BZHnZdx25BQ

Figure 6.19. Watch "Street Codes—Code of the Street, Elijah Anderson" [Streaming Video], and discuss the following questions with your classmates. Transcript.

1. How is the code of the streets at odds with mainstream/dominant culture?
2. How do concepts discussed in the video relate to both subcultural theories and strain theories? In other words, how would each theory explain the significance of these concepts/factors?
3. Based on examples provided in the video, what might contribute to racial tensions between Black community members and law enforcement in urban settings?
4. How do you see girls and women represented in the code of the streets?
5. Do you think that the values associated with lower-class and Black communities, according to subcultural theories, accurately reflect these communities? Do you think these communities deny

middle-class/mainstream social norms?

6. What are the ethical issues with researchers from mainstream or ethnocentric (white) cultures studying marginalized populations?

Gangs as Delinquent Subcultures

Frederic Thrasher, another white sociologist from the famed Chicago School, conducted a study in 1927 about gangs. He believed that the social conditions in the United States at the end of the 19th century had encouraged the development of street gangs. Like many of the other sociologists we have discussed, he was looking at the ways in which society caused crime and, in this case, encouraged people to band together.

During the 19th century, immigrants had filled the inner-city neighborhoods, creating a more culturally diverse population. They faced deteriorating housing, poor employment prospects, and a rapid turnover in the population. These conditions created neighborhoods with weak and ineffective social institutions and social control mechanisms. Thrasher believed the lack of social control encouraged youth to find alternative ways to establish social order, and they did so by forming gangs.

He described gangs as coming together spontaneously at first, then becoming bonded through conflict with other gangs and the surrounding community. What made Thrasher's work unique from other theories with similar concepts (such as social disorganization theory and strain theories) was his identification of gangs as a subculture. Although he was the first to start down this road of studying subcultures, several other subculture scholars followed suit as they worked to understand gangs specifically and in a subcultural context.

In the 1950s, Albert Cohen applied concepts from Merton's strain theory and subcultural theories to juvenile gang formation. As with many early criminologists, Cohen saw juvenile delinquency primarily as a working-class, male phenomenon. This is because working-class youth are taught the democratic ideal that everyone can become rich and successful, but in school they encounter a set of distinctly middle-class values against which their behavior is measured. These class-specific values are framed as universal, making it much easier for middle-class youth to achieve recognition in school for behaving "correctly." This leads to feelings of inferiority, which last as long as the working-class boys cling to that particular worldview. This strain is referred to as status frustration, for which **status frustration theory** is named.

According to Cohen (1955), boys experiencing status frustration may adopt attitudes and standards that defy the mainstream middle-class ideals as a way of rebelling against them and relieving the guilt of not being able to live up to them. This response is referred to as *reaction formation*. The delinquent subculture presents young boys with a new set of values and a means of acquiring status within a different cultural context. For example, while the middle-class places value on controlling aggression and respecting property, the culture of the gang legitimizes violence and group stealing (Cohen, 1955). While the act of theft may bring material benefits, it also reaffirms the cultural cohesion of the new group and the sta-

tus of its members. It is a joint activity that derives its meaning from the common understandings and common loyalties of the group (figure 6.20).

Like Merton and Cohen, criminologists Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) researched societal goals and the ability to achieve those goals. Incorporating concepts from Sutherland's differential association theory, they heavily emphasized the different opportunities (some more legal than others) available for juveniles to get what they want. They noticed that some neighborhoods offered more opportunities to participate in illegitimate means (like theft or selling drugs) to achieve one's goals. Their **differential opportunity theory** identified three different types of gangs that would develop based on the type of neighborhood and the legal and illegal opportunities offered there.

The three gang types that can form according to differential opportunity theory are criminal gangs, conflict gangs, and retreatist gangs. Criminal gangs form in lower-class neighborhoods that already have organized criminal networks of adults who mentor the youth into crime. These illegal opportunities for achieving wealth facilitate this youth gang formation. Conflict gangs form in neighborhoods that are unstable and disorganized. Like their environment, these gangs are unorganized, and rather than engaging in organized crime for profit, members tend to use violence as a means of gaining respect within their neighborhood. This is because these neighborhoods lack legal and illegal opportunities for financial and material gain. Finally, retreatist gangs also form in areas where legal and illegal opportunities for gain are lacking. However, rather than using violence to achieve status and respect, the members simply want to escape from their reality and may engage in personal drug use to do so.

For each explanation of male youth gang formation, the theorists explored the impact of social structure, learned behavior, strain and opportunity, and/or adherence to subculture norms. Additionally, they all recognized the unique status of adolescence and how it can make people more susceptible to peer pressure or feelings of inferiority.
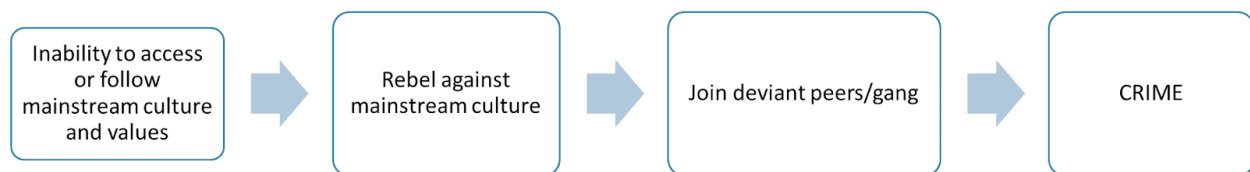

Figure 6.20. This diagram shows another way that some subcultural theories explain a path to crime, especially juvenile delinquency and gang formation.

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 6.20. Juvenile delinquency graphic by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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Figure 6.19."Street Codes — Code of the Street, Elijah Anderson" by Code of the Street, Elijah Anderson is licensed under the Standard YouTube License.

6.5 Modern Application: How Is It Relevant Now?

Learning theories and labeling theories are still valid and being scientifically tested and expanded. Deviant sources of influence have been demonstrated to be one of the most robust predictors of crime. Research indicates that deviant association with friends, best friends, siblings, co-workers, gang members, romantic partners, indirect ties, and university roommates can explain why individuals participate in criminal behavior (Capaldi et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2005; Fergusson et al., 2007; Hashimi et al., 2021; Haynie, 2002; Haynie et al., 2005; Kissner & Pyrooz, 2009; Payne & Cornwell, 2007; Piquero et al., 2005; Rees & Pogarsky, 2011; Rowan, 2016). However, learning theories have been critiqued for the fact that, although learning is universal, the bulk of what learning theories represent and explain is derived from white frames of reference and samples.

Relatedly, research on labeling theory finds that informal labels from the community and our close contacts may have more influence on our behavior (Tibbetts, 2015). Some of those labels may negatively impact social bonds and also contribute to criminal behavior. Marginalized people and people of color may be more vulnerable to informal labels and the broken bonds that follow due to stereotypes that associate criminality with marginalized groups (Bernburg, 2019). Although the scientific rigor in testing labeling theories has improved in the early 21st century, critics contend that labeling theories are too vague and lack adequate explanation of, especially, primary deviance.

Subcultural theories have been heavily critiqued for various reasons. Women and girls are essentially left out of the equation (a critique you will see again in Chapter 8). Also, especially regarding juvenile delinquency and juvenile gang membership, these theories do not really explain why most people age out of crime (more to come on this topic in Chapter 7). These theories have also been critiqued for offensively assigning negative values to already marginalized populations. It is important to critically evaluate historical oppressive power structures when studying the working-class and marginalized groups, which not all subcultural theories initially did. We will explore this topic more in Chapter 8.

Check Your Knowledge

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6.6 Conclusion

These theories illustrate the complex dynamics of criminal behavior and the impact that social environments have on crime. Learning is a core feature of many theories of crime as they explore the mechanisms through which behaviors are transmitted and sustained across generations. Learning theories focus on the learning mechanisms, interactionist theories emphasize the person-to-person dynamics, and subcultural theories center the behavior in the context of whether or not it conforms with a separate set of values and norms. Another common thread among these explanations is the fact that none of them assume criminal behavior is inborn or unchangeable. Learned behaviors can be unlearned, coping skills can be taught, and community well-being can be improved, all of which could help in crime prevention.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores crime as a learned behavior, the ways that social interactions and societal reactions to deviance can impact criminal offending, and subcultural theories of crime. Learning theories incorporate psychological understanding of human learning to explain how people come to commit crime. Key theorists conclude that crime is learned from intimate others, often just like anything else is learned. Sometimes this behavior becomes ingrained due to repetitive exposure to pro-crime values (differential association theory), and other times the behavior is reinforced through rewards and punishments (social learning theory). Other theorists explain ingrained criminality as a product of our society's role in placing informal and formal labels on people who engage in deviant behavior (labeling theory). Finally, some criminologists highlight the significance of cultural expectations and values, as an inability to achieve conventional societal goals may lead to rebellion or creation of a new subculture, both of which may lead to criminal offending (subcultural theories).

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. How do learning theories explain variations in criminal behavior across different social groups?
2. What are some real-world examples to which the principles of operant conditioning can be applied to understand criminal behavior and its consequences?
3. What challenges do historically marginalized groups and/or people living below the federal poverty threshold face in being able to achieve the American Dream?
4. Discuss some of the criticisms or weaknesses of learning theories, societal reaction theories, and subcultural theories.
5. How can insights from learning theories and subcultural theories inform crime prevention strategies aimed at reducing recidivism? What ethical considerations should be taken into account?
6. What are the implications of labeling theory for understanding the effects of criminal justice policies on individuals and communities?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- This video, "Subcultural Theories [Streaming Video]," discusses key concepts and propositions of subcultural theories in criminology.
- This article, "People-First Language Matters [Website]," discusses how terms such as "felon" or "convict" contribute to stigmatization. This is relevant to labeling theory and societal reaction.

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SOCIAL CONTROL AND LIFE COURSE THEORIES

Figure 7.1. *Some criminologists might ask what causes people to ignore clearly posted signs like the danger notice in A and the rubbish disposal directions in B. Others, such as those we will discuss in this chapter, might focus on the inability of the sign to maintain control of people or consider why someone might break the rules during their youth and stop once they age. Have you ever seen someone ignore a posted sign (or done it yourself)? What are some reasons why someone might do this?*

Contents of This Chapter:

How to Navigate this Book Online

Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

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You can also click on the "+" in the table of contents to see the chapter's sections and navigate directly to that place in the book.

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Reading on Smaller Screens

On smaller screens, like phones and tablets, the CONTENTS are at the top of the page. Look for the Previous and Next buttons at either the top or bottom of the page.
7

7.1 Chapter Introduction

So far in this book, we have explored many sociological theories of crime, including social structural and strain theories, learning and interactionist theories, and subcultural theories. This chapter will introduce you to some more key categories of criminological theories that are grounded in sociology. Control theories and life course theories ask some different questions and take different approaches than those we have discussed so far (figure 7.1).

Additionally, we will address theory integration in this chapter. You may have noticed throughout these chapters that many theories seem to share similar concepts, borrow ideas from other fields of study, and feel like mash-ups of each other. There is more than one way to think about integrated theories, but we will cover some of the major attempts at integrating theoretical assumptions and the discussion that they have sparked in the criminological field.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Explain how social control theories and the developmental life-course perspective differ conceptually from traditional theories in criminology.
2. Analyze the significance of conventional societal institutions in the explanation of crime according to control theories.
3. Evaluate factors that contribute to the onset and desistance of criminal behavior over one's life.
4. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of theoretical integration.
5. Describe the type of crime prevention policies that can be supported by social control and developmental life course theories.

Key Terms

- **Age-crime curve:** the consistently found relationship between age and crime in which crime peaks between adolescence and the early 20s, then drops off

- **Age-graded theory:** Sampson and Laub's theory that looks at age and delinquent or criminal behavior, in addition to what was going on in the individual's life at the time of that behavior, emphasizing transitions or turning points
- **Containment theory:** Reckless's theory that crime results from a failure of inner and outer control mechanisms and the inability to resist pushes and pulls into crime
- **Developmental life course perspective:** a collection of theories that look at criminal behavior over the course of someone's lifetime and pay special attention to the onset, persistence, and desistance of criminal behavior
- **Drift theory:** Sykes and Matza's theory that juveniles *drift* in and out of delinquency, especially when social controls like parental supervision are weak, and learn to justify their behavior in one of five ways (see techniques of neutralization)
- **Dual taxonomy of antisocial behavior:** Moffit's life course theory of in which she described adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent offenders
- **General theory of crime:** Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory that lack of self-control is the primary cause of criminal behavior
- **Restorative justice:** a perspective or theory of justice with the goal of repairing harm caused by crime and restoring the well-being of both perpetrators and victims rather than just punishing those who have committed crimes
- **Social control theory:** Hirschi's theory that, through successful socialization, a bond forms between individuals and the conventional society that limits criminal behavior; crime occurs when the bonds are weakened or broken and a person is free to engage in deviant/criminal behavior; also called social bond theory
- **Techniques of neutralization:** one of five techniques used by adolescents to justify their criminal behavior according to Sykes and Matza's drift theory
- **Theory of reintegrative shaming:** Braithwaite's theory that effective shaming within a society that disapproves of a behavior but respects the person who engages in that behavior will reduce crime

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Figure 7.1 *B*. "Ignored Sign" by Michael Coghland is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

7.2 Why Don't People Commit Crime?

Most theories that attempt to discover the cause of crime focus on the individual or societal factors that influence them to commit crime. However, social control theories focus on the question "Why *don't* people commit crime?" Since the majority of society does not commit crimes, social control theories try to discover the reason people do not commit crime instead of trying to figure out why they do (figure 7.2). The notion of social control relates to formal or informal factors and relationships that keep people within certain bounds of what is socially acceptable because they do not want to harm those relationships. Social control theories focus on those factors and relationships.

Figure 7.2. *Different theories have different perspectives on the natural human state. Theories that ask "why do some people not commit crime?" assume that people are naturally prone to selfish and bad behavior from the time they are children. What do you think? Are people inherently good, inherently bad, or just blank slates shaped by their environment?*

Containment Theory

Criminologist Walter Reckless (1961) believed that crime was the consequence of peer pressure and the inability to resist. This is especially true when looking at juvenile delinquency. He argued that social pres-

sure to involve oneself in violations of the law, as well as a failure to resist such pressure, is the basis for criminal behavior. When Reckless looked at criminality, he compared it to a biological immune response, saying that not everyone who is exposed to a disease contracts it. In other words, not everyone caves to peer pressure. Sickness, like crime, results from a failure of control forces that can be either internal or external. He called his approach **containment theory**.

According to Reckless, the inner control system (inner containment) consists of attributes like self-control, a positive self-image, good judgment abilities, resistance to frustration, and responsibility. These internal factors contain someone and prevent them from committing crime. In contrast, the outer control system (outer containment) consists of environmental buffers against criminal behavior, such as effective parental supervision or discipline, the opportunity to feel like you belong, and reinforcement of your goals. These external factors contain someone and prevent them from committing crime.

Containment theory posits that these control systems need to be strong enough to resist "pushes" and "pulls." *Pushes* are internal factors that push someone toward criminality, like feelings of inferiority, frustration, or rebellion. These feelings can push someone to seek out deviant peer groups, especially if they lack a strong inner control system. External factors, such as poverty, are considered *pulls* that pull individuals toward criminality. For example, a child who lives in a very impoverished neighborhood that is riddled with illicit substances and gang activity would experience a lot of pulls toward delinquent behavior. Containment theory assumes that criminal behavior can be contained only when the inner and outer control systems are balanced.

Social Control Theory

Sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969) argued that human beings are similar to animals in that we sometimes fight and steal, while at other times we are pleasant and cooperative. This aggression and impulsivity do not require explanation, as these traits are simply a part of our nature. What requires explanation is why people do not engage in more of this type of behavior as it is the easiest way to satisfy our desires (Ashley, 2023). He claimed that strong prosocial bonds between individuals and social groups limit criminal behavior. He called this **social control theory**, or social bond theory, and said that when someone's bond with conventional society is weakened or broken, that person is free to engage in deviant or criminal behavior.

According to Hirschi, there are four components of the social bond: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Attachment is how much someone cares about their family, friends, employer, coworkers, and community and what those people think of the person and their behavior. Commitment is about someone's personal or career goals and how committed they are to achieving them. Involvement is about how much someone is engaged in work or other activities and what consumes their time. Belief refers to the amount someone agrees with the norms, values, rules, and laws to which they are subject or to which they are expected to conform.

For example, a teenager may be tempted to steal alcohol with their friends from a convenience store. However, they fear getting caught because they do not want their parents to be disappointed in them (attachment), a criminal record would make them ineligible for the scholarship they are working toward

(commitment), they have to babysit their little brother in the morning so they don't want to be out late anyway (involvement), and they don't think it is right to steal or to drink (belief). For all of these reasons, they decide to go home before their friends go to the store so they will not be involved in a crime.

General Theory of Crime

Why, if someone has all the social components of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, would they still commit a crime? Hirschi and Michael Gottfredson (1990) proposed a **general theory of crime** that looks at the connection between self-control and crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi claimed their theory could explain all crime by all people. They argued that lack of self-control was the primary cause of criminal behaviors. They claim most ordinary crimes require few skills to commit and have an immediate payoff. There is no long-term planning or goal; crimes are committed for immediate pleasure. Moreover, they claim, people who commit these ordinary crimes tend to be impulsive, insensitive to the suffering of others, short-sighted, and adventurous. If true, these traits (low self-control) were established before the person started committing crimes and will continue to manifest throughout that person's life.

Hirschi and Gottfredson argued a well-developed social bond will result in the creation of effective mechanisms of self-control, or being able to weigh the options and consequences to make the decision to resist temptation. The root cause of low self-control, they claim, is ineffective parenting. If parents are not attached to their child and do not supervise their child, recognize their child's deviant behaviors, or discipline their child, the child will develop low self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claim self-control, or the lack thereof, is established by 8 years old.

These control theories all share common themes about weakened or broken bonds to society. Inadequate socialization by parents, teachers, friends, and society at large contribute to these severed bonds. Without strong bonds to conventional societal institutions like family, school, religion, and work individuals are free to commit crime because their selfish ways are no longer being controlled through their associations (figure 7.3).
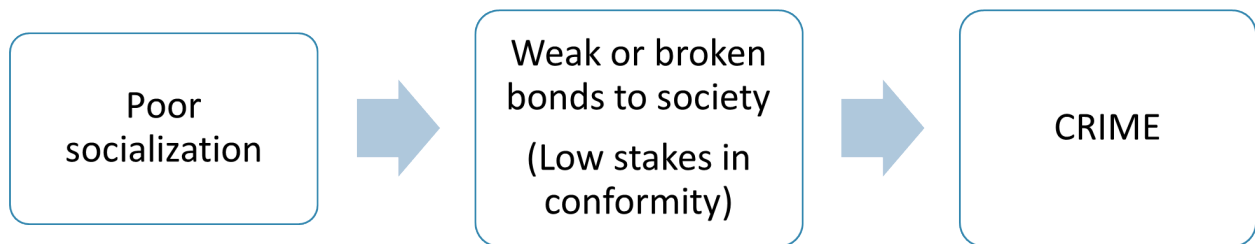
Figure 7.3. This diagram shows how control theories explain crime. All control theories broadly assume that appropriate socialization is an important piece of the puzzle and that weak or broken bonds to society result in criminal behavior.

Check Your Knowledge

> 🖥️ *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=559#h5p-28*

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Figure 7.3. "How Control Theories Explain Crime" by Jessica René Peterson is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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Figure 7.2. Image by Marta Wave is licensed under the Pexels License.

7.3 Why Do People Stop Committing Crime?

You may have noticed that many traditional criminological theories, such as Shaw and McKay's (1942) theory of social disorganization, the theories about gang formation by Cohen (1955) and Cloward and Ohlin (1960), and the control theories by Reckless (1961) and others, have tended to focus on explaining juvenile delinquency or offending that occurs in adolescence. This is the case for two reasons. First, most offending begins during adolescence—the transitional phase that begins around puberty and ends at adulthood—so most theories assume that the causes of offending can be found during this phase of life. Second, delinquency is fairly common during the adolescent years. Put differently, it is pretty normal for pre-teens and teenagers to do things that are illegal and test the boundaries of what they can get away with.

During infancy and childhood, parents hold a great deal of responsibility over their children's needs and behaviors. However, as children age, they become increasingly independent and responsible for their own behavior. Adolescence is often a period of experimentation, testing boundaries, and questioning figures of authority, including parents, teachers, and other adults. It is also the time when peers become much more important sources of influence and socialization. Research shows that adolescents are unique from adults in at least three ways: (1) they have lower levels of self-control; (2) they are less likely to consider the future; and (3) they are more sensitive to external influences, such as peers or incentives. All of these factors may elevate adolescent involvement in risky behaviors such as delinquency and crime.

Recent developments in neuroscience tell us that adolescence is a uniquely risky period because the psycho-socio-emotional system (which governs the processing of emotions, risk-taking, and sensation-seeking behavior) has finished developing, but the cognitive control system (which governs decision-making and self-regulation) has not. In fact, the cognitive control system does not finish developing until around the mid-20s. What this means is that adolescents are more likely to make risky decisions under heightened emotional conditions. It is not until well past the age of legal adulthood (age 18 in most jurisdictions and circumstances) that individuals have the capacity to engage in adult decision-making. This reality is reflected in our crime statistics.

The Age-Crime Curve

As early as the 19th century, French statistician Adolphe Quetelet (discussed in Chapter 3) saw that the propensity for criminal behavior was greater among young people (ages 21–25) and lower among older people (Beirne, 1987). The **age-crime curve** refers to the relationship between age and crime that has been demonstrated in numerous datasets (Farrington, 1986) and is often displayed graphically. An example is shown in figure 7.4, which plots the age of individuals convicted of crime in 2021 using data gathered through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) National Incident-Based Reporting System

(NIBRS) program you learned about in Chapter 2. As you can see, the crime rate rises throughout adolescence, peaks during the 20s, and then declines on a steady basis thereafter.
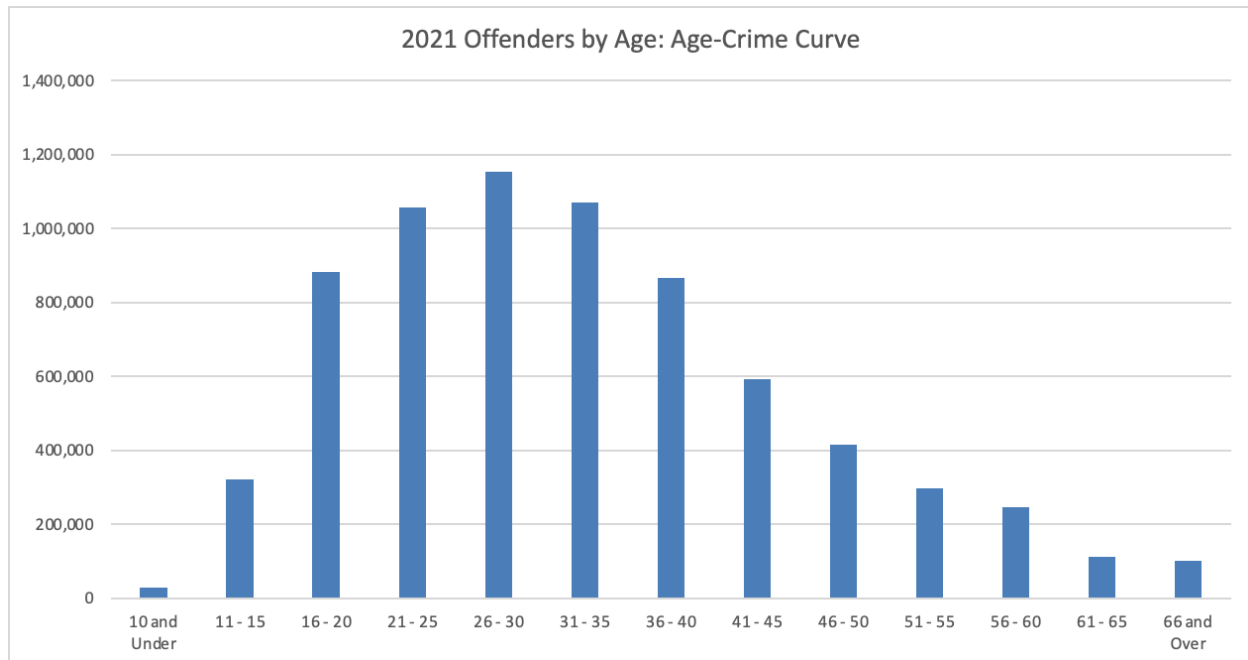

Figure 7.4. *2021 Offenders by age group per FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System. Image description available.* [Image description.](#)

One explanation for kids being able to engage in delinquent behavior without becoming "lifelong criminals" comes from Gresham Sykes and David Matza's (1964) drift theory. **Drift theory** explains that juveniles *drift* in and out of delinquency, especially when social controls like parental supervision are weak, and learn to justify their behavior in one of five ways. These justifications are known as **techniques of neutralization**, and they allow adolescents to avoid conflicting and uncomfortable feelings that can arise when your behavior does not match your beliefs (known in psychological terms as cognitive dissonance). Sykes and Matza (1957) identified five techniques of neutralization:

1. Deny responsibility: Juveniles learn to use this technique to deny that they are responsible for the criminal behavior they committed. This might look like, "It was not my fault; it was an accident or beyond my control."
2. Deny injury: Juveniles learn to use this technique to deny the wrongfulness of their behavior or deny that their behavior caused any actual harm. This might look like, "It was only a prank; I didn't hurt anyone" or "I just borrowed it; I didn't steal it."
3. Deny victim: Juveniles learn to use this technique to dehumanize or downplay the victim of their behavior. In other words, they neutralize their actions by claiming that they were acceptable because of who the victim was. Members of marginalized groups are easily targeted by this technique. This might look like, "The trans woman had it coming by wearing women's clothing here."
4. Condemn the condemners: Juveniles learn to use this technique to shift the blame to others, espe-

cially those who would disapprove of the behavior, as the juvenile sees them as hypocritical or corrupt. This might look like, "Who are they (parents) to tell me not to drink alcohol when they drink it themselves?"

5. Appeal to a higher loyalty: Juveniles learn to use this technique to justify their actions as necessary for a greater good or to maintain loyalty. This might look like, "I didn't do it for me; I did it for God," or "I did it to help a buddy out."

While drift theory can help us understand how youth engage in delinquency without fully adopting definitions favorable to crime (learning theories) or embracing a subculture's values (subcultural theories), it does not actually explain *why* or *how* juveniles stop committing crime.

The age-crime curve is one of the most consistent empirical facts in criminology and has been widely documented in Western countries such as the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, and Great Britain. It presents a criminological question that goes beyond whether or not the criminal justice system works: why do virtually all people who commit crimes ultimately desist from (slow down or completely stop) offending on their own? The majority of people who commit crimes when they are young stop committing crimes when they are in their 20s, and almost all of them stop by the time they reach their 40s, but why? Is it purely driven by age and physiological development, or are there other things at play? The developmental life course perspective may provide answers.

Activity: Applying Techniques of Neutralization

Sykes and Matza claimed that youth may "drift" in and out of criminal behavior, even when they are involved in or committed to mainstream social life and order. However, because they may feel guilt when they drift into criminal behavior, they rationalize or excuse their behavior in one of five ways to alleviate that guilt.

For this activity, read the following scenarios and respond to the questions.

1. You work for Walmart and steal $60.00 from the register one day. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior? Why?
2. You have an argument with your significant other and go to a bar afterward to cool off. You get drunk and end up going home with someone and having sex. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior? Why?
3. You are a senior in high school, and you don't complete your homework. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior? Why?
4. A police officer pulls you over for speeding in a school zone. When the officer approaches your window, you ask, "Shouldn't you be out catching 'real' criminals?" What technique of neutralization are you using to justify your behavior? Why?
5. You are in a gang, and you get caught spray painting graffiti on a building. Your fellow gang

members get away, and the police want you to give up their names. What technique are you likely to use to justify your behavior? Why?

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 7.4. "2021 Offenders by Age Group per FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System" by Taryn VanderPyl is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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7.4 Developmental and Life Course Perspective

The **developmental life course perspective** looks at criminal behavior over the course of someone's life-time. According to this perspective, criminality cannot be understood by studying people at a single point in time or by assuming that people are unchanging. Instead, to truly understand criminal behavior, it is important to follow individuals over time. This perspective seeks to understand why offending starts in the first place (i.e., onset), why it continues or even escalates in severity or frequency (i.e., persistence), and why it declines or slows down (i.e., desistance) at different stages of the life course. In this manner, we can understand the life events and turning points that affect both short- and long-term patterns of criminal behavior. This perspective emphasizes a person's individual development and life history.

Learn More: Celebrity Case Studies

When someone is famous for something they do well as an adult, it is easy to forget that their life was not always this way. Quite a few celebrities got in trouble with the law when they were younger and made significant changes as they grew older to become the people we know them as today. To illustrate this point, let's look at Lindsey Lohan, Mark Wahlberg, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (figure 7.4).

Lindsey Lohan went from child star and model to county jail and probation. Lohan got her first modeling contract at 3 years old and her first acting job at age 10, and she has been in the public eye ever since. She moved to Los Angeles alone at age 15. There, she faced several challenging years battling an eating disorder and drug and alcohol addiction. She was repeatedly arrested for driving under the influence, cocaine possession, theft, and driving on a suspended license. Lohan served multiple court-ordered stints in rehabilitation

Figure 7.5. A shows Lindsey Lohan, B shows Mark Wahlberg, and C shows Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. They are just a few examples of celebrities who have engaged in criminal behavior at some point in their lives.

facilities over a span of 6 years and remained on probation for even longer. After roughly 8 years of legal troubles, Lohan moved overseas and worked to treat her substance abuse disorder. She has since returned to acting.

Mark Wahlberg has a history of hostile behavior and hate crimes. As a teenager, he had more than one lawsuit filed against him, including a civil rights lawsuit for harassing Black children with racial slurs while throwing rocks at them. In the late 1980s, he pled guilty to assault after he nearly killed two men, one of whom he attacked while using anti-Asian slurs. The victims of Wahlberg's actions have since been interviewed and have different opinions on whether or not he deserves forgiveness. Ultimately though, Wahlberg's criminal past has had little impact on his career as an actor and business owner.

Dwayne Johnson, better known as "The Rock," turned his juvenile arrests for fighting, theft, and check fraud—all of which happened before age 17—into a career that allowed him to build on his strengths and support others to do the same. Johnson was noticed and recruited by his high school football coach, which Johnson points to as the beginning of his personal transformation. He later followed the professional wrestling career path of his father, then expanded into acting and producing. Perhaps most importantly, he now visits prisons to encourage those in custody to turn their lives around as well.

Imagine how each of these individuals' lives would look if you only saw them at one point in time instead of reading about their more complete story. When we see celebrity success stories, it can be easy to forget about unfavorable or even violent past behavior. For the everyday person, however, they might feel forever defined by their law violation(s). The developmental life course perspective is interested in explaining the events in one's life that changed the trajectory of their behavior, such as Lohan's international move, Wahlberg's system involvement, or Johnson's football career, and considers the entire life course rather than focusing on a small snapshot of someone's story.

Before we discuss the developmental life course perspective more thoroughly, let's explore a little bit of developmental psychology. Jean Piaget (1930, 1932), a developmental psychologist, studied childhood development and focused on children's cognitive growth. He believed that thinking is a central aspect of development and that children are naturally inquisitive. However, he said that children do not think and reason like adults and that their cognitive abilities develop through specific stages. He posited that it was not until the final stage, starting around age 11, when kids can begin using abstract and logical thinking. Similarly, Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) theorized that development of moral judgment occurred in six stages. When he studied people who had committed crime, he found that they scored lower in moral judgment, and he concluded that their criminality could be explained by their failure to properly move through all of the moral development stages. These ideas about the stages of development and their impact on future behavior is a thread woven throughout developmental life course theories.

In criminology, the developmental life course perspective has been studied and adjusted by a few influential scholars. First, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1957), completed one of the largest longitudinal studies in criminology with their report *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency*. The Gluecks began their study in 1939 by identifying 500 youths who had gone through the juvenile justice system (all of whom were white boys ages 10–17) from the Massachusetts correctional system. Each youth was matched to a comparable "non-delinquent" youth in the Boston public school system who shared the same age, ethnicity, neighborhood, and IQ. This means they tracked 1,000 participants over a couple of decades. This is very hard to do. The Gluecks gathered a variety of data on these 1,000 youths at three points in time: at approximately ages 14, 25, and 32. They collected data from interviews with the youths, their family members, teachers, employers, neighbors, and representatives of the criminal justice and the social welfare systems, in addition to archival data from police records.

This was a giant collection of data by the time they were done, and it has been used by several scholars to examine how behavior changes over the course of someone's life. The Gluecks' study was the first to investigate questions that would later become of central importance to developmental life course criminology. These include the relationship between age and crime, the focus on long-term patterns in criminal behavior, and the examination of unique causes of crime initiation, continuance, and desistance.

The second group to dive into studying developmental life course approaches also tracked a large group of youth for several years. Marvin Wolfgang, Robert Figlio, and Thorsten Sellin (1972) published a

study titled *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort* that examined the arrest records of 9,945 boys who were born in 1945 and resided in Philadelphia from ages 10–18. Wolfgang and his colleagues found that 35% of these boys became delinquent—defined as having official police contact for something other than a traffic violation—by their eighteenth birthday. Collectively, these 3,475 boys were responsible for 10,214 police contacts over that period. A small group—about 6% of the whole group and 18% of the delinquents—were identified as "chronic recidivists" because they had recorded at least five police contacts by age 18. This small group was responsible for over half of all offenses and two-thirds of all violent offenses. Like the Gluecks' earlier research, Wolfgang and his colleagues emphasized the importance of examining longer-term patterns in offending to truly identify more serious offenders, as opposed to just looking at single events.

The third major study in the developmental life course perspective was conducted through the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences. They put together a Panel on Research on Criminal Careers to focus on the study of individual patterns of criminal offenses over time that occur across a person's life. They called this someone's criminal career. You have the option to read the resulting report, titled *Criminal Careers and "Career Criminals"* [Website] (National Research Council, 1986), which introduced four key dimensions of the criminal career: (1) participation, (2) frequency, (3) seriousness, and (4) career length.

Participation refers to whether or not someone has ever participated in crime, and frequency refers to how often someone participates in criminal activity. The National Research Council said these two concepts were important to identify because they had different potential causes and required different policy responses. For example, preventing participation in crime in the first place would likely involve some type of programming outside of the criminal justice system, such as interventions for at-risk youth. To combat the frequency of offending, however, there would likely need to be more direct involvement of the juvenile or criminal justice system through some type of punishment.

During the 1980s, policymakers were particularly interested in using the idea of a criminal career to identify career criminals. They wanted to find that small percentage of individuals who commit a disproportionate share of crimes. They hoped that it would be possible to identify these so-called career criminals at the start of their criminal careers and selectively incapacitate them (lock them up) during their crime-prone years to limit their ability to commit crimes. The problem with this idea is that it means locking up kids for crimes they *might* commit instead of something they already did. This is something that not only happened at the time of this developmental life course research, it is actually still happening. Youth can still be detained for risk of future criminal offending. Efforts to identify which youth will turn into career criminals have been notoriously inaccurate and frequently result in false positives or the misidentification of kids who are not actually at risk of committing crime.

Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory

Several theories have been created under the umbrella of the developmental life course perspective. One of the most well-known is the age-graded theory of informal social control developed by Robert Sampson and John Laub in the 1990s. The **age-graded theory** of informal social control looks at the age and

delinquent or criminal behavior, in addition to what is going on in the individual's life at the time of that behavior. Specifically, they looked at things like the youth's family life, school, employment, and other relationships that change over time. These scholars reanalyzed the data that were gathered by the Gluecks to look for specific patterns. Their analysis revealed patterns of both continuity and change among the Glueck sample.

They found childhood delinquency was a strong predictor of adult criminal behavior. However, they also discovered that a substantial portion of children who engaged in delinquency stopped any criminal behavior during the transition to adulthood. For those who did continue exhibiting criminal behavior into adulthood, Sampson and Laub found links to both pre-existing characteristics of childhood delinquency (what made them commit crime as youths still made them commit crime as adults) and cumulative disadvantages that occurred over time (challenges and struggles like poverty, family dysfunction, and addiction).

They said the factors that were linked to both the onset of delinquency and desistance from offending were related to the social bond. For example, kids who committed acts of delinquency were often experiencing familial factors that included low parental supervision, erratic and harsh discipline, and parental rejection and neglect. Also, they found these family factors were linked to broader societal disadvantages, such as low socioeconomic status or unemployment. Then, they found that quality jobs and good marriages in adulthood became positive turning points for these same individuals, leading many of them away from a life of crime.

In a follow-up study of the original delinquent boys, Sampson and Laub (2003) continued to revise their theory and gathered data on arrest records through age 70 for all 500 original participants and conducted life history interviews with a small group of them. These studies provided additional insights about the processes of continuing in or stopping criminal behavior in later adulthood. For example, they found one of the reasons why good marriages and jobs led to desistance from criminal behavior was because they changed participants' routine activities, reducing the time they spent with friends who may have been a bad influence. In other words, they emphasized the importance of life transitions, such as marriage, employment, military service, the loss of a job, or the death of a loved one, in altering life trajectories. Also, many of the individuals they interviewed showed considerable independence and responsibility, taking an active, willful role in their efforts to desist from criminal offending. In other words, they wanted a crime-free life, so they did what they needed to do to get the type of life they wanted.

Moffitt's Dual Taxonomy of Antisocial Behavior

Figure 7.6. *Terrie Moffitt is a pioneer in researching the development of deviant and antisocial behavior. If you are interested in one of her most well-known studies, which she conducted alongside psychologist Avshalom Caspi, check out* [*the Dunedin Study [Website]*](#)*.*

One of the most influential theories in the developmental life course perspective comes from psychology and is a theory of antisocial behavior, also known as **dual taxonomy of antisocial behavior**. In an early article, Terrie Moffit (1993) described two types of offending patterns in the population: adolescence-

limited and life-course persistent (figure 7.6). Adolescence-limited offending is the more common pattern, and it means that any offenses someone committed were only during the individual's adolescent years. This represents almost all teenagers who did something illegal but did not turn into someone who commits crimes for most of their life. Testing boundaries and breaking rules is something most people grow out of naturally. According to Moffitt, this is all part of growing up as approximately 90% of the juveniles she studied engaged in some form of delinquency.

However, Moffitt acknowledged the maturity gap between a teenager's biological and social ages. As youth go through puberty, they begin to develop and mature into adulthood. At the same time, they are still treated as children by the broader society, lacking full rights and responsibilities. This gap between their biological and social maturity leads them to act out in ways that make them feel more adult and in control of their own lives. Peer associations, thrill-seeking, and rebelliousness contribute to delinquency. Once these adolescents transition to actual adult roles and responsibilities, the motivation to engage in delinquent behaviors disappears, and they desist from their criminal offending.

The other offending pattern identified by Moffitt, the life-course-persistent pattern, is somewhat rare. People who follow this pattern are similar to Wolfgang's chronic recidivists—that is, they are the small number of career criminals who commit the biggest portion of offenses and most of the more serious offenses, including violence. People in this pattern begin their criminal or delinquent offending during early childhood and continue offending throughout adulthood. Their criminal behavior is considered pathological (i.e., they cannot stop) and they possess numerous traits consistent with antisocial personality disorder, such as dishonesty and a lack of concern for the rights of others.

According to Moffitt, life-course-persistent offending can be caused by a combination of neuropsychological deficits and environmental factors supportive of crime, such as poverty and abuse (figure 7.7). Moffitt's theory is an example of a modern approach to incorporating biological factors into a theory of crime, but she identifies multiple risk and protective factors that are psychological, biological, or social in nature. Moffitt pointed to three factors that make it particularly difficult for people to escape delinquency: drugs, gangs, and jail. Prevention, rather than treatment, is the key to stopping chronic, lifetime offending according to Moffit. Incarceration, the traditional criminal justice system approach, can actually interfere with natural desistance from crime.

Activity: Applying the Developmental Life Course Perspective to Your Life
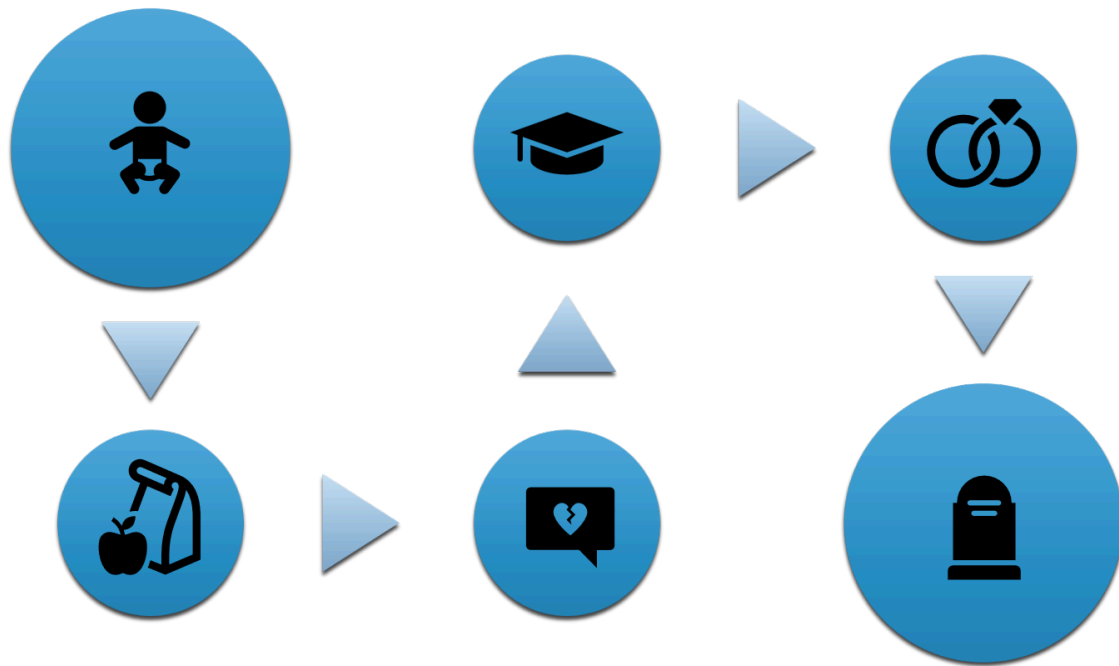

Figure 7.7. *The developmental life course perspective emphasizes the importance of milestones, events, and transitions throughout life in understanding when or if criminal behavior will start and stop. What does your life course look like? Image description available.* *Image description.*

This is a thinking exercise that you may choose to share or keep to yourself. Read the guide on building resilience from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child [Website]. Taking the previous sections into consideration, what transitions or trajectories have you seen in your life that support a developmental life course model to understanding crime? When were you most influenced by your parents, guardians, immediate family, or caretaker? When were you most likely to test boundaries and break rules? What events in your life encouraged offending behavior or inhibited it? What risk or protective factors were present for you? What helped you build resiliency?

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 7.5 A. "Lindsay Lohan in a video for Allure in 2023" by Condé Nast is licensed under CC BY 3.0.

Figure 7.5 B. "Mark Wahlberg 2, 2012" by Eva Rinaldi is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Figure 7.5 C. "Dwayne Johnson 2, 2013" by Eva Rinaldi is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

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Figure 7.6. Photo of Terrie E. Moffit from Duke University is included under fair use.

7.5 Theory Integration

Some contemporary theorists combine select aspects of foundational theories to form brand new explanations for criminal behavior based on ever-changing environmental, social, psychological, economic, and political events. These theorists will take a little bit of classical theory, mix it with some positivist, splash it with some neoclassical, and voila! Because there is no absolute when it comes to which theory is correct, criminologists are able to mix and match multiple theories into a cohesive hodgepodge to suit their needs—as long as the data supports the validity and reliability of the theory, of course.

You might be thinking, haven't many of the theories discussed in this book already done this? It is true that there is overlap between many of the theories we have covered. However, often a theory will focus strictly on the macro-level (e.g., neighborhoods) or micro-level (e.g., individual characteristics) or will only apply to certain types of crime (e.g., street crime). In the 1980s, many criminologists advocated for the integration of multiple existing theoretical frameworks and components to better account for complex human behavior. But theory integration is not as simple as slapping together a couple different ideas. Rather, there are different ways in which theories can be carefully and thoroughly integrated. These include end-to-end, side-by-side, up-and-down, and conceptual integration, all of which are explained in figure 7.8 (Tibbetts, 2015). Those in favor of theory integration also argue that theories should be multi-disciplinary to advance the field of criminology.

Figure 7.8. Some common forms of criminological theory integration (Tibbetts, 2015).

Type of theory integration	Description
End-to-end integration	Theories are merged "one after another," indicating that one occurs before the other. For example, a theory might state that weak social bonds lead to negative peer associations and then to crime.
Side-by-side integration	Theories are considered parallel explanations that might apply based on which type of situation is being explained. For example, impulsive theft might be explained by a theory of low self-control, while white collar crime might be explained by rational choice theory, as both have elements of control and opportunity involved.
Up-and-down integration	Theories are integrated by increasing the level of abstraction of one theory so that others can be incorporated into it. In other words, one theory's concepts may be broad enough that other theories can fit within it.
Conceptual integration	Key concepts from different theories that have similarities, even if different terms are used, can be integrated if they share similar meaning or operationalization.

There are many examples of integrated theories, some of which we have already discussed in previous chapters, but some heavily focus on the integration of concepts from multiple theories. American criminologist Delbert Elliott and colleagues provide one example with their integrated perspective on delinquent behavior. This approach combines components of strain, social learning, and social control theories and identifies two primary paths to delinquency. Although Elliott and colleagues recognized multiple different paths to delinquency, both of the primary paths in their theory involve juveniles who have weak social bonds, which can partly be a result of blocked opportunities and strain, and delinquent peer groups. One goal of their integrated approach was to eradicate the class bias that they saw in the

traditional theories, where delinquency was assumed and linked only to lower-class juveniles (Elliott et al., 1979).

Another prime example of theory integration is Australian criminologist John Braithwaite's (1989) **theory of reintegrative shaming**. Shame and informal social control are central to Braithwaite's theory. He said that societies "will have a lot of violence if violent behavior is not shameful, high rates of rape if rape is something men can brag about, endemic white collar crime if business people think law-breaking is clever rather than shameful" (Braithwaite, 2000). Braithwaite claims that societies must effectively communicate shame about crime in order to prevent it, as shame can become stigmatizing, which will actually increase crime. Effective shaming, or reintegrative shaming, involves communicating disapproval of behavior while maintaining respect for the individual. In other words, reintegrative shaming treats the person who committed a crime as a good person who did a bad thing but needs forgiveness, while stigmatization degrades, humiliates, and treats the individual as a bad person.

The theory of reintegrative shaming primarily borrows concepts from labeling theory and control theories, with some nods to deterrence theory. It applies to crimes against property and people in which there is a general social consensus that the behavior is wrong. The theory is very much in line with a **restorative justice** approach to crime control, meaning the goal is to repair harm caused by crime and restore the well-being of both perpetrators and victims rather than just punish those who have offended.

Learn More: Restorative Justice as a Theory of Justice

Remember when we talked about paradigms in Chapter 1? Restorative justice can be seen as a newer paradigm or lens through which we view crime, victimization, justice, and the role of the criminal justice system. The restorative justice paradigm is inclusive, has a problem-solving focus, and involves accountability, dialogue, and reparation in the pursuit of healing and righting relationships (Zehr, 1990). Restorative justice aims to put victims' needs at the center of the justice process and to encourage greater community engagement through inclusive and collaborative processes. Watch the 6-minute video in figure 7.9 to get an idea of what it might look like in practice.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
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https://youtu.be/V5JCwd5Wt5w

Figure 7.9. This video shows an example of a restorative justice approach. See what you think about the impact on the people involved. Transcript.

Rather than focusing on rules, restorative justice focuses on the emotional and relational dimensions of crime. Pranis et al. (2003) characterize this as a shift in thinking from justice as getting even, to justice

as getting well. When comparing the main goals of contemporary criminal justice and restorative justice, there are marked differences, as shown in figure 7.10 (Zehr, 2015, p. 30).

Figure 7.10. This table compares the goals of the traditional criminal justice approach with the goals of the restorative justice approach.

Criminal Justice	Restorative Justice
Crime is a violation of the law and the state.	Crime is a violation of people and relationships.
Violations create guilt.	Violations create obligations.
Justice requires the state to determine blame and impose punishment or expect perpetrators to be rehabilitated.	Justice involves victims, offenders, and community members in an effort to repair the harm or "put things right"
The central focus is offenders getting what they deserve.	The central focus is victim needs and offender and community responsibility for repairing harm and promoting accountability.

As Zehr (2015) suggests in figure 7.11, the key differences between criminal justice and restorative justice can be boiled down to a few central questions. The following table compares the primary questions the contemporary legal system is based on with the core questions of a restorative, transformative approach to justice.

Figure 7.11. This table compares the questions that a traditional criminal justice approach asks with those that a restorative justice approach asks.

Criminal justice asks...	Restorative, transformative justice asks...
What law was broken?	Who has been harmed?
Who did it?	What are their needs?
What do they deserve?	Who and/or what structures are obligated to address the harm caused? What needs to happen to address the harm and begin to promote healing of people and relationships?

While restorative justice is a more recent development in the United States, Indigenous cultures across the globe have been using similar approaches for some time. However, traditional Indigenous practices and restorative justice are not synonymous. Cunneen (2003) notes that restorative justice cannot run the risk of trampling over local traditional customs but requires a reimagining of justice outside the context of colonization. In some Indigenous communities, people involved in a harm or conflict would prefer to have a more culturally responsive justice process and avoid the colonially-based, legal system altogether. In some cases, Indigenous peoples will refer matters to their nation's justice program and engage in a restorative process that embodies cultural practices, such as prayers and ceremonies unique to that nation. Indigenous nations reclaiming responsibility for justice practices is an important component of self-determination and self-governance.

The integration of theories is actually a contentious topic among criminological scholars. While some support integration as a way of improving our theoretical understandings and getting closer to an accurate explanation of crime, others see major drawbacks to the process. Some theorists claim that the best

way for theories to advance is for them to compete against one another to encourage their continued testing. Those opposed to theoretical integration also argue that it is not possible to integrate theories that have opposing assumptions. For example, social control theories assume people are naturally inclined to commit deviant behavior, while learning theories typically assume that people are non-criminogenic prior to learning the behavior from someone else (Krohn & Eassey, 2014). Nonetheless, criminological ideas and concepts continue to be assessed, altered, and integrated.

Check Your Knowledge

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Figure 7.8. "Common Forms of Criminological Theory Integration" is adapted from Tibbets, 2015. Modifications include paraphrasing and putting material into table format.

Figure 7.9. "[DUI Probationer Participates in Restorative Justice Mediation Program](#)" by [countysandiego](#) is licensed under the [Standard YouTube License](#).

7.6 Modern Application: How Is It Relevant Now?

In this chapter, we discussed control theories, theories that fit into a developmental life course perspective, and theory integration. Let's consider how these theoretical approaches have impacted the field of criminology and how they remain relevant.

Social control theory has been one of the most tested theories in criminology, though the results have been mixed overall. The evidence suggests that weak social bonds are related to an increase in offending, but the strength of this relationship varies from low to moderate, suggesting that other variables need to be taken into account (Lilly et al., 2019). Other studies question what happens when children are attached to parents who are involved in illegal behavior themselves. For example, Jensen and Brownfield (1983) found that close attachment to parents who use drugs does not prevent children from engaging in drug use themselves. There is also the question of whether commitment and involvement are always positive (O'Grady, 2014). Was it not a commitment to win and heavy involvement in the sport that led Lance Armstrong to use performance-enhancing drugs to win the Tour de France?

While these criticisms are important, social control theory remains an important way of understanding the development of criminal behavior in youth, and Hirschi remains one of criminology's most important thinkers.

Although not embraced by all criminologists, the developmental life course perspective has led to a fundamental change in common assumptions in the field of criminology. These new studies and their findings have led to new research questions, concepts, and methods. As opposed to earlier theories that looked for simple or straightforward answers, the developmental life course approach recognizes that criminal behavior is far more complex and dynamic. Under this perspective, researchers try to understand why individuals move into and out of criminal behavior across their full lifespan.

An interesting strength of the developmental life course approach is its applicability to delinquency and crime prevention policy. This application can begin even before birth. For example, poor pre- and postnatal care can lead to developmental delays or abnormalities that can place kids at risk for offending behavior. Interventions during high-risk pregnancies, for those who are addicted to substances during pregnancy, and for those high-risk homes after birth could help improve juveniles' health and potentially reduce the early risk for criminality (Tibbetts, 2015) and prevent life-course-persistent offending.

Traditional theories tend to focus on between-individual differences, such as low levels of social control, weak social bonds, association with delinquent peers, and the presence of strain. However, developmental life course theories examine factors both between individuals and within individuals. This moves the research agenda in criminology from simply asking why people do or don't offend to more complex questions, such as why offending starts, why it continues or escalates in severity or frequency, and why it declines or slows down at different stages of the life course.

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7.7 Conclusion

Control theories, life course theories, and integrated theories all have a different degree of nuance. Control theories ask a different question than those we've discussed so far because they make the assumption that most people would or should be committing crime if left unchecked. Life course theories view many traditional theories as focusing on a single point in time rather than assessing changes in criminal offending behavior over time. The integration of theories, while sometimes controversial in academic circles, involves the careful combination of ideas and concepts that may otherwise seem incompatible, too encompassing, or too narrow.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed control theories, including containment theory, social control (bonding) theory, and the general theory of crime. We then discussed the age-crime curve and some potential contributing reasons for the consistency of that curve. We also explored developmental and life course theories and approaches, particularly as they try to answer the question "why do people stop committing crime?" Lastly, the chapter covered theory integration and its pros and cons.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. What are the core concepts of social control theory? How do they compare with theories that emphasize motivations for crime?
2. Read about the Families and Schools Together (FAST) [Website] crime prevention program that has been rated effective. Using social control theory, how does this program decrease juvenile delinquency?
3. Look up research on brain development, and discuss how that may apply to the age-crime curve and developmental life course theories.

4. Do you believe that people who commit crimes ever change? Drawing on theories discussed in this chapter, explain why or why not.
5. What theories from previous chapters in this book do you think count as integrated theories? Explain.
6. After learning about all these criminology theories in Chapters 3–7, what do you now believe is the true cause of crime?
7. Watch the TED Talk "The Future of Criminology [Streaming Video]" by Brian Boutwell at Saint Louis University, and discuss the implications of what he is proposing as it relates to the theories discussed in Chapters 3–7.

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- The article *The End of the Age-Crime Curve?* [Website] challenges the relevance of the traditional age-crime curve in modern America. It provides room for thought about what might contribute to these changing arrest rates.
- The American Society of Criminology (ASC) has a division devoted to Developmental and Life Course (DLC) Criminology [Website].
- Find current research on DLC in the *Journal of Developmental and Life Course Criminology* [Website].

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CRITICAL AND FEMINIST APPROACHES TO CRIMINOLOGY

Figure 8.1. *Identities are personal, but they often also become political. Critical and feminist criminological perspectives provide insight into how marginalized populations come to be criminalized in our modern society.*

Contents of This Chapter:

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8

8.1 Chapter Introduction

Throughout this book, we have explored many traditional theories that have impacted the development of the field of criminology. Although modern criminologists who test these theories may take a more inclusive approach, many of the early iterations were built by researchers who were trying to find physical differences between racial and ethnic groups that could explain crime (e.g., early biological theories) or who only studied white boys and men (e.g., theories about gang development). Factors such as gender, oppressive laws, or identity were not typically at the forefront of these explanations. Critical and feminist criminologists see this fault and attempt to not only incorporate, but center issues of social inequality in their theorizing about society, the legal system, criminal behavior, and victimization (figure 8.1).

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, students will be able to do the following:

1. Locate the foundation of critical and feminist approaches to criminology in terms of the race, gender, and societal status of the theorists.
2. Explain how critical and feminist criminological theories critique traditional theories in criminology.
3. Analyze the ways that power structures in society contribute to or create opportunities for crime.
4. Assess the significance of an intersectional approach in criminology.
5. Evaluate how critical and feminist criminological theories explain disparities in crime rates and criminal justice outcomes regarding demographics such as race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

Key Terms

- **Conflict theory:** the theory that social inequality and conflict among social groups is inevitable and that conflict leads to criminal or deviant behavior
- **Control-balance theory:** Tittle's theory that focuses on the control someone is under and the

control they hold over themselves (control ratio)
- **Crimes of the powerful:** crimes committed by white-collar individuals, corporations, government, or other elite in society that often go unpunished
- **Critical criminology:** a perspective or collection of theories that centers social inequality and focuses on the way society defines crime, power, and punishment
- **Feminist criminology:** a perspective or collection of theories that centers gender, along with other aspects of identity, in studying crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system
- **Feminist theory of delinquency:** Chesney-Lind's theory of four propositions that explain girls' unique pathway to delinquency
- **Intersectionality:** the approach or understanding that various identities and positions in society, including aspects such as race, class, income, sexuality, education, or disability, can lead to multiple forms of inequality and varied experiences of discrimination

- **Power-control theory:** Hagan's theory that sons are granted more freedom as adolescents, while daughters experience greater control of their behavior by their families, leading to more delinquency among boys

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8.2 Critical Criminology

Critical criminology is difficult to define. Broadly, it is an approach to criminology that diverges from the traditional approaches. For example, the positivist perspective dominates the field of criminology and emphasizes the identification and study of crime causes so they can be corrected and crime can be controlled. Theories that take a critical approach are more firmly focused on, and critical of, our social structures and the way society defines crime, power, and punishment. In other words, critical criminology is all about re-thinking established or traditional ideas, especially in the context of power dynamics.

First, we will discuss the work of sociologists and criminologists who laid the foundation for critical criminology. Then, we will look at key theories and topics within the critical criminological framework.

The Origins of Critical Criminology

Karl Marx's writings were concerned with the rise of social institutions during industrialization, including the development of criminal law, the power of police and prisons, and the processes of criminalization (figure 8.2). Marx suggests that societies are full of conflict, which is often reflected in, and stems from, the relations of production. The relations of production are the social relationships involved in producing the things we need to survive, such as food and shelter. Marx saw capitalism as the cause of disparities in wealth between employers and employees. He predicted that such an economic system would lead to worker revolt and the eventual collapse of capitalism.
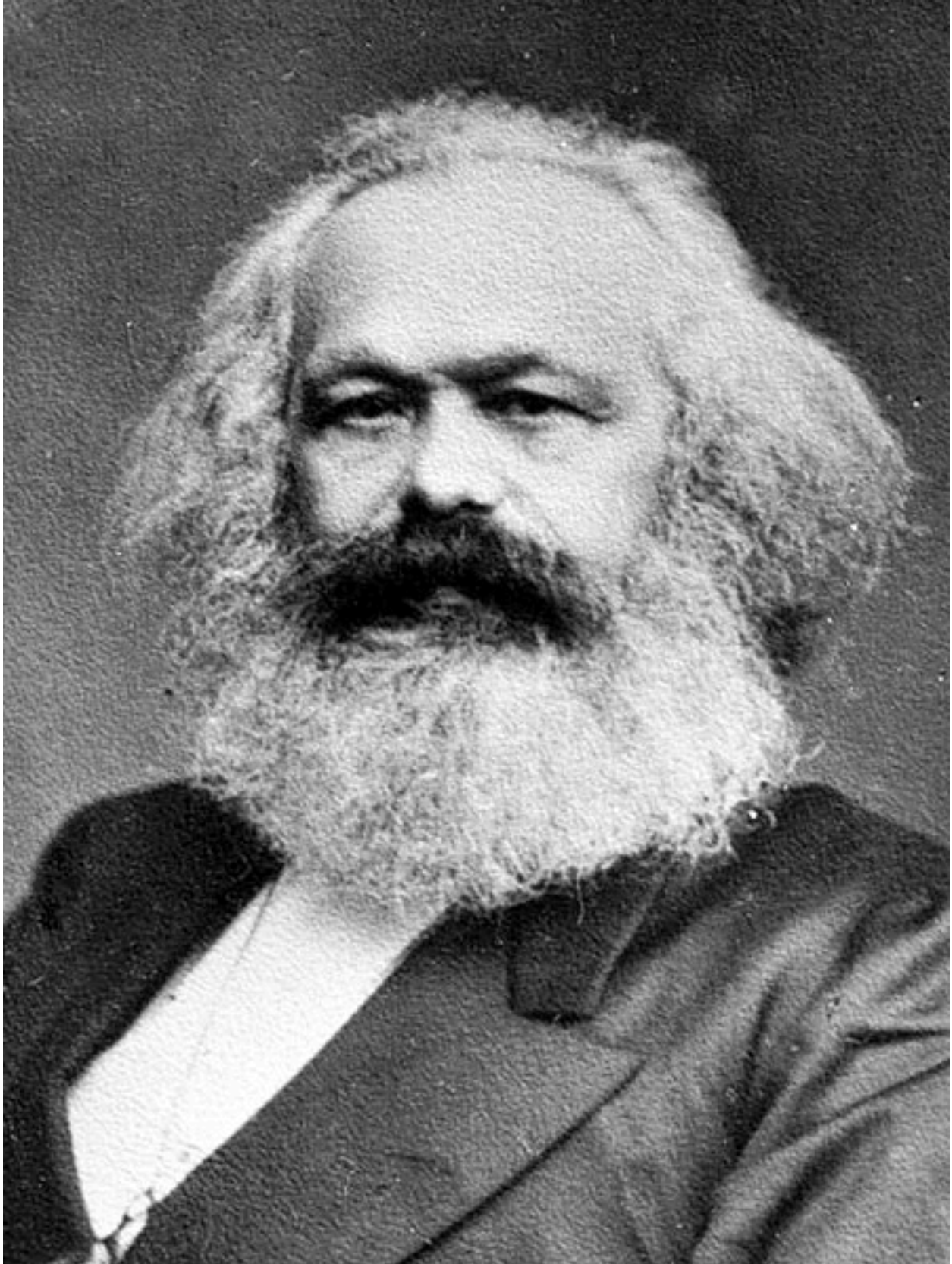
Figure 8.2. *Karl Marx's work was so influential to critical perspectives and theories that his name is often used to collectively*

Although Marx was not a criminologist, his work inspired many who were. For example, William Chambliss drew on Marx's ideas to analyze the origin of vagrancy laws, some of which were enacted as early as 1349. He concluded that these laws were created to force people to work in factories and other places by criminalizing those who did not work. Chambliss defined crime as "conduct that is defined and controlled by agents of the dominant economic class in a politically organized society, to benefit capitalism" (Chambliss, 1964, p. 71). Another Marxist, Louis Althusser (1969, 1971), referred to agencies such as the military, police, judiciary, and prison system as "repressive state apparatuses" as they had the legal right to use force in controlling people.

Another key figure in critical criminology is Michel Foucault. For Marx, power is always connected to economic power and how it manifests at the level of the state. For Foucault, power operates like a network of relations that we are all a part of. In addition to economic power, it includes power in the form of language and action. He argued that thinking about power this way encourages us to understand that power is similar to a building block in how things are made, composed, or constituted. Foucault's perspective remains incredibly important for critical criminologists because it allows for a more open analysis of power and domination that is not reducible to the state apparatus, law, or capital.

Currently, critical criminology encompasses a set of concepts and ideas examining how crime and criminal justice agencies are used as forms of social power that benefit some groups over others. It investigates (in)equality by examining the oppressive nature of criminal justice agencies, law, and the social practices of criminalization and marginalization. Although it would be impossible and debatable to include *all* critical theories and approaches in this chapter, we will cover some key works and areas of discussion in the field of critical criminology.

Conflict Theory

The development of conflict theory is attributable to many sociologists and criminologists, such as Thorsten Sellin, George B. Vold, C. Wright Mills, and Austin Turk, but its roots lie in the ideas of Karl Marx, as already mentioned. In his book *The Power Elite,* sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956) described the existence of what he dubbed the *power elite*, a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources. Wealthy executives, politicians, celebrities, and military leaders often have access to national and international power, and in some cases, their decisions affect everyone in society. Because of this, the rules of society favor a privileged few who further manipulate those rules to stay on top. It is these people who decide what is criminal and what is not, and the effects are often felt most by those who have little power.

The belief that social inequality and conflict among social groups is inevitable is central to **conflict theory**. The theory assumes that social groups are created by economic forces (social class, income level, types of employment), social forces (values and beliefs), and political forces (levels of social status and

power, honor or prestige, respect). Those with real power in society are not going to have the same interests, priorities, or goals as all social groups. As a result, conflict is created between those who benefit from the rules and those who do not. In fact, those who do not benefit from the rules are likely to be exploited, discriminated against, and marginalized. Conflict between social groups will inevitably lead to criminal or deviant behavior. This theory clearly fits within the critical criminological lens as it centers power dynamics in society and directly ties these power struggles to crime.

Learn More: Overrepresentation of Youth of Color with Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System

The following links are provided so you can learn more about each case if you would like to.

In 2018 in Texas, a 10-year-old boy with autism [Website] was pinned down and cuffed for being disruptive and swinging a computer mouse near other students. In 2021 in Colorado, an 11-year-old Hispanic boy with autism [Website] was cuffed, dragged from his school, and thrown into the back of a police car, where he was left for hours, for poking another student with a pencil. In 2021 in Maryland, an officer handcuffed and screamed at a 5-year-old Black American boy [Website] for wandering away from his kindergarten class. In 2022 in North Carolina, a police

Figure 8.3. Statistically speaking, of the three young boys in this photograph, at least two of them will end up in the juvenile justice system. What are some possible explanations for this?

officer pinned down a 7-year-old boy with autism [Website] for 38 minutes, with a knee on the boy's neck while placing handcuffs on his tiny wrists. This boy was accused of spitting at a teacher. These are just a few of the many disturbing stories about youth with disabilities and youth of color being mistreated and labeled as "criminals" by those in positions of authority.

Over the years, the juvenile justice system has gone from a system designed to get children off the streets and stop them from committing petty crimes to a system that incarcerates a startling number of kids with disabilities and youth of color (figure 8.3). Studies show as high as 85% of incarcerated youth have disabilities, and 70% are youth of color (National Council on Disability, 2015; Southern Coalition for Social Justice, n.d.). This is a phenomenon seen elsewhere in our nation's history as well. As discussed in Chapter 4, the early positivist theories blamed criminality on physical and mental characteristics or disabilities. Today, children with disabilities, especially if they are also people of color, are being incarcerated for supposedly different reasons.

In response to the rise in school shootings, including at Columbine High School in 1999 and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, schools have instituted zero-tolerance policies and increased the presence of police on campuses in the form of school resource officers. The intent was to create a safer environment for all students, but the unintended consequence is that school infractions have been crim-

inalized. For example, behaviors such as disorderly conduct or anger control issues can be criminalized as assault. Instances that occur in the classroom or on school grounds can lead to arrest or detention by police officers. As a result, kids with disabilities and youth of color have been swept up in a system of criminalization instead of protection. Even though their behavior may be caused by a disability and not intended to be defiant or dangerous, it can be misunderstood, and the child may be treated like a threat as a result.

Critical criminologists look at issues like this and point to power structures, the oppressive nature of the criminal justice system, and the criminalization and marginalization of certain groups as the causes of disparities in crime rates.

Theorizing About Crimes of the Powerful

Another dimension of Marxism we find in critical criminology is the study of corporate crime or **crimes of the powerful** (figure 8.4). Criminologists use a variety of terms to describe different crimes of the powerful, each referring to a subset of harmful conduct. The most widely known term, white-collar crime, was originally defined by American criminologist Edwin Sutherland as, "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation" (Sutherland, 1983, p. 7). Sutherland (1949) distinguished between working-class crime and crimes of the elite. The criminalization of both categories are related to capital accumulation: working-class crimes such as theft uphold private property relations and assault upholds the need of a healthy body to work, while crimes of the elite such as fraud or insider trading uphold "proper" relations of capital accumulation. However, it is more difficult to criminalize the wrongdoings of the powerful, and many go completely unpunished.

Figure 8.4. Enron, a Houston-based company, was at the center of one of the most famous and complex white-collar crime cases ever handled by the FBI. Officials with the company cheated investors for their own financial gain and caused thousands of people to lose their savings and livelihoods. If you are interested in learning more, check out this FBI article [Website] about the case.

Crimes of the powerful can also relate to the government. Chambliss (1989, p. 184) defines state-organized crime as "acts defined by law as criminal and committed by state officials in pursuit of their job as representatives of the state." There are many examples of state-organized crimes, including illegal surveillance, assassinations, and illegal wars. Despite causing widespread harm, state-organized crimes receive even less attention from criminologists than corporate crimes.

Given that nation-states have a monopoly on what is defined as a crime, the harmful behaviors they engage in are rarely called crimes. Consider what is perhaps the most infamous state-organized crime in history, the Nazi extermination of millions of people, including Jews, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Jehovah's Witnesses, the disabled, Roma, and those critical of the Nazi state. The Nazis perpetrated genocide, and many complicit individuals were prosecuted for crimes against humanity in the Nuremberg Trials. However, had Germany been victorious in World War II, it is unlikely that any such trials would have taken place. The victors in wars rarely allow their own harmful behaviors to be defined as criminal. For example, if the United States had been on the losing side of World War II, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan would likely have been designated war crimes, and those responsible for the horrific injuries and deaths of hundreds of thousands would have likely been put on trial.

It is significant that had the international rules of war, known as the Nuremberg Principles, been applied to decisions made by U.S. presidents to invade countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Iraq, it is possible that every U.S. president since the end of World War II could have been found guilty of war crimes (Chomsky, 2004; Noam Chomsky-The, n.d.). None of these countries posed a direct threat to the security of the United States, and authorization to use military force was not obtained from the U.S. Congress or the United Nations (Chomsky, 2004; Noam Chomsky-The, n.d.). Barack Obama and Donald Trump also ignored the law. Obama approved the use of force and the deployment of CIA operatives in Syria, and Trump ordered bombs dropped on Syria. Neither obtained approval from the U.S. Congress (Greenwald, 2021). Nonetheless, there are very few people calling for the arrest of any currently living former president for war crimes.

Activity: What Counts as a State Crime?

For an in-person class, split the classroom in half. Students on the right side receive scenario one, and students on the left side receive scenario two. Students should work in pairs to answer the first set of three questions. Next, students should pair up with a classmate from the other side of the room (who had the other scenario) and work together to answer the second set of three questions.

SCENARIO One

A company produced an intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD) that was used to prevent pregnancy after being implanted directly into the uterus. After about 10 years of production, researchers with the CDC discovered that the IUD had caused a multitude of severe injuries including pelvic infection and sepsis, infertility, unintended pregnancy, miscarriages after use, and even death. At least 18 women died in the United States as a result of using the device. The device was removed from the market and subsequently banned by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). After, it was learned that executives in the company were aware of the trends in those using the device, but they denied that enough evidence directly linked the negative outcomes to their device.

After the devices were removed from the U.S. market, the devices were distributed in bulk overseas to developing nations such as Ethiopia and Malaysia by the United States International Agency for Development and nongovernmental agencies (NGOs).

SCENARIO Two

A company owns and operates a sand and gravel mine used to produce concrete. Approximately 55 years ago, the company was granted a special zoning exception that allowed them to be located in a rural community that just so happens to be in the part of the county that has the highest percentage of Black Americans. Over time, the company also began using the space for waste disposal, soil composting and resale, and storage for unregistered vehicles—in other words, a junk yard.

Residents complain of the large trucks constantly carrying concrete back and forth on their narrow, two-lane roads and ruining them or threatening children and animals who are playing near the roads. Requirements have recently changed in the county regarding commercial operations. However, this company has remained exempt as the original special exception has been honored. As a result, the company continues to operate as usual, and they do not have standards for controlling storm-water runoff.

Work with a partner near you to answer the questions:

1. What are the harm(s)?
2. If you believe a crime has occurred, how would you classify the crime(s)? Why?
3. What might be a theoretical explanation for the crime(s) in this scenario? Explain.

Find someone with the other scenario and discuss:

1. In each scenario, what is the government's role/responsibility?
2. In each scenario, would you classify any of the harms/crimes as a state crime? Why or why not?
3. For each scenario, discuss policy(ies) that you think could help prevent this type of harm/crime.

Both scenarios are real cases. If you would like to learn more you can visit the provided links. Scenario one refers to the Dalkon Shield [Website] case, and scenario two refers to a case in Anne Arundel County, Maryland [Website].

Police and Prison Abolition

Since the police killing of George Floyd in May of 2020, police abolition has become a frequent and popular topic of public discussion (figure 8.5). Police abolitionists argue that public police exist only to enforce social order. Public police do not provide real safety, and instead they cause much harm through violence, racism, and corruption. Prison abolition, sometimes called penal abolition, focuses on the sanctions, rules, and punishments involved in institutional and community corrections. At its theoretical core, abolitionist work draws on both Marxist and Foucauldian conceptions that posit criminal justice systems as part of the social structure and discourse.

Discussions about police abolition have roots in the Black radical tradition in the United States and the Black feminist tradition. Police abolition was also a core feature of the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party and movement called for more community responses rather than state responses to transgression and critiques of the violence of the state articulated through police (Jeffries, 2002). A number of Black feminist scholars, including Beth Richie (2012), Andrea Ritchie (2017), and others building on the work of Angela Davis (2011), have been calling for police abolition for some time, particularly in regard to violence against women and domestic violence. The Black feminist tradition recognizes that police often cause or amplify harm to women in these scenarios.

The most well-known prison abolition works are those of Thomas Mathiesen from the 1970s and '80s. Mathiesen (1974) offers some useful concepts. For example, he focused on positive and negative reforms and argued that it is not contradictory for abolitionists or critical scholars to advocate for [negative reforms](#). Negative reforms are those that diminish the power of the state and the power of carceral institutions. However, he stated that it is contradictory to argue for positive reforms or reforms that do add to the power of the carceral state.

The works of Mathiesen have inspired a generation of penal abolitionists. McLeod (2015) argued that prison abolition should be an accepted perspective within legal studies and criminal law and that prison abolition is necessary for justice to exist in the world. Consistent with critical criminologists' contention that rethinking what we perceive as normal is necessary, critical scholars and activists focus on ways to undo these infrastructures and institutions not only physically but mentally. This requires us to develop new ways of speaking about and responding to harm and transgression, which is a common theme across police and prison abolitionist work. Many police and penal abolitionist works exist outside the discipline of criminology, so it is not surprising that they have provided useful terms and insights for resisting not only the criminal justice system but criminology itself.

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8.3 Feminist Criminology

A central definition of feminism can be challenging, because as figure 8.6 illustrates, there are many kinds of feminism, each with its own unique focus. However, there are features common to every type of feminism that we can use to establish a solid foundation when exploring **feminist criminology**. Primarily, feminism argues that women suffer discrimination because they belong to a particular sex category (female) or gender (woman), and that women's needs are denied or ignored because of their sex. Feminism centers the notion of patriarchy in understandings of inequality, and largely argues that major changes are required to various social structures and institutions to establish gender equality. The common root of all feminisms is the drive toward equity and justice.

Figure 8.6. Six feminist perspectives in criminology that consider factors such as patriarchy, power, capitalism, gender inequality, and intersectionality in the role of women's offending and victimization.

Type of feminism	Perspective on criminology
Liberal feminism: feminism that focuses on achieving gender equality in society	Liberal feminism assumes the differences between men and women in offending behavior is due to lack of opportunities for women in education and employment.
Radical feminism: feminism that emphasizes structural patriarchy in which men dominate every aspect of society, including politics, family structure, and the economy	Radical feminism assumes the criminal justice system is a tool used by men to control women.
Marxist feminism: feminism that emphasizes men's ownership and control of the means of economic production and sees the capitalist system as women's main oppressor	Marxist feminism assumes that unequal economic access led to women being disproportionately involved in property crime and sex work.
Socialist feminism: feminism that combines radical and Marxist theories/feminism	Social feminism assumes that differences in power and class account for gendered differences in offending behavior, especially pertaining to violence.
Postmodern feminism: feminism that focuses on the construction of knowledge and rejects the idea of a "universal female"	Postmodern feminism assumes that the diversity of women needs to be highlighted when one considers how gender, crime, and deviance intersect to inform reality.
Intersectional feminism: feminism that critiques the failure of other perspectives to consider one's position in society and multitude of identities when understanding how life and inequality are experienced	Intersectional feminism assumes that inequalities intersect to influence women's pathways to offending and/or risk of victimization.

Feminist activism has proceeded in four "waves." The first wave of feminism began in the late 1800s and early 1900s with the suffragette movement and advocacy for women's right to vote. The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s and called for gender equality and attention to a wide variety of issues directly and disproportionately affecting women, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence [IPV], employment discrimination, and reproductive rights. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the third wave focused on diverse and varied experiences of discrimination and sexism, including the ways in which aspects such as race, class, income, and education impacted such experiences. It is in the third wave that we see the concept of **intersectionality** come forward as a way to understand these differences.

The fourth wave, our current wave, began around 2010 and is characterized by activism using online tools, such as social media. For example, the #MeToo movement is a significant part of the fourth wave. The fourth wave is arguably a more inclusive feminism—a feminism that is sex-positive, body-positive, trans-inclusive, and has its foundations in "the queering of gender and sexuality-based binaries" (Sollee, 2015). This wave has been defined by "'call out' culture, in which sexism or misogyny can be 'called out' and challenged" (Munro, 2013).

Feminist criminology was born in the second wave of feminism. Feminist activism during this time brought attention to the inequalities facing women, including their victimization, as well as the challenges female offenders faced within the criminal justice system. The breadth and extent of domestic violence, specifically men's violence against women within intimate relationships, was demonstrated by the need for domestic violence shelters and the voices of women trying to escape violence. Conversations at the national level led to the establishment of shelters funded by the government as well as private donors.

At the same time, the historic and systemic trauma of women involved in the criminal justice system as people who had committed offenses was being recognized. Attention began to be paid to their histories of abuse, poverty, and houselessness and to the other systemic discrimination they faced. Historically, women who have been regarded as criminally deviant have often been seen as being doubly deviant. Not only have they broken the law, but they have also broken gender norms. In contrast, men's criminal behavior has traditionally been seen as being consistent with their aggressive, self-assertive character. This double standard also explains the tendency to medicalize women's deviance and to see it as the product of physiological or psychiatric pathology. For example, in the late 19th century, kleptomania was a diagnosis used in legal defenses that linked an extreme desire for department store commodities with various forms of female physiological or psychiatric illness. The fact that "good" middle- and upper-class women would turn to stealing in department stores could not be explained without resorting to diagnosing the activity as an illness of the "weaker" sex (Kramar, 2011).

When feminist criminology emerged in the 1970s, the focus was mainly on how women were accounted for in criminological theories. Feminist criminologists recognized that theories of crime and deviance regarding women's offending tended to take one of three paths: (1) theories were openly misogynistic, negatively portraying women or situating them as "less than" men; (2) theories were gender-blind and completely ignored gender; or (3) theories took an "add women and stir" approach, meaning that the theory was primarily about men and assumed explanations for crime and deviance could be applied to women without question. Most criminological theories were silent on the victimization of women.

The many androcentric (male-centered) explanations for crime and criminality were mainly the work of theorists who were men. In response, feminist criminologists demanded a centering of gender as a key factor in understanding crime and criminality. Here we see the scholarship of ground-breaking feminist criminologists like Meda Chesney-Lind, Carol Smart, and Karlene Faith and the theorists and criminologists they have inspired, such as Elizabeth Comack, Gillian Balfour, and Joanne Belknap.

Current feminist criminology points to the role of patriarchy, colonialism, capitalism, and other social structures and relationships in our broader society as contributing to the disproportionate victimization of women. While patriarchy privileges men and their experience over women and their experience, third-wave feminism and critical race scholars established the vital importance of intersectional analyses of gender-based violence (Bruckert & Law, 2018).

Feminist criminology challenges social institutions within the criminal justice system to acknowledge and address the disproportionate impact of gender on women's victimization. Feminist criminologists

acknowledge that due to systemic factors, including violence, colonialization, and inequality, women are much more likely to suffer from childhood sexual abuse than men. They also acknowledge that alcohol or substance use is often a coping mechanism that may result in increased likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system. Lastly, they understand that there is a high proportion of incarcerated women who have experienced trauma (Comack, 2018; Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2013). In essence, feminist criminologists ask us to examine how the criminalization of women is intertwined with the victimization of women. The question becomes: how can the criminal justice system respond to the unique needs of women given this victimization-criminalization continuum (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Comack, 1996)?

Activity: Intersectionality and Understanding Identity

"Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations (e.g., 'race'/ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, migration status, religion). These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g., laws, policies, state governments and other political and economic unions, religious institutions, media). Through such processes, interdependent forms of privilege and oppression shaped by colonialism, imperialism, racism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created"]
(Hankivsky, 2014).

Figure 8.7 is sourced from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women's intersectionality wheel diagram, with text elements arranged in concentric circles:

- Center: Unique Circumstances of Power, Privilege and Identity
- Second circle (aspects of identity): income, indigeneity, social status, education, age, housing situation, caste, religion, HIV status, class background, sexuality, disability, occupation, spirituality, citizenship, geographic location, experience of racialization, work history, refugee status, skin colour, life experience, gender, family status
- Third circle (prejudice and discrimination): homophobia, ableism, racism, discrimination, heterosexism, sexism, ageism, classism, transphobia, ethnocentrism
- Outer circle (larger forces/structures): economy, legal system, politics, globalization, capitalism, war, colonization, social forces, historical forces, immigration system, education system

https://www.criaw-icref.ca/publications/everyone-belongs-a-toolkit-for-applying-intersectionality/

Figure 8.7. Intersectionality takes into account the many different elements of our identities and how they interact. It's a complex and ever-shifting concept that pulls sociology and criminology together. (see Simpson, 2009). Image description available. [Image description.](...)

Study the diagram in figure 8.7 from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (n.d.) that illustrates the concept of intersectionality. Each circle represents different parts of who someone is and how they experience the world, including unique personal circumstances (center), aspects of identity (second circle), prejudice and discrimination that impact identity (third circle), and larger forces or structures that maintain exclusion (outer circle).

Considering your own intersectional identity—including but not limited to, your gender, race/ethnicity, country of origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic status, geography, and migration status—how might your position impact your thoughts about or approach to the study of

criminology and criminal justice? From an intersectional lens, how might your experiences shape your understanding of criminological theories?

Note: You are welcome to share information about your intersectional identity in your answer, but you are not required to do so. However, you should consider your personal position, obstacles, and privileges when answering these questions and think deeply and honestly about how your experiences may differ from those in other positions.

Female Delinquency

A consistent finding in crime data is that boys and men commit more crime than women and girls. Even though women and girls have increasingly become more involved in the criminal justice system, this finding persists. Some theorists have evaluated this issue from a feminist perspective to make sense of it.

American sociologist John Hagan and his colleagues wanted to figure out why boys committed more delinquent acts than girls and decided to look at their behavior in the family context. They developed **power-control theory** (Belknap, 2015), which outlines the role of social control in accounting for gendered differences in crime. They theorized that the gendered power dynamic between parents is often replicated with their children. In a patriarchal home, children are socialized into gender roles in which boys are encouraged to take risks and given more freedom, while girls are more restricted in their activities and socialized to be obedient and quiet. According to their theory, instrumental controls in the form of supervision and surveillance and relational controls in the form of an emotional bond with the mother are imposed more on daughters than on sons. In such households, girls have fewer opportunities to engage in deviance.

According to Hagan and colleagues, in egalitarian households where power is shared equally between parents, relatively equal freedoms and levels of parental supervision were given to daughters and sons, which allowed for more opportunities for girls to engage in deviant behavior (Belknap, 2015). Note that while this theory does at least attempt to explain the offending of women, it is not without its critics. Of particular concern is how the theory blames mothers who work outside of the home for their daughters' delinquency (O'Grady, 2018). The theory has also been criticized "for its simplistic conceptualization of social class and the gendered division of labor in the home and workplace, and for its lack of attention to racial/ethnic differences in gender socialization and to single-parent families, most of which are headed by women" (Renzetti, 2018, p. 78).

American Meda Chesney-Lind and Australian Kathleen Daly are prominent feminist criminologists who also focus specifically on women's delinquency. Daly identified three areas to consider when trying to understand the gender differences in juvenile offending behavior:

1. Gendered lives: Girls are socialized in accordance with accepted gender roles, and this impacts their daily lives and experiences with law-breaking.

2. Gendered pathways: Girls' engagement in crime follows a path that differs from that of boys and moves from victimization to substance abuse and then to acting out.
3. Gendered crime: Street life, sex, drug markets, and other criminal opportunities are structured in gendered ways that impact the type of crime available to and engaged in by girls.

Relatedly, Chesney-Lind (1987) emphasizes that our world, including the criminal justice system, is patriarchal and controlling of women and girls. She put forth four propositions in the **feminist theory of delinquency:**

1. Girls are often physically and sexually abused. Their gender uniquely shapes this victimization and their response to the victimization.
2. Those who victimize girls and women are typically men and are able to invoke informal controls like gender roles and formal controls like police involvement to keep these women and girls, especially daughters, at home where they are vulnerable.
3. Girls will often run away from home to escape victimization but are then left with few opportunities once they become "runaways," including being unable to enroll in school and having limited job opportunities.
4. Girls who have escaped abusive homes and are now runaways become forced to engage in criminal activities, especially those that exploit their sexuality, to survive.

Daly and Chesney-Lind contend that gender matters when studying crime and victimization because girls and women move through the world differently than boys and men do (figure 8.8). Girls are socialized to be nice and tend to internalize their problems, while boys are socialized to not back down and often externalize their problems. Consequently, girls' involvement in crime typically starts from substance use as a means of coping with victimization, especially sexual victimization. For example, a 2022 report from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) showed that the majority of sexual abuse victims were girls, with their victimization rates ranging from 55% of all victims under the age of 1 year old up to 87% of victims age 17 years old (DHHS, 2024). The fact that society places value on girls and women for their sexuality means that sex work may be the most accessible, or forced, criminal opportunity for runaway girls and those trying to survive on the streets. Thus, victimization becomes intricately tied into the cycle of offending.

Daly and Chesney-Lind's frameworks provide nuanced insight into the way girls experience victimization, crime, and treatment by the system. Chesney-Lind's intersectional approach, which considers the impact of race, class, and gender in shaping girls' pathways into delinquency, highlights systemic inequalities that push marginalized girls toward survival strategies that may involve crime. Together, Daly and Chesney-Lind's work challenges traditional criminological perspectives that often overlook or misinterpret offending by women. By understanding the complex interplay of social, economic, and gendered factors, policymakers and practitioners can better tailor interventions that address the root causes of delinquency in women, promote equity in the justice system, and support pathways to rehabilitation and community reintegration for girls at risk.

Applying the Feminist Perspective: Control-Balance Theory

Although some theories, like those used to explain girl's delinquency, may arise directly from feminist criminology and center gender in their explanations, others may be reevaluated or applied using a feminist perspective. In other words, feminist criminologists sometimes utilize traditional criminological theories by applying a feminist lens to who or what they study. Let's take the control-balance theory to use as an example of how this might occur.

Coined by criminologist Charles Tittle (1995), **control-balance theory** is a blend of social control theory and containment theory from Chapter 7. This theory focuses on the control someone is under as well as the control they hold over themselves. Too much control can be just as dangerous as too little. An individual's control ratio is the amount of control a person is subject to versus the amount of control a person exerts over others. In this theory, the control ratio is used to determine someone's risk of deviance. The importance of the control ratio is that it is believed to predict not only the probability that one will engage in deviance but also the specific form of deviance.

High levels of control are called a "control surplus," and low levels are called a "control deficit." According to Tittle, someone with a control surplus is able to exercise a large amount of control over others. Those who are overly controlled by someone else experience a control deficit. A situation that highlights someone's control imbalance will prompt them to correct or rebalance their control ratio. Such a situation may lead to crime, especially if the person feels humiliated about the imbalance.

Although this theory was not initially formed within a feminist perspective and did not seek to address gendered crime issues, it is compatible with a feminist approach when applied accordingly. For example, in cases of intimate partner violence, there is often one person with a control surplus. From a feminist criminological lens, patriarchal societies ensure that men have a control surplus, and control-balance theory may be able to shed light on gendered criminal behavior. When men use physical force, emotional

manipulation, or financial control over women, control-balance theory might explain the behavior as an exertion of control to maintain balance when the man perceives it to be lacking.

Ultimately, feminist criminological approaches to explaining crime (and victimization) among young girls and women recognize gendered culture and patriarchal institutions in society as having a significant impact on how they experience victimization, offending behavior, and the criminal justice system. Nearly all of the initial research conducted to establish or support the theories discussed in previous chapters of this textbook exclusively or predominantly included boys and men. Regardless of their specific theoretical concepts, feminist approaches center gender and grapple with the various ways that gender impacts behavior and treatment in the criminal justice system.

Learn More: Canada's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is an issue across the globe, and it has prompted a movement in countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia (figure 8.9). This section will provide a case study in the Canadian context.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, feminist criminology highlights the different pathways to offending as well as myriad ways in which women are uniquely victimized. This approach also calls attention to the intersectionality of gender with other forms of identity. The case of murdered and missing Indigenous women offers one example of this intersectionality reflected in the

Figure 8.9. The red hand over this child's mouth is a symbol of the MMIWG movement and represents the missing girls and women whose voices are not heard.

criminal justice system. *Red Dresses on Bare Trees* is an edited collection of stories and reflections by "authors with good minds, hearts and spirits (fuelled by good intentions)" (Hankard & Dillen, 2021, p. v) that address through stories and reflections the challenging human rights violations faced by Indigenous women and the plight of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) of Canada. The text provides reflections of those affected by the pain of MMIWG and honors their voices and their stories. If you are interested in reading the stories, you can find them in the book *Red Dresses on Bare Trees: Stories and Reflections on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* [Website].

In *Decolonizing the Violence Against Indigenous Women*, Jacobs (2017) argues that decolonization must include a goal of returning safety and respect to Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous women and girls, and the stolen lands settlers occupy (Jacobs, 2017, p. 51). Many provincial and national inquiries have produced reports that examine the circumstances of Canada's Indigenous peoples that are the direct consequence of its colonial history and the intergenerational trauma associated with Canada's past and present. This includes a history built on Eurocentric norms and systems; the removal of Indigenous chil-

dren from their families and their placement in residential schools, which were often fraught with physical, sexual, and psychological abuses; and the Sixties Scoop, during which Indigenous children were placed in foster care. But make no mistake: the colonial oppression of, and violence against, Indigenous peoples is ever present in Canada today.

The first public inquiry into Canada's treatment of its Indigenous peoples followed the Oka Crisis in the summer of 1990, which drew international attention and forced the federal government to seriously consider its historical and ongoing treatment of its First Peoples. The Oka Crisis was a dispute over a golf course on the lands and burial grounds of the Kanien'kéhaka (Mohawk) in Québec and involved heavy military enforcement. The National Film Board of Canada produced the award-winning documentary *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, which detailed the 78 day standoff that resulted in two fatalities.

Although the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' (RCAP) report (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1996) does not focus specifically on Indigenous women and girls, it provides a detailed history of the colonial practices that harmed Indigenous peoples for centuries, with a focus on including Indigenous voices (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1996). At the same time, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) began demanding action to address the continued disappearance and murder of Indigenous women and girls across Canada (Tavcer, 2018). According to the final report of the *National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG): Reclaiming Power and Place* (2019), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) now confirm 1,181 cases of "police-recorded incidents of Aboriginal female homicides and unresolved missing Aboriginal females" between 1980 and 2012.

Between 1996 and 2019, many other commissions and inquiries addressing MMIWG have issued similar reports that highlight the dangers of being an Indigenous woman or girl in Canada. Several of the inquiries have focused on British Columbia because it has the highest proportion of MMIWG. The Highway of Tears—a 725 km corridor of highway stretching from Prince Rupert to Prince George, British Columbia—is where at least 30 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing since 1974. British Columbia is also the site of serial killer Robert Pickton's farm where DNA from 33 female victims was found, 12 of whom were Indigenous.

It is time for meaningful action to address the ongoing oppression and systemic racism against Canada's Indigenous peoples. We continue to see the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples—women in particular—in all aspects of the Canadian criminal justice system, as both people who commit offenses and victims. In 1996, the RCAP asked "Why in a society where justice is supposed to be blind are the inmates of our prisons selected so overwhelmingly from a single ethnic group?" (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1996). How is it that we continue to ask the same question today?

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Figure 8.7. "CRIAW-ICREF's Intersectionality Wheel" by The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women from Everyone Belongs: A Toolkit for Applying Intersectionality is included under fair use.

8.4 Conclusion

Critical criminology has its beginnings in the critical theories of Marx and the concept of repressive power as it is linked to the state and the capitalist economy. Contemporary critical criminology has largely settled on abolitionist thought. Overall, feminist criminology centers gender, together with other aspects of identity, in crime and criminology rather than minimizing or treating gender as an add-on. Instead of taking the experience of men for granted, feminist criminology actively theorizes about the experience of women in both criminalization and victimization and pays critical attention to racism, classism, sexism, and other bases of discrimination and marginalization. All these ways of thinking about criminal justice share the idea that existing systems are inherently inequitable and violent. Therefore, they must be rethought, denaturalised, and deconstructed in an effort to emancipate and create material change.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we discussed the origins and brief history of both critical criminology and feminist criminology. Some of the major thinkers and concepts within each perspective were explored, as well as some theories that fit neatly within each subfield. Both of these areas strive to evolve and adapt their understandings of crime and victimization to modern issues of social inequality.

Discussion Questions and Supplemental Resources

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does the capitalist economic system in the United States contribute to social inequality and crime?
2. What are some of the key critiques of traditional criminological theories that are offered by feminist criminologists?
3. How do you think critical criminology challenges mainstream explanations of racial disparities

in crime rates and criminal justice outcomes?

4. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with applying intersectional perspectives to criminological research and policy-making?

5. Some paradigms, perspectives, and theories are more concrete and easily summarized than others. Refer to figure 3.15 in Chapter 3, and try making a similar one for critical and feminist approaches. What challenges do you run into when identifying core concepts, theorists, or theories?

Supplemental Resources

If you want to dig deeper into the topics covered in this chapter, check out the following resources:

- Tough Guise 2: Violence, Manhood & American Culture [Website], a documentary that examines America's social and cultural contribution to men's violence, particularly against women. (See if your university/library has access through Kanopy or another platform.)
- *Power* [Streaming Video], a documentary on Netflix about the history of American policing. It takes a critical approach to the subject and begs the question, who do police serve and protect?
- The American Society of Criminology's Division of Feminist Criminology [Website] has a plethora of resources and information about feminist criminology.
- The American Society of Criminology's Division on Critical Criminology & Social Justice [Website] has a plethora of resources and information about critical criminology.
- The *Women & Crime podcast* [Website] is hosted by two criminology professors who study and discuss women who have been victims or perpetrators of crime.

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THE FUTURE OF CRIMINOLOGY

Figure 9.1. *The field of criminology is not static. Rather, it must constantly evolve and adapt to our social, political, legal, and physical world.*

Contents of This Chapter:

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Table of Contents

Every page of this book has a button labeled CONTENTS. In most browsers, this button will be in the upper left corner. You can click anywhere on that button to show the book's table of contents. Clicking the button again hides the table of contents.

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9

9.1 Chapter Introduction

As our societies, physical environments, climate, and technologies change and evolve, so too can offending behavior and victimization. Additionally, as social norms or understandings of social life change, so too do our approaches and theories (figure 9.1). Every year, more criminological approaches and sub-fields give voices to underrepresented or marginalized populations and their perspectives. The field of criminology and criminal justice has considerable room for growth, improvement, and new perspectives. In this chapter, we will briefly discuss continuing and emerging crime and victimization topics as well as different sub-fields or specializations within criminology. As you read, I encourage you to contemplate the exciting research, advocacy, and career opportunities that the field can provide.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter and engaging with the activities and resources, students will be able to do the following:

1. Identify some of the core continuing and emerging topics in the crime and victimization sub-fields of criminology.
2. Assess the changing needs within the field of criminology.
3. Understand more about research and career options that exist within the field of criminology.
4. Apply criminological knowledge to current issues.

Key Terms

- **Cybercrime:** an umbrella term that refers to essentially all crime that is committed via the internet or the use of computers
- **Deepfake:** the product of digital manipulation in which an existing photo or video is replaced with someone's likeness
- **Domestic violence:** violence that is physical, sexual, emotional, or financial in nature and often patterned that takes place between people in a family setting; often used interchangeably with the

term intimate partner violence, although domestic violence is not limited to intimate partners

- **Environmental racism:** the unintended or intended phenomenon in which policies or practices have disproportionate negative environmental impacts based on race or color
- **Femicide:** the killing of women because of their gender
- **Gender-based violence:** a broad category of violence that is directed at someone because of their gender; may also refer to violence that is disproportionately experienced by one gender
- **Green criminology:** a subfield of criminology that focuses on harm to the environment, humans, and nonhuman species
- **Hate crimes:** crimes that are motivated at least in part by bias against a particular identity or group affiliation
- **Infotainment:** media that blurs the line between news and entertainment and might be both educational and entertaining
- **Intimate partner violence:** violence that occurs between people who are or were in a romantic and/or sexual relationship; can include physical, sexual, or emotional violence perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner
- **Legal desert:** areas or counties, typically in rural settings, where few or no lawyers are working
- **Mass killing** or **mass murder:** the killing of multiple people, typically more than three, in one incident
- **Mass shootings:** an event in which one or more people use firearms to target, injure, and/or kill multiple people
- **Queer criminology:** a subfield of criminology that centers the LGBTQIA+ community in studying crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system
- **Rural criminology:** a subfield of criminology that focuses on rural settings and how the rural context impacts the study of crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system
- **Serial murders:** a series of murders in which multiple people are murdered across *more than one incident* and there are *cooling off periods* separating each murder
- **Space criminology:** a subfield of criminology that focuses on outer space-related crimes, security, and justice
- **Victimology:** a subfield of criminology that focuses on victimization and centers the experiences of those who have survived criminal victimization

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Figure 9.1. "Board School Soon" by Gerd Altmann is licensed under the Pixabay License.

9.2 Continuing and Emerging Crime and Victimization Topics

Although there may not be a consensus on the cause(s) of crime, one thing is certain: crime is not going away. Understanding root causes, risk factors, and more can help us mitigate risk, prevent or treat crime, and make our communities safer. All of what we discussed in [Chapter 1](#) and [Chapter 2](#) is still true! Going forward, the field of criminology will and should continue to study everything from property crime to violent crime. Here, we will discuss a few topics that are either newly emerging, highly impactful, or particularly intriguing to the public or researchers:

- mass murder
- crime and media
- gender-based violence
- cybercrime

Mass Murder

While other countries definitely experience their own types of tragedies, the United States has become known for certain types of horror-filled events where one or a few individuals take the lives of many. A **mass killing** or **mass murder** is federally defined as a single incident in which three or more people are killed in a public place (Investigative Assistance, 2013). The types of mass murder vary by the weapon used (such as a firearms, knives, explosives, vehicles, or even airplanes), by the perpetrator (such as a lone wolf, members of a cult, or religious extremists), by the amount of time between killings (meaning all in one event or across multiple locations), and by the motive (such as hate/bigotry, mental illness, religious extremism, or politics). What does not vary is that each type of mass murder includes the killing of at least three people by at least one perpetrator. With so many factors involved, there is a lot of variety in mass murders, despite them being some of the least common crimes committed.

Many contemporary mass murder single events are also termed **mass shootings** because of the use of firearms to kill or injure the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time. These killings happen in the same location, such as at a school, workplace, public location, or event – and at the same time. School shootings, in which students arrive heavily armed and ready to kill their classmates and teachers, have gone from being extremely rare to becoming frighteningly common (figure 9.2). The incident most often referenced as the start of this horrible trend is the massacre at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Two high school seniors from the school, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, murdered 12 students and one teacher and injured another 21 people. They then killed themselves in the school library. At the time, Columbine was the deadliest school shooting in U.S. history, and even though it was not the first school shooting in the United States, it changed how we viewed safety in schools. Schools now routinely

practice lockdowns and have active shooter drills. Students and teachers alike are all very aware of the possibility of a school shooting on their campus.

Understanding the reasons, motives, and causes of different types of mass murder events may be key to reducing them. The debate over gun control and accessibility in this country is a controversial policy discussion that comes up in every election and, typically, after every mass shooting on the news. Criminologists are well-situated to meaningfully contribute to this conversation.

Learn More: Mass Shootings in America

As we will discuss in this chapter, a mass shooting is defined as an event in which three or more people are shot (not counting the shooter). The Gun Violence Archive, an independent data collection and research group, keeps daily track of all gun violence in the United States dating back to 2014. Specific to mass shootings, 2023 was one of the top three deadliest years since the organization began tracking this data. In 2023, there were 656 mass shootings in this country. In 2022, there were a total of 646 mass shootings, in 2021, there were 689, and 2020 had a total of 610. These numbers show a frightening trend, with each year having almost double the number of mass shootings as occurred each year between 2014 and 2019, when the average was 348 mass shootings per year (Gun Violence Archive, 2024).

The largest mass shooting in terms of number of deaths and injuries in U.S. history occurred in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 1, 2017. Twenty-two thousand fans were in attendance at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival on the Las Vegas Strip when 64-year-old Stephen Paddock opened

Figure 9.2. A montage of some of the deadliest mass shootings in the United States. Clockwise from top left: The 2017 Las Vegas shooting, the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and the 2019 El Paso shooting.

fire on the crowd. Paddock fired over 1,000 shots from inside his hotel room, a corner suite on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino. Over the course of one week leading up to the shooting, he had moved an arsenal of firearms in 22 suitcases into two suites. These weapons included 14 AR-15 rifles, eight AR-10 rifles, one bolt-action rifle, and one revolver. Some of the AR-15 rifles were also equipped with bump stocks that allowed them to fire in rapid succession, and 12 of them had 100-round magazines. On September 30th, he placed a "do not disturb" sign on the doors of both of the suites. For 10 minutes, Paddock fired indiscriminately into the crowd at the concert as they tried to escape to safety.

When police breached the door of the hotel suite after the shooting, Paddock was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head. His motive for the mass shooting remains unknown.

Shootings like this, although on a smaller scale, have become part of American culture. No other country in the world experiences mass shootings with the type of frequency that we do here in the United States. This phenomenon is not only not getting better, it appears to be getting far worse and gaining momentum.

Supplemental Resources

- You have the option to learn more about the Gun Violence Archive [Website].
- If you want to keep up with the Supreme Court's cases and opinions, including those about ghost guns [Website] or gun rights/control [Website], you can follow Scotusblog [Website].

Crime and Media

Crime and media are intricately and historically linked. In our modern society, crime **infotainment** such as documentaries, podcasts, tv series, and other true crime media are incredibly popular. Journalistic reporting of crime and victimization has changed drastically since the time of print newspapers as we now get stories about crime from social media and other online outlets. Additionally, there is growing distrust for "the media" and "the news"—the ambiguous collective—that leads to public questioning of crime-related information.

Criminologists and media scholars alike have their work cut out for them. There is a heap of research already that assesses how the media portrays victims, perpetrators, and crime issues. Much of this research looks at the ways in which gender, race, religion, and other identities are represented in crime-related media. For many criminologists, the accuracy of and impact that these portrayals have on victims, public opinion about justice issues, knowledge of the legal system, and more are incredibly important.

Activity: Serial Murder in the Media

Serial murder differs from mass murder in at least two important ways. First, in serial murder, multiple people are murdered as part of more than one incident. Second, serial murder includes cooling off periods that separate each murder. In other words, the person committing the murders has time for any adrenaline-fueled emotional highs to subside before they commit the next murder. Scholars who study serial murder and serial murderers look at things like who is targeted and their characteristics (e.g., gender, race), as well as the lifestyle, education, occupation, and motivations of the people committing the murders. Although this type of crime is relatively rare, the public is fascinated by these cases.

In 2022, the show *Dahmer—Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* came out on Netflix (figure 9.3). With Evan Peters in the lead role, the show quickly became very popular, sparking memes and discussion across the internet. Although it was not a novel idea and many shows, documentaries, films, and podcasts explore the lives and crimes of famous serial killers, this one brought our morbid curiosity and the ethics related to these stories to the forefront.

Read this article about Rita Isbell [Website], the sister of Errol Lindsey who was one of Jeffrey Dahmer's victims, to get one perspective related to this topic. Then answer the following questions.

1. Does the telling of serial murder cases in the media educate or exploit? Think about the pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages of serial murder stories in different forms of media.
2. Does having the details of these cases help educate the public on the realities of serial murder? Does that education help us be more prepared, able to avoid, or able to help victims of serial murder?
3. Or do these stories exploit tragedies for profit? Do they further harm victims? Do they glorify murder and murderers?
4. Does your answer differ when you consider different forms of media? For example, TV news media, internet news media, documentaries, "based on a true story" fictional films, TV shows, or podcasts. Explain your thoughts.

Supplemental Resources

- If you want to see public opinion and listenership of true crime podcasts, check out the Pew Research Center's Survey [Website].
- If you want to see a famous example of how media coverage of crime can impact the involved parties watch the documentary *Amanda Knox* [Streaming Video] on Netflix.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence, a broad category of violence that is directed at someone because of their gender, is a phenomenon that occurs in all parts of the world and across time. Often, gender-based violence refers to violence against women that includes sexual assault and rape, **intimate partner violence** (violence committed by a sexual/romantic partner or ex-partner), **domestic violence** (violence in a domestic/family setting), and **femicide** (the killing of women because of their gender). According to The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 47% of women in the United States reported any contact sexual violence – including rape, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact – physical violence, and/or stalking victimization by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime (Leemis et al., 2022). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that between 2003 and 2014, 55% of the homicides of American women involved an intimate partner, and non-Hispanic Black women had the highest rate of dying by homicide (Petrosky et al., 2017). Many cultural factors have been tied to these forms of gender-based violence, such as patriarchal structures and rape culture (Johnson & Johnson, 2021).

Gender-based violence can also include infanticide, which is the killing of an infant; honor killing, which is the killing of someone who has allegedly dishonored their family; female genital mutilation, which is the partial or total removal of female external genitalia; forced marriage; and human trafficking. Worldwide, girls and women are subjected to these types of violence at a disproportionate rate (UN Women, 2020).

Another area of focus regarding gender-based violence relates to hate crime victimization, particularly of transgender individuals. In a study that looked at violent victimization between 2017 and 2020, the rate of violent victimization against transgender persons was 2.5 times the rate among cisgender persons (Truman & Morgan, 2022). Relatedly, "corrective rape," or rape that is intended to force the victim to conform to a heterosexual or cisgender identity, is a form of sexual violence often perpetrated against women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The issue of gender-based violence, in all of its forms, is not unique to the United States and is in need of continued criminological study.

Learn More: Gender-Based Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as criminal acts that are at least partly motivated by the perceived identity or group affiliation of the victim (figure 9.4). In other words, hate itself, and often hate speech, is not considered a hate crime. There are several federally protected identities, but states can decide which other groups will be protected under hate crime legislation within their borders. Gender and gender identity are not protected in every state.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the FBI collects data on hate crimes. There are few hate crimes against women and transgender people reported each year. However, this data source is severely limited and does not represent the actual amount of hate crime victimization taking place. Hate crimes are shakily defined, significantly underreported, often misclassified by law enforcement, and difficult to prove and prosecute. First, legislation typically does not recognize various forms of gender-based violence as a hate crime. For example, rape targeting women victims will not show up in the hate crime data, even though the victim was likely chosen because of gender.

Second, hate crimes are underreported for multiple reasons. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, people choose not to report

Figure 9.4. Hate is not new, but the FBI has only been collecting data on hate crimes since 1990.

for various reasons, such as fearing retaliation or fearing or distrusting the police. For transgender individuals, reporting their victimization might also mean outing themselves and placing themselves in danger. A study in West Virginia in 2011 found that hate crimes were undercounted by approximately 67%, and, related to the third limitation, they found classification errors in the way police were reporting hate crimes (Haas et al., 2011).

Finally, hate crimes can be difficult to prove and prosecute in court. Without clear evidence, such as video or witness accounts of a perpetrator using slurs during the commission of a crime, it may not be possible to secure a conviction. Prosecutors may fear that a hate crime charge could jeopardize the entire case and thus choose not to pursue such charges. Hate crime charges also tend to spark public and political debates, which may deter a prosecutor from pursuing hate crime charges.

The intersection of gender-based violence and victimization with hate crimes is not clear and will likely continue to evolve.

Supplemental Resources

- Learn more about the intersection of transphobia and hate crimes by reading this *Insider* investigation that uncovered 15 murders driven by transphobia (only one of which was successfully prosecuted as a hate crime): "'Love us in private and kill us in public': How transphobia turns young men into killers" [Website].
- Learn more about intimate partner violence at the National Domestic Violence Hotline [Website], which includes statistics, research, and resources.
- Learn more about sexual assault at the National Sexual Assault Hotline [Website], which includes statistics, research, and resources.

Cybercrime

Technological advancements have drastically changed the way we live our lives. New tools and technologies can make life easier, but they can also create new opportunities for harm and victimization. Not only is it challenging for the law to keep up with these changes, but the field of criminology has to adapt and evolve as well.

Cybercrime is an umbrella term that refers to essentially all crime that is committed via the internet or with the use of computers. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities improve and become harder to detect, issues such as **deepfake** videos that impose someone's likeness onto an existing video may change the way fraud, identity theft, blackmail, and more are committed (figure 9.5). Although internet and mobile phone connectivity varies across the globe and is especially lacking in developing countries, 95% of the world's population has mobile broadband network coverage and 63% are using the internet (International Telecommunications Union, 2022). The expansion of these network connections makes it easier for organized crime groups to facilitate the trafficking of drugs, people, guns, and other contraband.

Criminologists will continue to research how to detect these threats, the impact of cybercrime victimization, and practical investigative practices for identifying and catching people engaged in cybercrime. This topic is forever and fast-changing as our technologies grow and change.

Activity: Deepfake Pornography

Figure 9.5. Many celebrities and public figures, predominantly women, have had their intimate photos leaked online or had their likeness used in the creation of pornographic material. Even when the material is not real, the harm very much is.

Read this brief article, "Taylor Swift and the Dangers of Deepfake Pornography" [Website], as well as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's press release [Website] about federal legislation that was introduced in March 2024.

1. How do you think deepfake pornography impacts the privacy and rights of individuals whose faces are used without consent?
2. Should there be specific laws addressing the creation and dissemination of deepfakes? Why or why not?
3. How might exposure to deepfake pornography affect individuals, both those depicted and viewers?
4. What responsibilities do social media platforms, tech companies, or pornography websites have in preventing the spread of deepfake pornography?
5. How does deepfake pornography intersect with issues of gender, power, and exploitation?

Supplemental Resources

- If you are interested in learning more about cybercrime and career opportunities for investigating cybercrime, check out the FBI's cyber threat web page [Website].
- You can learn how to report cybercrime via the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) [Website].

Check Your Knowledge

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9.3 Subfields and Specializations within Criminology

Beyond the established crime and victimization topics criminologists will continue to study going forward, there are also some important and emerging subfields within criminology that bring attention to different issues. The sub-disciplines discussed here differ from those already covered in this textbook. They are not the only important or emerging areas of study, but rather a sample of those that will be part of the field's future. They include:

- victimology
- green criminology
- rural criminology
- queer criminology
- convict criminology
- space law and criminology

Victimology

Victimology is the scientific study of victimization within society. It is a grounded social science derived from the narratives and experiences of survivors of crime. Like criminology, it explores broader social questions about how people come to experience violence, how those experiences are understood within society, and the imbalance of power between the various actors in the criminal justice system. Victimology should not be defined as the study of victims. This would be akin to describing criminology as the study of criminals without acknowledging the value-laden nature of the word and the power dynamics that shape its use.

Victimology is often understood as emerging as a sub-discipline of criminology, and later emerging as a distinct yet overlapping discipline exploring a different set of questions than criminologists (Spencer & Walklate, 2016; Wemmers, 2017). Victimology research often identifies and defines types of victimization, explores how they are measured, examines relationships between victims and perpetrators, and analyzes the experiences of survivors in the criminal justice system, victim services, and society (Karmen, 2020). This sub-discipline is incredibly important for illuminating the needs of those who are at risk or have been victimized (figure 9.6).

Figure 9.6. *Victim advocacy is often a component of victimologists' work.*

Supplemental Resources

- If you are curious about victim services in Oregon, check out the Oregon Department of Justice's Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division [Website].
- If you are interested in learning about career options in the field of victimology, check out victim services careers at the FBI [Website].

Green Criminology

Green criminology refers to:

the study of environmental crimes and harms affecting human and nonhuman life, ecosystems, and the biosphere. More specifically, green criminology explores and analyzes: the causes, consequences, and prevalence of environmental crime and harm, the responses to and prevention of environmental crime and harm by the legal system (civil, criminal, regulatory) and by nongovernmental entities and social movements, as well as the meaning and mediated representations of environmental crime and harm (Brisman & South, 2019, p. 1).

Much of traditional criminology is [anthropocentric](#) (human-centered), as theories and research focus on humans both as perpetrators of criminal actions as well as victims of crime. In contrast, green criminology broadens this view to include the environment – water, land, air, and plants – as well as nonhuman animals, including wild, farmed, and domestic animals. Green criminology moves away from a strictly anthropocentric perspective to a more encompassing view of who could be a victim of crime or harm.

Regarding crime, green criminology not only looks at breaches of law, but also who is breaking the law and how the justice system responds to such breaches. Green criminology is a critical perspective and calls attention to the role that power plays in determining both the laws and who is deemed to have violated those laws. As part of the focus on harm, green criminologists ask "Who determines what is harmful?" and "Who defines what is criminal?" These questions center the issue of power, as in who has the power to construct definitions of environmental crime, who has the power to resist definitions of harm, and who and what are harmed by these actions (figure 9.7).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/criminologyintro1e/?p=587#oembed-1

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https://youtu.be/OPB5RzReiIY

Figure 9.7. Watch this 5-minute video about **environmental racism**, the unintended or intended phenomenon in which policies or practices have disproportionate negative environmental impacts based on race or color. Considering what you have learned about green criminology, as well as the [activity from Chapter 8](#), how might this phenomenon be explained by different criminological theorists or perspectives? [Transcript.](#)

Supplemental Resources

- Consider reviewing the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \[Website\]](#) from the United Nations (UN).
- For an example of the types of environmental harms that are prosecuted and the police role in enforcing environmental laws, see the research article ["The Green Police in the Golden State" \[Website\]](#).

Rural Criminology

Rural criminology refers to the study of crime, victimization, justice, safety, and legal systems in rural communities (figure 9.8). In the simplest terms, rural describes non-urban spaces with lower populations and lots of undeveloped land. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 66 million people or 20% of the population live in rural areas in the United States (U.S. Census, 2023). Rural people and places are historically underrepresented in research and policy. However, there has been growing interest in studying crime and justice in rural communities over the past few decades.

The rural environment creates unique challenges for victims, people who commit offenses, and actors in the criminal justice system. These locations tend to have fewer educational and career opportunities, are geographically remote or isolated, lack public transportation and welfare services, and suffer from fewer overall resources. Criminal justice system agencies and justice-related organizations in rural communities suffer from a lack of funding and resources, understaffing, and the challenges brought on by geographic isolation. All of these disadvantages are especially challenging for already marginalized populations in these communities. Furthermore, as populations grow and people leave rural areas to move to cities and metropolitan areas, the residents who are left behind can face further disadvantages. The field of rural criminology seeks to lift these unheard voices and bring attention to issues of access to justice, accountability in rural justice agencies, funding and resource deficits, and more.

Figure 9.8. *A common misunderstanding is that crime does not occur in rural communities. All the types of crime that you see in urban areas also happen in the countryside. However, some crimes, like the theft of farm equipment or livestock, are unique to rural areas. Did you know that total costs from farm crime in the United States are estimated to be between $100 million and $5 billion in a single year (Mears et al., 2007; FBI, 2023)?*

Learn More: Legal Deserts

Many rural communities struggle to attract and retain individuals who work in the criminal justice system. Salaries are often less competitive, opportunities may be fewer, and distance from city amenities can drive people away. When rural areas lack judges and attorneys, residents' access to justice can be severely impacted.

The term **legal desert** refers to areas that have few or no lawyers. Almost every state in the United States has stretches or rural areas and counties that face this problem. For example, Georgia's 154 counties outside of Atlanta hold 65% of the population but only 30% of the state's lawyers, according to the American Bar Association (ABA) (2020). This means that people in need of an attorney may have to travel long distances for their legal needs, such as wills, divorces, custody issues, or help with criminal and civil cases. Many rural areas suffer from high rates of poverty and do not have public transportation, making long-distance travel nearly impossible.

Some states have established initiatives to help solve this problem. In South Dakota, Project Rural Practice was established to support young lawyers in small towns and rural areas (ABA, 2020). The Rural Law Opportunities Program in Nebraska provides scholarships to Nebraskan students that enables them to obtain a bachelor's degree at certain partner universities, a law degree through the University of Nebraska College of Law, and then practice in rural areas of Nebraska (University of Nebraska, 2024).

If small-town living is your vibe, opportunities like these can support you in getting your legal education and ultimately help provide legal services to underserved rural communities.

Supplemental Resources

- If you want to connect with rural criminologists and practitioners who work in rural spaces across the globe, reach out to the International Society for the Study of Rural Crime (ISSRC) [Website].
- If you want to learn more about stereotypes and the exploitation of rural communities, check out the documentary *Hillbilly* [Streaming Video].
- If you are interested in learning more about unique rural crime and rural policing, check out "The Inside Scoop on Hive Theft in California with Investigator Rowdy Freeman" [Streaming Video] for an example.

Queer Criminology

Queer criminology emerges from the field of critical criminology and aims to place the LGBTQIA+ population at the center of criminological inquiry (figure 9.9). Similar to that of feminist criminology, queer criminology recognizes that identities within the LGBTQIA+ population are complex and have not been adequately included in traditional criminological research. Simply tacking sexual orientation or

gender identity onto a list of demographics does not capture the nuances of the ways people in this population experience victimization, offending, or the criminal justice system.

Researchers in the field of queer criminology point out that the LGBTQIA+ population has been understudied in the field for decades, noting how curious this is since same-sex sexual conduct and marriage were illegal across much of America for most of the 20th century (Panfil & Miller, 2014). Current movements and legislation targeting transgender children, hate crime victimization, and the murder of transgender individuals are particularly important for modern criminologists to address. A critical understanding of homophobia, transphobia, and other sociocultural elements are important to the study of these issues.

Another component of queer criminology focuses on the ways in which components of the traditional criminal justice system, especially police, are used as tools to uphold heteronormativity, cisgender superiority, and gender roles. Relatedly, it is important that the voices of queer scholars (especially those with system involvement) be elevated in these discussions. Research from this subfield can help criminal justice practitioners, such as police, lawyers, judges, or correctional officers who work with the queer population (as coworkers or as clients) better understand or address the needs of LGBTQIA+ people.
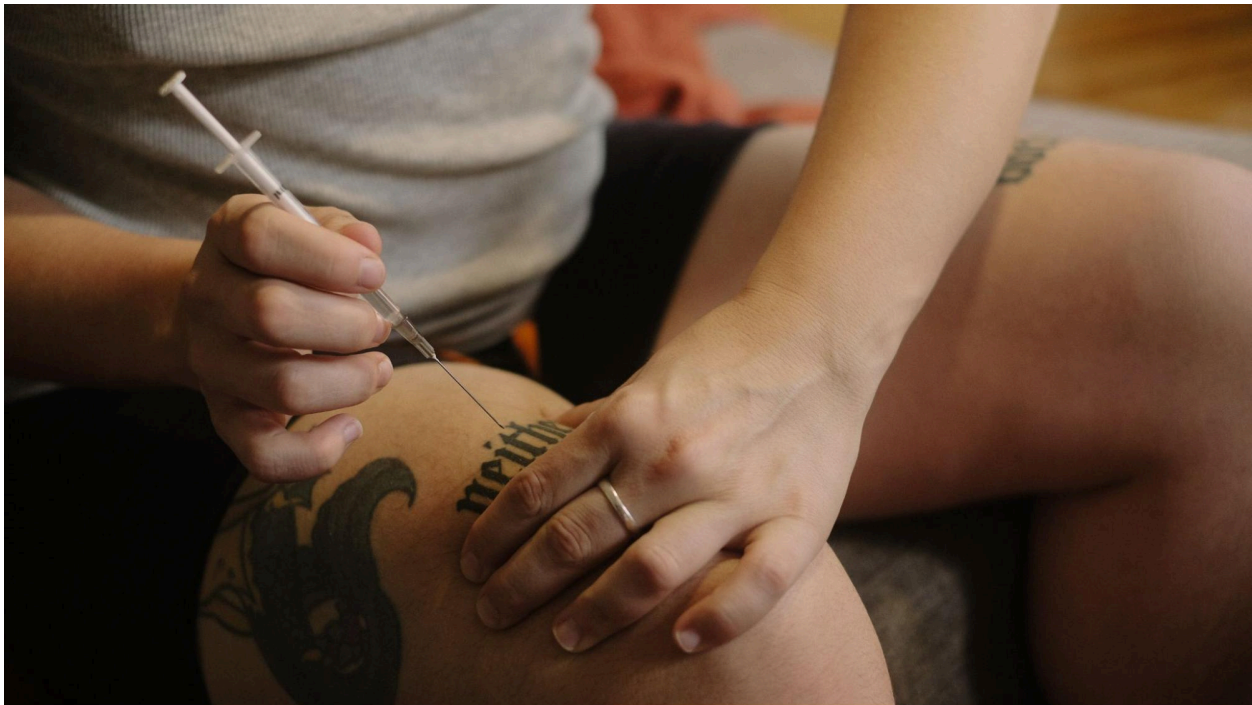
Figure 9.9. The subfield of queer criminology deals with issues of invisibility, inequity, devaluation, and criminalization of sexual and gender minorities. Should health-care issues, such as gender-affirming care, be regulated by health-care professionals or government officials and the legal system?

Supplemental Resources

- If you want to learn a bit more about this sub-discipline's history and direction, check out "Young and Unafraid: Queer Criminology's Unbounded Potential" [Website].

- If you are interested in studying queer criminology, find a list of graduate programs from the American Society of Criminology's Division on Queer Criminology [Website].

Convict Criminology

Convict criminology is an approach to criminology that privileges the voices and standpoints of persons who have been criminalized or who have been affected by the criminal justice system (Richards & Ross, 2001). People with justice system experience combine their time inside prisons with their academic knowledge to provide new insights into the operation of the criminal justice system. Convict criminology began two decades ago (Jones et al., 2009) and was initially a largely U.S.-based approach that brought together scholars who had experience behind bars or experience being criminalized (figure 9.10). The insights of these scholars were used as a platform for analyzing the criminal justice system and exploring the power relations involved in the criminal justice apparatus. Using ethnographic methods and empirical research, they highlighted the destructive impact of prisons and punishment from an experiential position.

Convict criminology has now branched out and become a global phenomenon (Ross et al., 2014). What is important about this expansion is that convict criminologists in different countries are uniquely positioned to shed light on and investigate the criminal justice system in each country and to provide comparative insights. Rather than providing a deductive armchair approach, convict criminology provides a more inductive and immanent understanding of criminal justice processes. This is important because scholarly criminological work that is more or less based on deductive academic concepts can not only be wrong but also be harmful and alienating to people who have directly experienced the harms of the criminal justice system. *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* is the official journal publication of convict criminology. Today, it is almost impossible to think about what critical criminology would be without including convict criminologists and the kinds of inquiries they provide.

Figure 9.10. *Convict criminology prioritizes the voices of formerly incarcerated people and marries experience with education.*

Supplemental Resources

- The *Ear Hustle* [Website] podcast gives a voice to those currently and previously incarcerated.
- To learn about one of the founders of convict criminology and his subsequent work to help those with criminal records, read this article, "Criminal Turned Criminologist John Irwin Dies" [Website], written after John Irwin's passing.

Space Law and Criminology

This realm of criminology might sound silly and fake at first, but **space criminology** will likely continue to grow in our near future (figure 9.11). The Space Force, the sixth and newest branch of the U.S. military,

was authorized by Congress and signed into law by former President Trump in December 2019 (United States Space Force, n.d.). However, the initiative was not new. Rather, it had been taking shape within the armed forces and Congress over the previous 25 years based on the premise that as satellite and space technologies evolved, America's military organizations had to change as well. When you think about it, our social world, our work world, and really everything in our modern lives is quite dependent on satellites in orbit. Military intelligence, surveillance, communications, operations, missile detection, digital mapping, navigation, and banking have all come to rely on links to orbiting satellites. Satellite imaging is even used by farmers to help them detect soil moisture levels, variations in temperature, and overall crop health. This is essential to large-scale agricultural management and the production of food for large masses of people.

Figure 9.11. *Outer space has been described as the new frontier, similar to the "Wild West" before settlement, colonization, and industrialization. In terms of legal systems, what parallels might exist between outer space and undeveloped areas on earth? How might concerns related to colonization be relevant?*

To sustain our way of life, it is increasingly important to protect space-based satellites from being destroyed or altered. Such a feat is not inconceivable as Russia recently tried to disrupt Ukraine's spaceborne communication systems. Additionally, as space travel, including commercial space travel, continues, questions of legal rights and ownership related to mining, research, and more could pose significant legal and criminological questions. Universities and law schools across the United States are already implementing programs to address these questions. For example, the University of Washington School of Law has a Space Law, Data and Policy program. There is even a textbook on space criminology! While

it might sound like an episode of *Black Mirror*, it is a field that will grow as our exploration of outer space grows.

Supplemental Resources

- To learn more about all things related to space criminology and research in this field, check out Space Criminology [Website].
- If you are interested in studying in this field, check out the University of Washington School of Law Space Law, Data and Policy Program [Website].
- You have the option to learn more about the U.S. Space Force [Website].

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9.4 Conclusion

If you are interested in the field of criminology and criminal justice, there are so many ways for you to engage with and help the field grow. The topics and subfields discussed here are just a drop in the bucket. As the new generation of potential criminologists and criminal justice professionals, you will shape the future of the field. Whether you want to test the theories discussed in this book, help victims and survivors of crime, bring a lens of equity and inclusion to policing, help reform sentencing practices, or build the next great crime prevention program, there is a place for you. If any part of this textbook sparked a passion in you, don't lose it. Nurture it and be a part of improving the way our society handles harm and safety.

Discussion Questions

1. What do *you* think are the most critical current issues in criminology?
2. Can you think of other subfields or branches of criminology that should be developed?
3. The criminal justice field consists of way more than just police, courts, and prisons. Given what you have learned about the study of causes of crime, what other institutions or agencies do you think are important to preventing or treating crime?
4. Most of the discussion in this textbook focused on criminology in a United States context. In what ways do you think criminological explanations of crime might differ in other countries' and cultures' contexts? Can you think of any examples?

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Glossary

Ability

the innate intelligence everyone has at birth

Age of Enlightenment

A period of philosophical, intellectual, and cultural revolution in 17th and 18th-century Europe

Age-crime curve

the consistently found relationship between age and crime in which crime peaks between adolescence and the early 20s, then drops off

Age-graded theory

Sampson and Laub's theory that looks at age and delinquent or criminal behavior, in addition to what was going on in the individual's life at the time of that behavior, emphasizing transitions or turning points

Aggravating circumstances

A circumstance or factor that makes the behavior seem worse or makes the offender more culpable

Anomie

a state of normlessness in society, especially during societal transition

Associative learning

the simple retention of input or the memorization of facts and skills

Atavism

Lombroso's outdated theory that individuals who committed crime were a less evolved and more primitive species

Bias

a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone that is often considered unfair

Bias crimes

criminal acts based on a particular bias or prejudice

Born criminals

Lombroso's term for people who chronically engaged in criminal offenses and had a collection of physical, psychological, and functional anomalies (see stigmata) and were unable to change their behavior because they were stuck in an earlier stage of evolution (see atavism)

Bounded rationality

The idea that offenders' rationality in their decision-making is constrained by both time and relevant information

Broken window theory

a theory that claims the environment of a particular space signals its health to the public and that signs of dilapidation and decay attract more serious crime

Brutalization effect

A phenomenon, observed in some research, of increased violence or homicide after death penalty sentences are carried out

Classical conditioning

a learning process in which an automatic conditioned response is paired with a stimulus

Classical school of criminology

one of the two major traditional paradigms in criminology that emerged during the Age of Enlightenment; theories within this paradigm assume that crime is the result of humans' free will and rational decision-making.

Code of the street

Anderson's theory that Black street culture places a high value on respect, which can lead to conflicts between community members

Collective efficacy

the ability of a community to mobilize their existing social networks toward common goals, especially against crime, in their communities

Concentric zone theory

a theory that takes an ecological approach to understanding city structure and crime by sectioning a city like the circles on a dart board and finding that the zone in transition, which exists between the area where people work and the area where they live, is the most criminogenic

Conceptual learning

the ability to manipulate and transform information input or problem-solving

Conditioning

the category of personality traits and behavioral characteristics people learn

Conflict theory

the theory that social inequality and conflict among social groups is inevitable and that conflict leads to criminal or deviant behavior

Containment theory

Reckless's theory that crime results from a failure of inner and outer control mechanisms and the inability to resist pushes and pulls into crime

Control-balance theory

Tittle's theory that focuses on the control someone is under and the control they hold over themselves (control ratio)

Correlated

a term describing variables that have a relationship or connection

Craniometry

the outdated idea that brain and skull size could tell us about one's intelligence, behavior, and personality

Crime

legal term describing the violation of a criminal law

Crimes of the powerful

crimes committed by white-collar individuals, corporations, government, or other elite in society that often go unpunished

Criminal justice

the system that deals with crime and its consequences

Criminal personality theory

Eysenck's theory used to explain the links between personality and crime

Criminaloid

Lombroso's term for people who were not life-long criminals and whose criminality could be explained by a variety of factors, such as disease or environment

Criminogenic factors

something that increases the likelihood of crime occurring when it is present

Criminology

the study of crime and why it happens

Critical criminology

a perspective or collection of theories that centers social inequality and focuses on the way society defines crime, power, and punishment

Cultural deviance theory

Miller's theory that the lower class have their own subculture and that parents in this group socialize their children into six focal concerns that run counter to mainstream culture

Cutoff

where an offender can discount the suffering of the victim

cybercrime

an umbrella term that refers to essentially all crime that is committed via the internet or the use of computers

Dark figure of crime

unreported or unknown crime

Deepfake

the product of digital manipulation in which an existing photo or video is replaced with someone's likeness

Deterrence

in relation to crime, the prevention of criminal behavior due to the threat of consequences

Deterrence theory

a criminological theory that posits that people will be deterred from committing crime if punishment is swift, severe, and certain

Developmental life-course (DLC) perpsective

a collection of theories that look at criminal behavior over the course of someone's lifetime and pay special attention to the onset, persistence, and desistance of criminal behavior

Deviance

a sociological term describing behavior that is outside of accepted social norms

Differential association theory

Sutherland's theory that criminality is learned through a process of interaction with others who communicate criminal values and advocate for the commission of crimes

Differential opportunity theory

Cloward and Ohlin's theory that juvenile gang formation depends on the neighborhood type and both the legal and illegal opportunities within it

Disintegrative shaming

stigma and further exclusion from society

domestic violence

violence that is physical, sexual, emotional, or financial in nature and often patterned that takes place between people in a family setting; often used interchangeably with the term intimate partner violence, although domestic violence is not limited to intimate partners

Drift theory

Sykes and Matza's theory that juveniles drift in and out of delinquency, especially when social controls like parental supervision are weak, and learn to justify their behavior in one of five ways (see techniques of neutralization)

Dual taxonomy of antisocial behavior

Moffit's life course theory of in which she described adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent offenders

Empirical validity

the degree to which research that is based on systematic observation, measurement, and verifiable experimentation shows what the theory says it should

environmental racism

the unintended or intended phenomenon in which policies or practices have disproportionate negative environmental impacts based on race or color

Eugenics

prejudiced beliefs and practices that aim to control the human gene pool by controlling reproduction and/or eliminating populations deemed inferior

Explanatory power

the ability of a theory to explain the intended topic in a useful manner

Extraversion

an individual's energy levels that are directed outside of themselves that can be manifested as impulsive sociability

femicide

the killing of women because of their gender

Feminist criminology

a perspective or collection of theories that centers gender, along with other aspects of identity, in studying crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system

Feminist theory of delinquency

Chesney-Lind's theory of four propositions that explain girls' unique pathway to delinquency

gender-based violence

a broad category of violence that is directed at someone because of their gender; may also refer to violence that is disproportionately experienced by one gender

General deterrence

circumstances in which individuals are discouraged from committing crime due to their perceptions of the certainty, swiftness, and severity of legal consequences

General strain theory

a theory that posits different types of strain, felt at the individual level, can lead to frustration and negative emotions that may lead to crime if someone does not have adequate coping skills to deal with those strains

General theory of crime

Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory that lack of self-control is the primary cause of criminal behavior

green criminology

a subfield of criminology that focuses on harm to the environment, humans, and nonhuman species

Hate Crime Statistics Act

the federal act that requires data collection "about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity"; prompted data collection in the UCR

hate crimes

crimes that are motivated at least in part by bias against a particular identity or group affiliation

Hedonistic calculation

the weighing of pain and pleasure that humans make in every decision they make; seek to maximize their pleasure and minimize their pain

Hypothesis

a reasonable possible explanation of why we think a phenomenon is occurring based on an educated guess that can be tested

Infotainment

media that blurs the line between news and entertainment and might be both educational and entertaining

Inherited

the category of personality traits and behavioral characteristics that are genetic

Intelligence quotient (IQ)

intelligence as captured by tests; IQ tests are philosophically and contextually controversial, particularly due to their use in supporting the eugenics movement.

Intersectionality

the approach or understanding that various identities and positions in society, including aspects such as race, class, income, sexuality, education, or disability, can lead to multiple forms of inequality and varied experiences of discrimination

intimate partner violence

violence that occurs between people who are or were in a romantic and/or sexual relationship; can include physical, sexual, or emotional violence perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner

IQ

intelligence quotient DEFINE MORE?

Labeling theory

the theory that societal reaction and the application of stigmatizing labels can lead to someone becoming deviant/criminal.

Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA)

a collection of data on incidents in which law enforcement officers were killed or injured in the line of duty; part of the UCR

Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection (LESDC)

a collection of data focusing on the loss of current and former law enforcement officers, corrections employees, 911 operators, judges, and prosecutors that hopes to prevent future deaths by suicide or suicide attempts; part of the UCR

legal desert

areas or counties, typically in rural settings, where few or no lawyers are working

Life-course persistent offending

continued offending throughout adulthood

Lifestyle theory

the belief that criminal behavior is a general criminal pattern of life that is characterized by an individual's irresponsibility, self-indulgence, negative interpersonal relationships, impulsiveness, and the willingness to violate society's rules

Logical consistency

a theory must make sense and be reasonable from beginning to end

Looking-glass self

the idea that a person's identity is shaped by how they believe they are seen by significant others and society at-large

Macro-level

in relation to theory, a focus on large scale issues or populations

Mass killing or mass murder

the killing of multiple people, typically more than three, in one incident

Mass shootings

an event in which one or more people use firearms to target, injure, and/or kill multiple people

Micro-level

in relation to theory, a focus on individuals or small groups

Mitigating circumstances

A circumstance or factor that makes the behavior seem less bad or makes the offender less culpable

Modeling

behavior that results from people observing and imitating others.

Moral faculty

the capability of both distinguishing and choosing good from evil. Individuals suffered from either anomia, or total moral depravity, in which both the moral faculty and the conscience stopped functioning, or micronomia, a partial weakness of the moral faculty in which the individual remains aware of their wrongdoing

Moral insanity

habitual, uncontrollable criminality committed without motive or remorse, akin to what would today be described as psychopathy

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)

the main source of information on criminal victimization in the United States

National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

a database of crimes reported to the police, including incidents where multiple crimes were committed, that includes information on victims, people who have committed offenses, the relationships between victims and people who have committed offenses, people who have been arrested, and property involved in the crimes; part of the UCR

National Use-of-Force Data Collection

a collection of data that contains statistics on the use of force by law enforcement with the goal of providing transparency and improving trust with the public; part of the UCR

Negative punishment

taking something away as s punishment that makes behaviors less likely to happen

Negative reinforcement

taking away a reinforcement that increases the probability of a given behavior

Neoclassical perspective

a new perspective and more modern approach to classical school criminology that considers circumstances that affect choice

Neurotic extroverts

people who require high stimulation levels from their environments and their sympathetic nervous systems are quick to respond

Neuroticism

a trait associated with depression, anxiety, and other negative psychological states

Observational learning

the theory that people learn by watching others and observing the results of their actions

Onset

beginning of delinquency

Operant conditioning

a learning process in which reinforcements and punishments guide behavior

Operational definition

the way we define a concept in order to use, measure, or test it in research

Panopticon

an architectural design for a prison with a central guard tower surrounded by a circle of cells that allowed for actual - or perceived - constant supervision and deterrence of bad behavior

Paradigm

a framework of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that shapes the types of questions we ask and how we answer them

Parsimony

keeping a theory clear, concise, elegant, and simple

Perceptual measures of punishment

what people think will happen to them if they are caught for committing a crime

Persistence

continues or even escalates in severity or frequency

Phrenology

outdated theory claiming that different areas of the skull corresponded to different personality, behavioral, or mental functions and that bumps on the skull could tell you about the corresponding traits

Physiognomy

the outdated study of individuals' facial features as a way of assessing character or criminality

Positive punishment

giving a punishment that makes behaviors less likely to happen

Positive reinforcement

giving a reinforcement that increases the probability of a given behavior

Positive school of criminology

one of the two major traditional paradigms in criminology that emphasized the scientific method and was grounded in the positivist philosophy; theories within this paradigm assume that crime is determined or predisposed, to some degree, by one's biology, psychology, or environment

Positivism

a philosophy stating that knowledge should be based on empirical evidence and what can be witnessed in research

Power orientation

where an offender views the world in terms of strengths and weaknesses

Power-control theory

Hagan's theory that sons are granted more freedom as adolescents, while daughters experience greater control of their behavior by their families, leading to more delinquency among boys

Pre-Classical Justice

the time period before crime and justice were studied scientifically and systematically when medieval societies viewed crime as the result of sin, demonic possession, or other supernatural causes and punished them severely or via religious interventions

Psychoanalysis

Freud's therapeutic application of psychological theories of the importance of the unconscious mind on behavior

Psychodynamic theory

a collection of theories to explain the source of human behavior

Psychopathic

emotional and moral aberrations derived from congenital factors

Psychotic extroverts

people who are cruel, insensitive to others, and unemotional

Psychoticism

can make the individual appear aggressive, impersonal, impulsive, and lacking empathy for others

Qualitative data

non-numerical descriptive information that helps us understand something

Quantitative data

information that can be counted and expressed in numbers

queer criminology

a subfield of criminology that centers the LGBTQIA+ community in studying crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system

Rational choice theory

a criminological theory that posits that people weigh the pros and cons of their options and use a cost-benefit analysis to make their choices, including the choice to commit crime

Relative deprivation

the idea that inequality and the gaps between wealth and poverty in a single place can lead to negative perceptions of one's situation and result in crime

Restorative justice

a perspective or theory of justice with the goal of repairing harm caused by crime and restoring the well-being of both perpetrators and victims rather than just punishing those who have committed crimes

Routine activities theory

a criminological theory that sees crime as a function of people's everyday activities and posits that crime occurs when a motivated offender, suitable target, and lack of capable guardians converge at one time and place

rural criminology

a subfield of criminology that focuses on rural settings and how the rural context impacts the study of crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system

Scientific racism

an ideology that "appropriates the methods and legitimacy of science to argue for the superiority of white Europeans and the inferiority of non-white people whose social and economic status have been historically marginalized"

Scope

something that is covered or addressed by a theory

Self-report data

data that comes directly from individuals about their own experiences through methods like surveys or interviews

serial murders

a series of murders in which multiple people are murdered across more than one incident and there are cooling off periods separating each murder

Social contract

the voluntary relinquishment of some freedoms in exchange for order and safety provided by a sovereign government

Social control theory

Hirschi's theory that, through successful socialization, a bond forms between individuals and the conventional society that limits criminal behavior; crime occurs when the bonds are weakened or broken and a person is free to engage in deviant/criminal behavior; also called social bond theory

Social disorganization theory

the theory that neighborhoods with weak community controls caused by poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity will experience a higher level of criminal and delinquent behavior

Social learning theory

Burgess and Akers's theory that people learn attitudes and behaviors conducive to crime in both social and nonsocial situations through positive reinforcement (rewards) and negative reinforcement (punishments)

Social structure

the framework and relationship between institutions, groups, and norms in a society; all the things that make up a society

Somatotyping

Sheldon's theory that body type was hereditary and corresponded to differences in personality

space criminology

a subfield of criminology that focuses on outer space-related crimes, security, and justice

Specific deterrence

a specific individual being deterred from committing crime due to their experience being punished by the legal system previously

Spuriousness

occurs when two things appear to be correlated but are not because of another variable(s)

Status frustration theory

Cohen's theory that four factors—social class, school performance, status frustration, and reaction formation (coping methods)—contribute to the development of gangs and delinquency in juveniles

Stigmata

Lombroso's term for any features that deviated from the norm, such as physical, psychological, or functional anomalies, and could indicate one's atavism (see atavism)

Strain theory

a theory that assumes a society has conventional goals and means to achieve them and that people who are unable to achieve conventional goals due to blocked opportunities experience structural strain and may adapt in a way that involves criminal behavior

Subculture

a group that shares a specific identity that differs from the mainstream majority, even though they exist within the larger society

Subculture of violence theory

Wolfgang and Ferracuti's theory that certain norms and values, such as violence being an expected and normal response to conflict, are part of working-class communities and help explain violent crime

Symbolic interactionist theory

a theory that, in part, posits that people take on roles when interacting with others

Techniques of neutralization

one of five techniques used by adolescents to justify their criminal behavior according to Sykes and Matza's drift theory

Testable

the openness of a theory to testing and possible falsification

Theory

a statement that proposes to describe and explain why facts or other social phenomenon are related to each other based on observed patterns

Theory of imitation

Tarde's theory that crime is the result of imitating or modeling the behaviors of others

Theory of reintegrative shaming

Braithwaite's theory that effective shaming within a society that disapproves of a behavior but respects the person who engages in that behavior will reduce crime

Trial by ordeal

a medieval method in which the criminally accused would endure an experiment that "proved" whether or not they were guilty and if they were deserving of mercy

Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR)

the largest, most commonly used data collection currently available on crime; housed by the FBI

Usefulness

the degree to which a theory has real-world application

Variables

concepts, factors, or elements in the study

victimology

a subfield of criminology that focuses on victimization and centers the experiences of those who have survived criminal victimization

Attributions and References for Glossary Terms

Bias: Psychology Today. (n.d.). *Bias*. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bias

"Bounded rationality" definition by Brian Fedorek from SOU-CCJ230 Introduction to the American Criminal Justice System is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Institutes of Health. https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism

Scientific racism: National Human Genome Research Institute. (2022). Eugenics and scientific racism. National

"Subculture" definition by Tonja R. Conerly, Kathleen Holmes, Asha Lal Tamang, Introduction to Sociology 3e, *Openstax*, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

Theory: "Theory" definition from the Open Education Sociology Dictionary by Kenton Bell is licensed under CC BY SA 4.0.

Image Descriptions

Image description for Figure 2.4

This diagram represents the Uniform Crime Reports Program and all of its data collections. A dark blue oval in the center includes the words, Uniform Crime Reports Program. Six light blue ovals branch out from the center oval including:

    National Use-of-Force Data Collection

    Summary Reporting System (SRS)

    National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)

    Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA)

    Hate Crime Statistics Program

    Law Enforcement Suicide Data Collection

    The Summary Reporting System (SRS) oval has a yellow square branching off from it that says Part I and Part II. This is the old traditional reporting system that has been retired and part I and II represent the old way of categorizing crimes. The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) oval has a yellow square branching off from it that says Group A & B. This represents the newer reporting system that is updated and includes more crime categories. Both are included in the diagram because older data in the UCR will likely come from the SRS and NIBRS data shows up as the program began transitioning.

Image description for Figure 2.5

This image represents the crime categories included in both the Summary Reporting System (SRS) and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) of the Uniform Crime Reports Program (UCR). On the left side is the SRS broken up into two parts; Part I and Part II. Part I consists of:

1. Criminal homicide
2. Rape
3. Robbery
4. Aggravated assault
5. Burglary (breaking or entering)
6. Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft
7. Motor vehicle theft
8. Arson
9. Human Trafficking, commercial sex acts
10. Human Trafficking, involuntary servitude

Part II consists of:

1. Other assaults (simple
2. Forgery and counterfeiting
3. Fraud
4. Embezzlement
5. Stolen property: buying, receiving, possessing
6. Vandalism
7. Weapons: carrying, possessing, etc
8. Prostitution and commercialized vice
9. Sex offenses (except rape, prostitution, and commercialized vice
10. Drug abuse violations
11. Gambling
12. Offenses against the family and children
13. Driving under the influence
14. Liquor laws
15. Drunkenness
16. Disorderly conduct
17. Vagrancy
18. All other offenses
19. Suspicion
20. Curfew and loitering laws (persons under age 18)

On the right side is the NIBRS broken up into two parts; Group A and Group B. Group A consists of:

1. Arson
2. Assault Offenses – aggravated, simple, intimidation
3. Bribery
4. Burglary/Breaking & Entering
5. Counterfeiting/Forgery
6. Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of property
7. Drug/narcotic offenses & drug equipment violations
8. Embezzlement
9. Extortion/blackmail
10. Fraud offenses (wire fraud, welfare fraud, impersonation, credit card fraud, false pretenses, etc.)
11. Gambling offenses – betting/wagering, operating/promoting/assisting gambling, gambling equipment violations, sports tampering
12. Homicide offenses – murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, justifiable homicide
13. Human Trafficking – commercial sex acts, involuntary servitude
14. Kidnapping/abduction
15. Larceny/theft offenses – pocket-picking, purse-snatching, shoplifting, theft from building/coin-operated machine/motor vehicle, theft of motor vehicle parts/accessories, other larceny, etc.

16. Motor vehicle theft
17. Pornography/obscene material
18. Prostitution or assisting/promoting prostitution
19. Robbery
20. Sex offenses (forcible) – forcible rape, forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, forcible fondling
21. Sex offenses (nonforcible) – nonforcible incest, nonforcible statutory rape
22. Stolen Property offenses
23. Weapon law violations

Group B consists of:

1. Bad checks
2. Curfew/loitering/vagrancy violations
3. Disorderly conduct
4. Driving under the influence
5. Drunkenness
6. Family offenses, nonviolent
7. Liquor law violations
8. Peeping Tom
9. Runaway (only before 2011)
10. Trespass of real property
11. All other offenses

At the bottom of the graphic are the sources for this information:

Image description for Figure 2.6

This image is a map of the United States, titled "National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Participation Status" and dated April 2022. It shows the participation status of each state in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The map uses two shades of blue to differentiate between states that have fully transitioned to NIBRS and those that have not.

- Darker Blue: Represents states that have fully transitioned to NIBRS. There are 19 states in this category, including California, Texas, Florida, and New York.
- Lighter Blue: Represents states that have not fully transitioned to NIBRS. There are 31 states in this category, including Washington, Colorado, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

Additionally, there are labels for other outlying areas including:

- American Samoa
- Guam (NIBRS Certified)
- Puerto Rico
- U.S. Virgin Islands

The map also highlights states that provide direct contributions to NIBRS with asterisks, including:

- Alabama
- Washington, DC
- Illinois
- Maryland

This map provides a visual representation of the current status of NIBRS participation across the United States and its territories.

The list below includes all states that have either fully or not fully transitioned to NIBRSas of April 2022.

Dark Blue (Fully Transitioned to NIBRS)

- Alaska (AK)
- Arkansas (AR)
- Colorado (CO)
- Connecticut (CT)
- Delaware (DE)
- Florida (FL)
- Idaho (ID)
- Iowa (IA)
- Kentucky (KY)
- Maine (ME)
- Michigan (MI)
- Nebraska (NE)
- North Dakota (ND)
- South Carolina (SC)
- South Dakota (SD)
- Tennessee (TN)
- Texas (TX)
- Virginia (VA)
- Wisconsin (WI)

Light Blue (Not Fully Transitioned to NIBRS)

- Alabama (AL)
- Arizona (AZ)

- California (CA)
- Georgia (GA)
- Hawaii (HI)
- Illinois (IL)
- Indiana (IN)
- Kansas (KS)
- Louisiana (LA)
- Maryland (MD)
- Massachusetts (MA)
- Minnesota (MN)
- Mississippi (MS)
- Missouri (MO)
- Montana (MT)
- Nevada (NV)
- New Hampshire (NH)
- New Jersey (NJ)
- New Mexico (NM)
- New York (NY)
- North Carolina (NC)
- Ohio (OH)
- Oklahoma (OK)
- Oregon (OR)
- Pennsylvania (PA)
- Rhode Island (RI)
- Utah (UT)
- Vermont (VT)
- Washington (WA)
- West Virginia (WV)
- Wyoming (WY)

Image description for Figure 3.15

On the left a flow chart for "Classical School" has three boxes branching out from it that say deterrence theory, rational choice theory, and routine activities theory. On the right a flow chart for "Positivist School" has three boxes branching out from it that say biological theories, psychological theories, and biosocial theories.

Below there is a header for "Classical School of Criminology"

Key theorists: Cesare Beccaria, Jeremy Bentham, Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson

Key concepts: rationality, choice, free will, deterrence
Key theories: deterrence theory, rational choice theory, routine activity theory

Image description for Figure 4.12

This image depicts Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a psychological theory proposed by Abraham Maslow. The hierarchy is represented as a pyramid with five levels, each corresponding to different human needs.

- Physiological Needs (base of the pyramid): The most basic human needs, including food, water, warmth, and rest.
- Safety Needs: The second level, encompassing the need for security and safety.
- Belongingness and Love Needs: The middle tier, which includes intimate relationships and friendships.
- Esteem Needs: The fourth level, involving the need for prestige and a feeling of accomplishment.
- Self-Actualization (top of the pyramid): The highest level, representing the need to achieve one's full potential and engage in creative activities.

The pyramid is divided into three broad categories: Basic Needs (Physiological and Safety Needs), Psychological Needs (Belongingness and Love Needs, and Esteem Needs), and Self-Fulfillment Needs (Self-Actualization). Each level must be fulfilled before progressing to the higher levels.

Image description for Figure 5.10

This image illustrates "The Concentric Zone Model," which visually represents the spatial organization of urban areas. The model features five concentric circles, each representing a different zone in a city, from the innermost to the outermost.

- Central Business District (innermost zone): The core of the urban area, typically characterized by high-density commercial activity.
- Transitional Zone: Surrounding the central business district, this area includes recent immigrant groups, deteriorated housing, factories, and abandoned buildings.
- Working Class Zone: This zone consists of single-family tenements and is primarily residential.
- Residential Zone: A suburban area with single-family homes, yards, and garages.
- Commuter Zone (outermost zone): The outermost ring, representing the suburbs, where people commute into the city for work.

Each zone is labeled with its name and key characteristics, providing a clear understanding of the urban structure according to this model.

Return to Figure 5.10

Image description for Figure 7.4

A bar graph that shows the number of offenders by age categories according to 2021 data from the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System. The age categories start from 10 and under to 6 and over, with the number of offenders ranging from approximately 50,000 to nearly 1,200,000. The graph illustrates the "age-crime curve" as the number of offenders peaks between the ages of 26 and 30 years.

Return to Figure 7.4

Image description for Figure 7.7

This image depicts common major milestones across an individual's life course using a series of icons arranged in a flowchart format. The icons, enclosed in blue circles, are interconnected by blue triangular arrows indicating the sequence of life stages.

- Infancy: The first icon shows a baby, representing birth and early childhood.
- School: The second icon depicts a lunch sack and apple, symbolizing early education
- Heartbreak: The third icon displays a broken heart in a speech bubble, signifying emotional challenges or relationship breakups.
- College education: The fourth icon depicts a graduation cap, symbolizing the completion of formal education.
- Marriage: The fifth icon features a pair of wedding rings, indicating marriage or a significant romantic relationship.
- Death: The final icon is a tombstone, representing the end of life.

These icons collectively illustrate some typical stages and significant events that many people might experience throughout their lives and that might be relevant to the onset or desistence of criminal behavior.

Return to Figure 7.7

Image description for Figure 8.7

This image is a visual representation of the concept and framework of intersectionality. It is structured as a multi-layered circle with the innermost circle labeled "Unique Circumstances of Power, Privilege, and Identity." Surrounding this central concept are various factors that contribute to an individual's identity, including income, social status, housing situation, class background, disability, spirituality, geographic location, life experience, family status, gender, skin color, work history, refugee status, experience of racialization, citizenship, occupation, sexuality, HIV status, education, age, religion, caste, and indigeneity.

The outermost layer of the circle contains broader social and systemic forces that influence these identity factors, including globalization, capitalism, war, colonization, social forces, historical forces, the immigration system, the education system, the economy, the legal system, and politics. Interwoven throughout this layer are various forms of discrimination and oppression such as racism, discrimination, heterosexism, sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, transphobia, ageism, homophobia, and ableism.

The image is sourced from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF) and can be found at the following link: CRIAW-ICREF Toolkit [Website]. The CRIAW-ICREF logo is present in the top right corner of the image.

Return to Figure 8.7

Transcripts

Transcript for Figure 1.4, The Marshmallow Experiment – Instant Gratification

[Teacher]: Okay, so here's the deal. There's a marshmallow. You can either wait, and I'll bring you back another one, so you have two. Or you can eat it now. So you can eat it now, or you can wait and I'll bring you back two. Okay?

[Child 1]: I want two.

[Teacher]: Okay, I'll be back.

[Teacher, to new group of two children]: Okay, so I have one marshmallow for each of you.

[Child 2]: Okay. One.

[Child 3]: Don't eat it?

[Teacher]: Here's the deal. You can either eat it now, or you can wait until I get back, and you can have two. Okay? So eat it now, or wait until I get back, and you can have two. And I'll be back in a little bit.

[Child 3]: If we wait, will you give us two?

[Teacher]: Yep, if you wait I'll give you two. Or you can eat it now. Whichever you want.

[Child 3]: We're going to wait.

[Music accompanies children contemplating their marshmallows.]

[Child 3]: I wonder what we're going to do. (To Child 2) Are you going to eat it?

[Child 2]: I just want to take one bite.

[Child 3]: Well, you're still not going to get two…. But if you wait until she gets back, she'll give you two…. She still won't give you two, because you ate it. Some of it. And I didn't eat a single bite of mine. So don't show her, okay?

[Music accompanies children continuing to look at and play with their marshmallows. Some eat, lick, or bite their marshmallows.]

[Teacher]: Okay, so I have this marshmallow. You can eat it now, or you can wait a little bit, and I'll bring two for you. All right?

[Music accompanies child immediately eating marshmallow.]

[Teacher, to another boy]: How are you doing, Sam?

[Child 4]: Good.

[Teacher]: Good! [__]. Okay, well I'm going to go, and I haven't found a marshmallow yet. So I'm going to look for some more, but you stay here, and if you haven't eaten it, I'll bring you back another one. I'll be right back.

[Child 3]: I'm waiting.

[Child 2]: I'm waiting too.

[Child 3]: Well, no, you're eating, not waiting… for her to get back.

[Child 2]: I can wait.

[Child 3]: Well, you still ate some of it, so she's still not going to give you two. (Child 2 fidgets and gets up.) No, stay in your chair. (Child 2 goes to the door.)

[Teacher]: Here I come. Oh, what happened?

[Child 3]: She ate hers.

[Teacher]: Oh! Okay.

[Music plays while children keep playing with their marshmallows and waiting.]

[Teacher]: Hi, Hunter! You waited! You get two.

[Music plays while children who waited get to eat both marshmallows.]

Licenses and Attributions for Transcript for Figure 1.4, The Marshmallow Experiment – Instant Gratification

Transcript for "The Marshmallow Experiment – Instant Gratification" by FloodSanDiego is included under fair use.

Return to video

Transcript for Figure 1.18, Craig Pinkney: The real roots of youth violence

In my line of work as an urban youth specialist, this is an image that I see quite often: young people from our communities stabbed, shot, beaten, wounded.

How I arrived at this particular point normally starts around 2:26 or 4:21 in the morning when I'm sleeping in bed. I'm next to my wife, my child is sleeping in the other direction with their toes in my nose, and I get a phone call. Generally, it's from a private number. The call usually sounds like this:

> "You know, Craig, come to the hospital now. Someone just got shot."

> Or,

> "Excuse me, is this Craig Pinkney? I'm the mother of Shawn. I know you don't know me, but is it possible for you to come to the hospital because an incident took place a couple of hours ago. My son is in surgery, and all of his friends are saying that you need to come to the hospital. I know we haven't met, but could you possibly make your way over now?"

As I do, I get out of my bed, leave my family, get into the car, and make my way to the hospital.

Even though I'm passionate about this work, there's something that frustrates me deeply. I'm going to share it with you now.

Anytime I travel to different places around the city, around the UK, or around Europe, I always get faced with this statement:

> "It's not my problem."

I generally talk to people about raising awareness of youth violence, gun crime, and knife crime. And people say,

> "Yeah, but it's not really me; it's those types of young people,"

> or,

> "It's them."

In the back of my head, I'm getting a little bit angry, but I'm smiling at the same time. I'm thinking,

> "Yeah, but it is our problem—until it happens to your son, your daughter, your niece, your nephew, your husband, your wife, your partner, your neighbor, or your colleague."

The image before you is of young people from inner-city Birmingham under the age of 21 who, in the last three years, lost their lives to violence. I could show you another two slides of young people in the last three years who lost their lives to knives or guns—wrong place, wrong time, at a party, having fun, something happens. Sitting on a school bus, something happens, and they lose their lives.

But why I show you this image is that these young people were not criminals. These young people were not gang members. When the media talks about violence, we often think,

> "Well, it's just gang-related."

But that wasn't the case.

As a criminologist, part of my work is trying to understand what causes young people to be violent. Asking that most important question: **Why?** Why would a young person, 16, 15, or 17 years old, pick up a knife and stab someone they've never met before at random? Why would someone pick up a gun, just because someone lives in a completely different postcode, and be prepared to shoot? Why would someone be prepared to kill a child on a school bus just because that child looked at them for 10 seconds?

The fact of the matter is, there's not one answer to explain why young people arrive at this point. There are actually a series of factors: dysfunction in families, father absence, racism, poor identities, and dysfunctional homes. But one thing that really sticks out for me when I analyze this is this one word: **invisibility.**

What I find in my work is that most young people in our society are invisible—unseen, unheard. And if anybody knows the history of cultures and communities, when people feel oppressed, invisible, or unheard, sometimes they do things to become visible.

We might not be able to understand why a young person gets on a bus one day and feels that, in order to gain credibility, they need to hurt someone or rob someone's phone. Our young people are invisible.

You've probably heard the saying, *"It takes a village to raise a child."* I'd like to extend that by saying, yes, it takes a village to raise a child, but when you don't recognize the village, sometimes that village can kill a child. And there's also another saying: if young people don't feel a part of the village, they will burn it down to feel its warmth.

I'll say it one more time: if young people feel they are not part of our village, they will burn it down to feel its warmth.

Some of you in this room may be thinking, "Well, you've shocked me with certain things, and yes, it could be my son, my daughter, or a relative of mine. But what can I do?"

I'm going to spend a couple of seconds speaking to those of you who are thinking, "How can I do this type of work?"

Here are four things:

1. Find out what's going on in your community. What are the issues amongst young people?

2. Find out who the workers are—the frontline workers doing the real work in the community.

3. Attach yourself to them. Contact them. Inquire, find out, through YouTube, social media—engage with those people.

4. Create your own platform, and then call on young people, call on the community of all different ages to support you in building your own legacy.

That's what I'm doing right now.

I did it. I was like many of you in this room right now—sitting in a conference, sitting in a course—until I met two individuals. The first was Dr. Carlton Howson. He spoke profoundly about issues affecting society, and I was taken aback by him. I wanted to meet him and learn more. When I met him, he started to challenge my mind and my ideas about what it meant to be a man, especially a Black man in Western society. He helped me understand some of the issues young people face. When they get labeled as criminals, thugs, or gang members, I understand.

I walk into work Monday to Friday with my badge, and people assume:

> "Are you a security guard?

> Are you a cleaner?

> Do you teach sport?

> Are you a musician?"

Shouldn't the question be, "What do you teach?" rather than assuming?

Then I met another man, Dr. Martin Glynn, on a course. He said something profound that shocked me. During a break, nobody wanted to talk to him. So, I walked over and said, "You don't know me, but my name is Craig Pinkney, and you need to be my mentor."

I took his number, called him every day, and insisted we meet. Eventually, he said, "You know what, just come to my house."

Every day, before work, I'd be at Dr. Glynn's house at 7:30 a.m. with my notepad and pen, asking questions, learning concepts, and understanding his mind. I wanted to take that knowledge and implement it in my community. It didn't require money or qualifications—just dedication, time, and reflection.

Some of you may have seen this bird before: the Sankofa bird. The concept of Sankofa comes from the Akan people of West Africa. It means we have to go back and reclaim our history in order to move forward.

How does this apply to the issues I'm talking about today? Sometimes, we as a society only respond to the symptoms, but we never look at the root causes of why people behave the way they do. We need to go back and find out what's at the root. What are the key things in society causing these behaviors?

This also means looking within. What causes you to do what you do? How do you ignite that fire? And when that fire burns out, how do you reignite it? Because that's what I did. And if I can do it, you can do it.

Each one, teach one—the power of us.

Thank you.

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Transcript for Figure 2.16, Sexual Assault and the Justice System: Why So Many Victims Don't Report

[Faye]: I was advised that a lot of things about me would be brought up in court that I might not necessarily want people to know. That they'd bring up sexual history, they'd speak to my friends, they'd speak to my family. They'd get photos of me on Facebook and even perhaps analyze
what I was wearing in certain situations.

[Winnie]: I consider myself lucky because I'm one of the few victims who managed to actually have a conviction against their perpetrator. And so I think the statistics are 6% of reported rapes the results in the conviction in England and Wales, and actually only about 15% of rapes that are reported. So the statistics are pretty damning and actually horrifying in a lot of ways.

[Emily]: And those reasons can range from – to so many, from feeling like you won't be won't be believed.

[Faye]: The fear of causing a fuss or just not being believed or you know nothing's going to come of it. And it's quite stressful to tell people that you're close to, let alone strangers in the police station.

[Emily]: When it happened to me I spent the first few days denying that anything bad had happened. And it wasn't for another month before I actually thought I needed to go and report this, but of course by that point no more, no physical evidence and very much a he-said she-said situation.

[Faye]: If I were to lose the case, which they said was more likely, I would have to pay the legal fees. Which as a student I never would have been able to afford. It's something that even two years on I'm still dealing with today. I felt like I never really got justice for myself. And this person is married and I know that he has four young children, and he's still perhaps doing the same job. I feel like I'm the one that's being punished.

[Winnie]: My rapist was arrested about five or six days after the assaults, and he didn't plead guilty, so that meant that eleven months from then there was a trial that had been scheduled. So I had to kind of wait eleven months for this trial to happen and it was like my life was on hold effectively. And it was an awful experience for me because just the thought of having to – thought of having to testify in person in great detail about your rape in the same room as your perpetrator is terrifying, right? And I can't imagine actually if you sat through that whole process and then you still didn't get a conviction, that must be incredibly damaging in terms of it … must have an impact on your ability to recover in some ways.

[Alex]: About six years ago – and I was sexually assaulted by a very senior person and, and then reported that to the police. The power imbalances of someone high-profile – he was seen as a reliable witness – it'd been all about one person's word against other people's word and if someone has more power and status then the likelihood is that they're going to be believed by the jury and get found not guilty.

[Winnie]: When I was researching for my novel I ended up observing a number of rape trials. Oftentimes when victims are being questioned, there were all these reactions from clerks, saying, you know, from clerks saying, I really don't think she's telling the truth, you know, and I don't think she's telling the truth. And I would ask her, and I'll ask, well, why do you think that? I mean, it's like, well she's not really acting the way like a rape victim would act, but how do you know how victims are supposed to act?

You know I think unfortunately we go – maybe because of movies and TV – we have this image of how rape victims are supposed to be. They're supposed to be weak and vulnerable and cry and maybe be a lit-

tle bit feminine and not be too strong, but if they seem too put together, too articulate, maybe they're not actually telling the truth, right, because you don't seem distressed enough. It's a little bit ignorant because in reality people react in all different ways. People of all different personality types become victims, so your personality and your attitude towards the world is going to affect the way that you testify.

[Faye]: I think that – I wish that I'd known to go to the police sooner. Although it's really difficult to speak out especially to strangers, I think that if you feel like you can it's so, so important because it only strengthens your case being brought to justice.

[Unidentified Speaker]: It's not always perfect but I do think it's important for people to be engaging with it if they can.

[Alex]: So my advice would be: seek advice from some of the people who really understand the system and really weigh up. Don't feel that you're in any way responsible. Don't take the burden of you know creating a better society on yourself cuz I think your first duty is to yourself and to your mental health.

[Music.]

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Transcript for Figure 3.3, Monty Python and the Holy Grail – Witch Scene

[Crowd]: A witch! A witch! A witch! We found a witch! We've got a witch! A witch! A witch!

[Peasant 1 (played by Eric Idle)]: We have found a witch. May we burn her?

[Bedevere, Knight/Magistrate (played by Terry Jones)]: How do you know she's a witch?

[Man]: She looks like one.

[Bedevere]: Bring her forward.

[The Witch (played by Connie Booth)]: I'm not a witch! I'm not a witch!

[Bedevere]: But you are dressed as one.

[The Witch]: They dressed me like this.

[Crowd]: No, we didn't.

[The Witch]: And this isn't my nose. It's a false one.

[Bedevere]: Well?

[Peasant 1]: We did do the nose.

[Bedevere]: The nose?

[Peasant 1]: And the hat. But she is a witch!

[Bedevere]: Did you dress her up like this?

[Peasants and Crowd]: No, no!

[Peasants]: Yes. A bit.

[Peasant 1]: She has got a wart.

[Bedevere]: What makes you think she's a witch?

[Peasant 3 (played by John Cleese)]: She turned me into a newt!

[Bedevere]: A newt?

[Peasant 3]: I got better.

[Peasant 2 (played by Michael Palin) and Crowd]: Burn her anyway!

[Bedevere]: Quiet! Quiet!

[Bedevere]: There are ways of telling whether she is a witch.

[Peasant 1]: Are there?

[Peasants and Crowd]: What are they? Tell us.

[Peasant 2]: Do they hurt?

[Bedevere]: Tell me, what do you do with witches?

[Peasants and Crowd]: Burn them!

[Bedevere]: And what do you burn, apart from witches?

[Peasant 1]: More witches!

[Peasant 2]: Wood!

[Bedevere]: So why do witches burn?

[Peasant 3]: 'Cause they're made of wood?

[Bedevere]: Good!

[Bedevere]: How do we tell if she is made of wood?

[Peasant 1]: Build a bridge out of her.

[Bedevere]: But can you not also make bridges out of stone?

[Peasants]: Oh, yeah.

[Bedevere]: Does wood sink in water?

[Peasant 2]: No, it floats.

[Peasant 1]: Throw her into the pond!

[Bedevere]: What also floats in water?

[Peasant 1]: Bread.

[Peasant 2]: Apples.

[Peasant 3]: Very small rocks.

[Peasants]: Cider! Great gravy. Cherries. Mud. Churches. Lead.

[King Arthur (played by Graham Chapman)]: A duck!

[Bedevere]: Exactly. So, logically –

[Peasant 1]: If she weighs the same as a duck…. She's made of wood!

[Bedevere]: And therefore?

[Peasants]: A witch!

[Crowd]: A duck! A duck! Here's a duck.

[Bedevere]: We shall use my largest scales.

[Bedevere]: Remove the supports!
[Crowd]: A witch!
[The Witch]: It's a fair cop.
[Crowd]: Burn her!

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Transcript for Figure 4.10, The dark history of IQ tests – Stefan C. Dombrowski

[Stefan Dombrowski, Narrator]: In 1905, psychologists Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon designed a test for children who were struggling in school in France. Designed to determine which children required individualized attention, their method formed the basis of the IQ test. Beginning in the late 19th century, researchers hypothesized that cognitive abilities like verbal reasoning, working memory, and visual-spatial skills reflected an underlying general intelligence, or g factor. Simon and Binet designed a battery of tests to measure each of these abilities and combine the results into a single score. Questions were adjusted for each age group, and a child's score reflected how they performed relative to others their age. Dividing someone's score by their age and multiplying the result by 100 yielded the intelligence quotient, or IQ.

Today, a score of 100 represents the average of a sample population, with 68% of the population scoring within 15 points of 100. Simon and Binet thought the skills their test assessed would reflect general intelligence. But both then and now, there's no single agreed upon definition of general intelligence. And that left the door open for people to use the test in service of their own preconceived assumptions about intelligence. What started as a way to identify those who needed academic help quickly became used to sort people in other ways, often in service of deeply flawed ideologies.

One of the first large-scale implementations occurred in the United States during WWI, when the military used an IQ test to sort recruits and screen them for officer training. At that time, many people believed in eugenics, the idea that desirable and undesirable genetic traits could and should be controlled in humans through selective breeding. There were many problems with this line of thinking, among them the idea that intelligence was not only fixed and inherited, but also linked to a person's race.

Under the influence of eugenics, scientists used the results of the military initiative to make erroneous claims that certain racial groups were intellectually superior to others. Without taking into account that many of the recruits tested were new immigrants to the United States who lacked formal education or

English language exposure, they created an erroneous intelligence hierarchy of ethnic groups. The intersection of eugenics and IQ testing influenced not only science, but policy as well. In 1924, the state of Virginia created policy allowing for the forced sterilization of people with low IQ scores—a decision the United States Supreme Court upheld.

In Nazi Germany, the government authorized the murder of children based on low IQ. Following the Holocaust and the Civil Rights Movement, the discriminatory uses of IQ tests were challenged on both moral and scientific grounds. Scientists began to gather evidence of environmental impacts on IQ. For example, as IQ tests were periodically recalibrated over the 20th century, new generations scored consistently higher on old tests than each previous generation. This phenomenon, known as the Flynn Effect, happened much too fast to be caused by inherited evolutionary traits. Instead, the cause was likely environmental—improved education, better healthcare, and better nutrition.

In the mid-twentieth century, psychologists also attempted to use IQ tests to evaluate things other than general intelligence, particularly schizophrenia, depression, and other psychiatric conditions. These diagnoses relied in part on the clinical judgment of the evaluators, and used a subset of the tests used to determine IQ—a practice later research found does not yield clinically useful information.

Today, IQ tests employ many similar design elements and types of questions as the early tests, though we have better techniques for identifying potential bias in the test. They're no longer used to diagnose psychiatric conditions. But a similarly problematic practice using subtest scores is still sometimes used to diagnose learning disabilities, against the advice of many experts.

Psychologists around the world still use IQ tests to identify intellectual disability, and the results can be used to determine appropriate educational support, job training, and assisted living. IQ test results have been used to justify horrific policies and scientifically baseless ideologies. That doesn't mean the test itself is worthless—in fact, it does a good job of measuring the reasoning and problem-solving skills it sets out to. But that isn't the same thing as measuring a person's potential.

Though there are many complicated political, historical, scientific, and cultural issues wrapped up in IQ testing, more and more researchers agree on this point, and reject the notion that individuals can be categorized by a single numerical score.

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Transcript for Figure 4.13, What identical twins separated at birth teach us about genetics – BBC REEL (Nature vs. Nurture)

[Nancy Segal]: My name is Dr Nancy Segal. I'm a psychology professor at California State University, Fullerton. What got me into twin research initially is that I am a fraternal twin and always fascinated with the similarities and differences, mostly differences, that my sister and I have. And I used to wonder as a child how this could be if we had the same parents and same environment. And when I began to study psychology at the high school and graduate school level, I learned about genetics and how we all came into the world with predispositions of our own. And that explained why my sister and I were so very, very different.

Twins raised apart

Well, I spent many years at the Minnesota study with twins raised apart, looking at identical *and* fraternal twins who've been separated at birth. It's very important to include the fraternals because they're the natural control group. And let's think about the differences between those twins before looking at the insights.

Identical twins share all their genes having split from a single fertilized egg within the first two weeks after conception. Fraternal twins share half the genes on average. They result when a woman releases two eggs at the same time and they're fertilized by two separate sperm, so they have 50 percent of their genes in common on average, like ordinary siblings. Comparing resemblance in identical twins to fraternal twins gives us a handle on whether or not genetics has an effect. It would if identical twins are more alike than fraternal and they invariably are. Studying twins gives us enormous insights into how we come to be the way that we are.

Twin studies are a natural model for looking at genetic and environmental influences on behavior, and what we are finding is that many more behaviors than we ever would have thought, do have a genetic component to them. Genetics is not everything, but does explain a great deal of why we differ one person to another.

Genetics and physical traits

Well, let's start with looking at genetic influences on physical traits.

We find that height and weight have substantial genetic components. We find that general intelligence has a substantial genetic component, a little bit less than the sum of the physical traits like height and weight and brainwaves, but nevertheless, a substantial genetic component, as does special mental abilities. And then we drop down a bit when we get to job satisfaction. Probably the most surprising findings in the last 20 years or so had been that things like religiosity, how much you invest in religious activities and interests and political attitudes and social attitudes have a genetic component to them.

Genetics and the environment

It's very important to appreciate that genes do not work in deterministic ways. They work in probabilistic ways they predispose, but they do not provide the final word.

Genes change in expression just because you have a gene doesn't mean it will always be expressed. It takes a certain environment to bring that out. We all have genes that will be expressed given a particular environment. Now, with identical twins, they have the same DNA, but sometimes gene expression can

occur in one twin and not the other. And this can create differences between them, and these environmental differences that trigger different gene expression might even start in the womb. The beauty of identical twins raised apart is that they share only their genes and not their environments. So any resemblance between them is tied to their common genes.

We find some amazing similarities in identical twins raised apart. Many more than we ever would have anticipated, not just in the more traditional areas like intelligence, personality, physical features like height and weight, but in some more unusual habits, such as a pair of twins who both used to scatter love letters around the house to their wives and both bit their nails down to the nub and both explain their same mixed headache syndrome in exactly the same way as if someone is beating on their head with a hammer. These are very challenging, and you can ask yourself, are they due to just random chance? My answer to that is no, they're not. And the rarer they are, the more I believe it's somehow tied to their genes and the way the genes interact with their environments to produce these kinds of unusual similarities.

I think that the people who find it challenging or even disturbing are those who don't fully understand the process. They think the genes work in deterministic ways when in fact they work in probabilistic ways. And so it doesn't mean that we're set in stone, we can't change. It means that we can change. We can alter environments to make behavioral expression different. We can work to prevent disease or to mitigate it, but we can't all be the same.

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Transcript for Figure 5.8, Kai, Hatchet Wielding Hitchhiker, Amazing Interview w/ Jessob Reisbeck

[Jessob Reisbeck, reporter]: (You're) one of the heroes…

[Kai]: Yeah, what?

[Reisbeck]: You want to talk about what happened today?

[Kai]: Well, went straight out of Dogtown skateboard and surfing it up. Before I say anything else I want to say no matter what you've done you deserve respect, even if you make mistakes you're loveable and it doesn't matter your looks, skills, or age, or size or anything you're worthwhile. No one could ever take that away from you. Now this stuff right here.

I was driving and I was in the passenger side of this [__] car and he comes over on there he was over by the recycling center. He says, oh, when I was in the Virgin Islands, thirty years old

on a business trip I [__] this 14-year old. I was like you what? He's like I raped this 14 year old, starts to cry and gives me big hugs it's like [__] 300-pound guy. I'll be like oh [__] you must be [__] man like what's he talkin' about I didn't take him seriously at first. He comes driving down this way. He's like you know what? I'm coming to realize I'm Jesus Christ and I can do anything I [__] want to you and watch this BAM and he smashed into this [__] guy right there, pinned them in between that [__] truck and so I [__] hop out I'll look over. The guy's pinned there, I mean like freight train riders know this, like if you get pinned between something do not [__] move that [__] otherwise you'll bleed out like [__]. I ran in I grabbed the keys he [__] sitting there like nothing even happened and like [__] like man if you started driving that car around again man there would've been a lot of bodies around here [__] I'll hop on out and so I grabbed the bag I threw it over by that pole right there and then [__] buddy gets out. And these two women who are trying to help him he runs up and he grabs one of them. Man, like a guy that beat can snap a woman's neck like a pencil stick so I [__] ran up behind with the hatchet. Smash smash sssssmash, yeah.

[Reisbeck]: The lady said you saved her life.

[Kai]: She was the one who got grabbed by that [__] you know what [__] is cool that guy ain't [__].

[Reisbeck]: How'd you, how'd you get in his car? How, how did you – ?

[Kai]: I was hitchhiking. I was, it, well, good thing I was hitchhiking yeah. People say don't hitchhike well it was what happens was…. Yeah, well, at least I was here.

[Reisbeck]: So he did this on purpose?

[Kai]: Dude that guy was [__] cooked out man like he's beyond holiday. I don't even see any breath in him you don't….

[Reisbeck]: Can I get your name and where you're from, if you don't mind?

[Kai]: I'm Kai, Kai straight out of Dogtown, K – I – A.

[Reisbeck]: Do you have a last name?

[Kai]: I don't have anything.

[Reisbeck]: Where are you from, originally from, Fresno area?

[Kai]: Sophia, West Virginia

[Reisbeck]: How old are you?

[Kai]: I can't call it.

[Reisbeck]: Have you ever experienced anything like today and what made you take the actions that you did?

[Kai]: That woman was in danger. He just finished what looked like at the time killing somebody and if I hadn't done that he would have killed more people, so he's dead. Good.

Well, this one time I was in an orchard and this [__] guy started, starts beating on this woman who he calls his so I walked on over and I started to smash him in the head. I can't – you see all these, you see all these teeth marks right here for the camera? Yeah I started smashing in the head and the teeth busted out, all his teeth. I'm on the [__] and the sheriff's not the policy enforcers [__] show up and start like they're like yeah so what, what happened? I mean like I just give me any old name and just give me all the [__] and birthdate whatever it is yeah.

[Reisbeck]: What happened today after, after – you're obviously free now, but were you arrested? What was the process, what did they do to you when they came out? Obviously they found out that you did the right thing but the time that from the accident to now where have you been?

[Kai]: Well you started, you started, following I'll act I cleaned his [__] head wide open with a

Hatchet. He stood up like he was pulled right up right and like [__] I'm lay I was like brother if you're [__] Jesus Christ I'll be the Antichrist man like [__] that [__] and he starts following me off this way so I figure I'll lure him right away from the crowd so I'm running off this way I got I got a hatchet in one hand [__] on this bag I'm carrying over with another hand. I start running off that way and so a couple of the people who was bystanders to it came over and told me to stop and I was like, why stop? They're like the cops are on their way. I was like, is he back up and doing anything? And somebody said that he was like masturbating in front of the school and

[__] whatever this place is right here yeah.

[Reisbeck]: Were you questioned by police? Were you taken into custody?

[Kai]: What happened, I was questioned I was put into the back of the sheriff's wagon wasn't the policies the [__] and pulled I over you know what I'm saying yeah so like I got put in the back of

the sheriff's way again. The sheriff was like what happened here, took down a statement. I told him everything I just told you and [__] let me on out said I couldn't grab all this stuff until I had finished like, they had finished with something you want to me and like brought me back on over here so I could be in front of this thing like this [__] car right here it was [__] gnarly man holy [__]. It was like the biggest wave I've ever ridden in my life.

[Reisbeck]: What's next for you?

[Kai]: Hopefully some surfing. I'm, if anybody's watching this somewhere else and they got a [__] that they could lend the guy with the wetsuit I'd love to test out [__].

[Reisbeck]: Would you do it again?

[Kai]: Club him in the head with a hatchet? You know if I could go back in time I'd go back over to where I was at that recycling center and he said that he had raped that chick over in the Virgin Islands cuz it doesn't matter where you at you can [__] just spend a bunch of money and do whatever the [__] you want you know that's not right if I if I could go back in time I would have dab them up right there.

[Reisbeck]: No, you're not, I mean, you don't seem like you have any concern for yourself/ You're all about, I mean, doing the right thing and not even worrying about Kai first.

[Kai]: I don't have any family, like, as far as, as far as anybody I grew up with is concerned I'm already dead so whatever.

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Transcript for Figure 6.5, The difference between classical and operant conditioning – Peggy Andover

Translator: Andrea McDonough

Reviewer: Bedirhan Cinar

[Peggy Andover, Narrator]: When we think about learning, we often picture students in a classroom or lecture hall, books open on their desks, listening intently to a teacher or professor in the front of the room. But in psychology, learning means something else. To psychologists, learning is a long-term change in behavior that's based on experience. Two of the main types of learning are called classical conditioning and operant, or instrumental, conditioning.

Classical conditioning

Let's talk about classical conditioning first. In the 1890's, a Russian physiologist named Ivan Pavlov did some really famous experiments on dogs. He showed dogs some food and rang a bell at the same time. After a while, the dogs would associate the bell with the food. They would learn that when they heard the bell, they would get fed. Eventually, just ringing the bell made the dogs salivate. They learned to expect food at the sound of a bell.

You see, under normal conditions, the sight and smell of food causes a dog to salivate. We call the food an unconditioned stimulus, and we call salivation the unconditioned response. Nobody trains a dog to salivate over some steak. However, when we pair an unconditioned stimulus like food with something that was previously neutral, like the sound of a bell, that neutral stimulus becomes a conditioned stimulus. And so classical conditioning was discovered.

We see how this works with animals, but how does it work with humans? In exactly the same way. Let's say that one day you go to the doctor to get a shot. She says, "Don't worry, this won't hurt a bit," and then gives you the most painful shot you've ever had. A few weeks later you go to the dentist for a check-up. He starts to put a mirror in your mouth to examine your teeth, and he says, "Don't worry, this won't hurt a bit." Even though you know the mirror won't hurt, you jump out of the chair and run, screaming from the room.

When you went to get a shot, the words, "This won't hurt a bit," became a conditioned stimulus when they were paired with pain of the shot, the unconditioned stimulus, which was followed by your conditioned response of getting the heck out of there. Classical conditioning in action.

Operant conditioning explains how consequences lead to changes in voluntary behavior. So how does operant conditioning work? There are two main components in operant conditioning: reinforcement and punishment. Reinforcers make it more likely that you'll do something again, while punishers make it less likely. Reinforcement and punishment can be positive or negative, but this doesn't mean good and bad. Positive means the addition of a stimulus, like getting dessert after you finish your veggies, and negative means the removal of a stimulus, like getting a night of no homework because you did well on an exam.

Example

Let's look at an example of operant conditioning. After eating dinner with your family, you clear the table and wash the dishes. When you're done, your mom gives you a big hug and says, "Thank you for helping me." In this situation, your mom's response is positive reinforcement if it makes you more likely to repeat the operant response, which is to clear the table and wash the dishes.

Operant conditioning is everywhere in our daily lives. There aren't many things we do that haven't been influenced at some point by operant conditioning. We even see operant conditioning in some extraordinary situations. One group of scientists showed the power of operant conditioning by teaching pigeons to be art connoisseurs. Using food as a positive reinforcer, scientists have taught pigeons to select paintings by Monet over those by Picasso. When showed works of other artists, scientists observed stimulus generalization as the pigeons chose the Impressionists over the Cubists. Maybe next they'll condition the pigeons to paint their own masterpieces.

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Transcript for Figure 6.12, Stanford Prison Experiment

[Dr. Steve Taylor]: If you go to Google and type in the word, "experiment," one of the first things you'll see is the Stanford Prison Experiment. It's probably the best known psychological study of all time.

It all began in West Coast America on a summer's day back in 1971, when college students grew their hair long, protested against their government, were Profis and totally anti Authority – or so we thought – until Philip Zimbardo.

[Dr. Philip Zimbardo]: So Stanford Prison Experiment, very simply is, an attempt to see what happens when you put really good people in a bad place. We put an ad in the City newspaper: Wanted – students for study of prison life, lasting up to two weeks. I'm going to pay you $15 a day – this is back in 1971; it's pretty good money – and we picked 75 volunteers, gave them a battery of psychological tests, and we picked two dozen, when all dimensions were normal and healthy to begin with.

And then we did what is critical for all research. We randomly assign half of them to the role of playing guards or the role of playing prisoners. It's a literally like flipping a coin.

And then what we did – we told the guards to come down a day early and we had them pick their own uniform, we had them help set up the prison so they'd feel like it was their prison, and that… and the prisoners were coming into their place. The prisoners we simply said wait at home in the dormitories. Well, what we didn't tell them, which is a little bit of the deception of omission, is that they were arrested by the city police.

[Participant]: Right there, they took me out the door, they put my hands against the car – was a real cop car, was a real policeman. It took me to the, to the, police station, the basement of the police station.

[Zimbardo]: I had told the police when to put a blindfold on the prisoners but since they had never been arrested they didn't know that doesn't happen. The reason for the blindfold is then my assistants would come, put him in our car, bring him down to our prison and they'd be in our prison now, blindfolded. The guards would strip them naked, delouse them, pretending that they were lice – it's kind of a degradation ritual – and after the first day I was about to end it because nothing was happening.

But the next day, on the morning of the next day, the prisoners rebelled. And what the guards did, they came to me and said, "Prisoners are rebelling – what are we going to do?" I said, "Your prison. Whatever you want I will do it – you got to tell me," and they said, "We have to treat force with force," so they broke down the doors.

[Sounds of prisoners protesting treatment.]

[Zimbardo]: (They) stripped the prisoners naked, dragged them out. Some of them, they tied up their feet. They put them in solitary confinement which was a tiny little hole in the closet – about about this big – door and, and they said at this point everything but breathing air is a privilege. Food is a privilege, clothes are a privilege, having a bed is a privilege, and so the guards begin to hear the new rules. And the new rules are you are dangerous and we are going to treat you as such and then it began to escalate.

Each day, the level of abuse, aggression, violence against prisoners got more and more extreme and so the guards change to become more dominant and you see it's all about power. It's the whole institution that, that empowers the guards who are the representative of this institution called prison to do whatever is necessary to prevent prisoners from escaping, maintain law and order.

[Prisoners are forced to sing by the guards.]

[Zimbardo]: The way, the direction it took, is having them engage in ever more humiliating tests, cleaning toilet bowls out with their bare hands, taking their blankets and putting them in dirt with nettles, and the prisoners spent hours taking the nettles out if they wanted to, you know, sleep. And it's essentially saying we have the power to create a totally arbitrary mindless environment and that's the environment you have to live in, so some of the prisoners are now crushed.

And in 36 hours the first kid has an emotional breakdown, meaning crying, screaming, irrational thinking.

[Prisoner]: I gotta go to a doctor, anything. [Incoherent screaming.] Goddamn it!

[Zimbardo]: And we have to release him. In five days we had to release five of the prisoners because the situation was so overwhelming.

What about the kids who didn't who didn't break down? They became zombies. Zombies in the sense that they became almost all mindlessly obedient. Whatever the guards would say they did. "Do this" – they did. Do ten push-ups, do twenty push-ups, step on him while he's doing a push-up, tell him he's a bastard.

[Prisoners]: Prisoner 819 did a bad thing. Prisoner 819 did a bad thing.

[Zimbardo]: It was horrifying to see the kids break down. It was even more horrifying to see these other, these other kids just become mindlessly obedient.

[Prisoners]: Because of what prisoner 819 did, my cell is a mess. Because of what prisoner 819 did, my cell is a mess.

[Zimbardo]: Again, we have to keep remembering these are kids who start out being rebels against society all – every one of them – and now they are just pawns. They are, they are, they are the puppets that, that the guards are manipulating. In fact one of the guards said it was like being a puppeteer.

[Narrator]: The guards tested their control over the prisoners by making them write letters home.

[Guard]: No need to visit, it's seventh heaven.

[Guard]: Yours truly….

[Prisoners]: Yours truly

[Guard]: Your loving son….

[Prisoners]: Your loving son

[Guard]: And put the name there that your mother gave you.

[Zimbardo]: The results were surprising because I did not expect the transformation of good kids into pathological prisoners or abusing guards to occur so quickly and so extremely. That is, we had assumed from all other research, you know, that there would be verbal abuse. They would make fun of them, there would be teasing, they would be bullying, but not this kind of – I would call it creative evil. That is, thinking about ways to demean, degrade, dehumanize other human beings. And the critical thing there in that transformation is becoming the role or the role becoming you, and suspending your usual morality, your usual way of thinking.

[Student who was a guard]: You really become that person. Once you put on that khaki uniform, you put on the glasses, you put on – you take the nightstick and, you know, you act the part.

[Dr. Taylor]: So what Zimbardo's research demonstrates so dramatically is that situations can affect us more than we think and can often outweigh individual characteristics. So if we're going to use psychology to try to reduce the possibility for evil, maybe we need to focus more on systems and less on individuals. But should the research ever have been done? After all, the participants suffered real harm.

[Zimbardo]: In hindsight, again, I have mixed feelings about if the study should have been done – well, not if it means suffering of anybody. Would I like my son to have been in that study, no. On the other hand, does it tell us something vital about human nature that has enduring value? There I have to say yes. It's been used in lots of prisons, the training device to get people to be sensitized to how easy it is to abuse power, so in that sense it has, has widespread enduring value. Therefore I'm saying, well, I'm glad I did it.

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Transcript for Figure 6.13, Labeling Theory

[Narrator]: Labels, labels, labels. We give people a number of labels based on who we think they are, which is based on what society tells us is important. The labels we give to a person determine how we interact with them. This includes what we believe is deviant and criminal

Stemming from symbolic interactionism, labeling theory focuses not on the deviant or criminal behavior itself but by society's reaction to the deviant behavior. How we respond to the behavior determines whether something or someone is deviant.

Let's discuss an example of deviance that is not so clear in society: medical marijuana. For decades, marijuana has been listed as a schedule 1 drug, which means that it is just as dangerous as heroin or ecstasy. So for the longest time, medical marijuana was not even something to consider in treating certain illnesses. But perception and time have changed, and so have medical marijuana laws. In the U.S., medical marijuana laws vary by state and, as of the making of this video, some states have not legalized medical marijuana, so how can we relate this to deviance? Let's say there's a woman – we'll call her Sarah – and she has found out she has cancer. She knows that using medical marijuana will help relieve the nausea and pain induced by cancer treatments. Simply by being in a state where medical marijuana is legal can determine whether Sarah receives a deviant label.

If Sarah is living in Colorado, where it is legal, Sarah can apply for a medical marijuana card and make an appropriate doctor-approved transaction. Now let's say Sarah lives in a state where medical marijuana is not legal – Iowa, for example – but she believes that the benefits would help her through the treatment process. Since it's illegal in Iowa and there are no locations to obtain marijuana, Sarah would have to get it illegally. She still wants it, although she would have to make the transaction in secret and the price is pretty steep. If her friends and family found out, they may label her as deviant. If police caught her, she would be arrested, and society would definitely label as a deviant then.

Why? In Iowa it is illegal to grow, distribute, or consume in any way. In Colorado marijuana is legal, doctor approved, and there are socially acceptable places to purchase marijuana. So Sara isn't likely to be labeled as deviant. The only real difference is location, but society's reaction to her behavior is very different. It's the same person buying the same substance but in different locations.

There's also something we call primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance is a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term consequences and does not hurt a person's self-image. If Sarah lives in Iowa and buys marijuana illegally one time without getting caught, she doesn't experience any long-term consequences and her self-image is intact. If she continues to do it and is arrested, or even if society knows she continues to buy it but she's never caught, she very likely will receive a label as deviant. This is secondary deviance. This happens when a person's self-concept changes due to the label society gives that person.

One deviant act may not change the way society reacts or the way a person sees themselves. In fact, we all likely recall when we have engaged in some type of deviant act. But when society puts a label on us, our self-concept begins to change. Sarah starts to see herself as deviant, even though she believes there is a good reason for her to buy marijuana. She adopts the label and in essence, she begins to live that label – even if deep down she knows it isn't who she truly is.

When someone is labeled as deviant or criminal, it tends to become their master status. A master status is a chief characteristic of an individual. When people are labeled a criminal, it's hard for them to change

that status and it follows them everywhere. When someone has committed a felony, they are labeled a felon and must report it when they apply for a job. They can't serve on a jury or vote in many states; therefore, the master status of felon follows them in everything they do.

So, what is one personal experience where you have either been the person labeling or the person labeled because an action was seen as deviant? How did the person respond to the label or how did you respond? What is one action that society defines as deviant and has a strong reaction to? What labels to society give those that are labeled as deviant and how does what is deviant change based on what community and culture you are in?

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Transcript for Figure 6.16, Rosenhan – Being Sane In Insane Places

[Music.]
   Madness has always existed, but it wasn't until the 19th century that it came to be seen as a disease, one that required management by a new group of experts—psychiatrists. New asylums were built, their walls and bars marking the supposedly clear-cut boundary between the sane and the insane.

In 1887, an enterprising journalist named Elizabeth Cochran, who wrote under the name Nellie Bly, challenged this notion. Bly was on a mission to test the field of psychiatry. She checked into a boarding house, pulling strange faces, tugging her hair, and declaring that everyone around her was crazy. Sure enough, it wasn't long before two doctors had her shipped off to the Women's Lunatic Asylum in New York.

Once inside, she behaved perfectly normally, but it made no difference. As she later wrote, "The saner I acted, the crazier they thought I was." Her articles, later compiled into her book *Ten Days in a Mad House*, revealed just how easy it had been to deceive the doctors and how terrible the conditions were inside the asylum.

Fast forward 85 years, and a clinical psychologist named David Rosenhan conducted a similar experiment.
   [Music.]
   The 1960s were a time of social and cultural revolution, with established ideas, institutions, and professions—like psychiatry—being questioned. By the 1970s, psychiatry was going through a turbulent period. Some psychiatrists, even in the 1960s, labeled themselves as "anti-psychiatrists."

This movement challenged the medical model, which claimed mental illness was primarily a physical condition. Anti-psychiatrists suggested a different approach. Thomas Szasz argued that psychiatry was a pseudoscience, and the very idea of mental illness was a myth. Irving Goffman suggested that simply being in a mental hospital could drive people insane, while R.D. Laing claimed that what psychiatry labeled as mental illness was simply a rational response to an irrational world.

Their shared objection was horror at how psychiatry was being practiced at the time. People were often just incarcerated in large hospitals—often referred to pejoratively as "loony bins." These places were likened to dustbins for unwanted people, and the conditions were horrible.

R.D. Laing became the most famous of the anti-psychiatrists. It was while listening to one of Laing's lectures that David Rosenhan began wondering if there might be a way to test the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses. Could we really tell the sane from the insane?

One evening, Rosenhan called some friends and students, asking if they would participate in an experiment. His idea was to see if they could get themselves admitted to psychiatric hospitals. Surprisingly, seven people—three women and four men—agreed. One of them, Martin Seligman, now a world-famous psychologist, explained that Rosenhan could be very persuasive. It was a tough assignment.

For the pseudo-patients, entering these institutions was intimidating. The physical experience of the place—the smell, the atmosphere—was overwhelming. None of the pseudo-patients had any history of psychiatric disorder, yet they practiced their roles, including how to avoid swallowing the inevitable mass of tablets they would be given. They stopped shaving, showering, and brushing their teeth, and five days later, the experiment began.

This would become one of the most notorious experiments ever conducted in psychology, and psychiatry never fully recovered from it.

[Music.]

Rosenhan and his confederates traveled to 12 hospitals in five different states across the U.S. to obtain a representative sample. Some hospitals were old, some new. Some were understaffed, others well-staffed. After calling for appointments, the pseudo-patients presented themselves at the hospitals. They didn't act crazy like Nellie Bly had; instead, they faked just one symptom.

When the pseudo-patients arrived at the hospital, they reported hearing a voice saying, "hollow, empty, thud." This was significant because it didn't represent any known symptom of a schizophrenic disorder. Rosenhan had given the doctors a unique opportunity to diagnose correctly. Apart from hearing the voice and giving false identification, everything else the pseudo-patients said was true, including significant life events.

Yet, all of them were diagnosed as insane and admitted to the hospital.

Once admitted, the pseudo-patients stopped faking the symptom and behaved normally, which inspired the study's title: *Being Sane in Insane Places*. When asked by the staff how they were feeling, they said they were fine, the symptom had disappeared, and they requested to be released.

Rosenhan had two aims for the study. First, he wanted to investigate whether psychiatric labels were being used inappropriately. This part of the study was a field experiment with the independent variable being the pseudo-patients' lack of symptoms once admitted, and the dependent variable being the staff's responses.

The second aim was to gather data on what it was actually like to be a patient in a psychiatric hospital. Thus, the study also became a covert participant observation of the experience of being hospitalized in a psychiatric ward.

So, what did Rosenhan and his confederates discover? How long would it take for the hospital staff to detect their sanity? What insights would they gain about life inside a psychiatric hospital? How different were mental hospitals in the 1970s from the madhouse of the 1890s that Nellie Bly described?

[Music.]

Despite choosing hospitals that weren't particularly bad, and despite the pseudo-patients behaving normally throughout their stay, none of them were ever detected by any hospital staff. Even Rosenhan was surprised by this outcome.

He later admitted, "I told friends, I told my family, 'I'll get out when I can get out, probably in a couple of days.' Nobody knew I'd be there for two months."

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Transcript for Figure 6.19, Street Codes — Code of the Street, Elijah Anderson

[Music.]

Now we're down to Broad Street in Germantown. As we get to the very bottom of the hill, we get into distressed neighborhoods—crime, alienation. The civil law in the minds of people becomes weaker and weaker. The code of the street becomes more and more prominent: eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. And where the civil law is weak, street justice often fills the void.

Tell me your story.

My story? Yeah, your story. The story of the young Black man in the urban environment. His perspective is often missing from any discussion. I grew up in a family of four. Like my brothers, they in and out of the streets and stuff like that. My mom was there as much as she could be. She worked, but she also had her habits—like drinking and stuff like that, which made it harder for the kids.

For you to be your age and me to be mine, I've probably seen a little more than you. Yeah, on a violent perspective. We met Mustafa on the street about three weeks ago. He's a self-described entrepreneur, selling whatever he can to make money. As far as seeing people get shot, watching dead bodies lie on the ground, seeing friends of mine die off—it's just killer be killed.

Now in the community, people divide themselves up into street and recent. Probably Mustafa, however he was raised, had access to the street. That experience created in him a deep sense of alienation. Anything can happen at any given time, but his dream is about decency.

Decency.

You only get cash two ways. I always tell folks, legal businesses—you own and operate your own business or work for someone—or illegal, where you do drug trades or steal or whatever. Those are the only two ways you make money in this country when you break it down. Drugs are everywhere, and guns are everywhere. It's easy to get drugs. You go to any corner and get drugs, almost any corner. Things get bad, I stand on the corner of a block and sell drugs if I had to. It's not something that, oh yeah, I'm proud of this, yeah, look at me, I do this. It's just literally a way of life.

What kind of money do they make?

I mean, standing on the corner, if you're doing it right, you can make like $1,500 a day.

Manhood.

If you're a man and you feel no hope, or you sense no future, you become destroyed as a person. Then you don't care what happens to you. If you don't care what happens to you, you certainly don't care about people around you.

I respect you.

You get enough, enough. You have to be respectful. You've got to be respectful. You have to be—no, you have to be respectful. Street credibility is essential, and street credit is high maintenance.

In the '50s, '60s, and '70s in the city of Philly, we had gang killings. This violence now is on a whole other level. Most of the homicides in the city for the last 10 years or so have been argument-related. Guys are frustrated.

What are the fights about?

Most of the fights in Philly are about nothing. About nothing. About nothing. Stuff like me and you talking now, we disagree, and you can look at somebody's girl wrong, and it escalates. It escalates. And you're packing, and I'm packing. Right, somebody's going to get shot.

A lot of people say that fighting is going out—fist fighting.

Yeah, ain't no fighting no more. Can't nobody take an ass-whooping. Yeah, nobody wants to get beat up in front of people. People gain reputations for having the ability and the inclination to pay back, to seek revenge.

How easy is it to get a gun?

A phone call and a couple of dollars. A couple of dollars is all you need. You got the little green dead people on a piece of paper, and you can get whatever you want. So, I ain't going to fight. I'm just going to shoot.

The code of the street is a peculiar form of social exchange that allows for a certain order in the community. It's even something of a self-policing mechanism, one might say. It's not pretty, but this is one of the ways the community functions. You see, if you're walking across a cop car, you're walking across the street—get the fuck out the street.

Not a lot of respect for the police in the community?

No. If somebody broke into my house, I would go grab a gun and start shooting before I called the police. The code of the street is that you don't call the police because you protect yourself. They don't trust the police, they don't trust the system, because maybe they had an experience where they did the right thing, and it didn't work out the way they expected.

The police don't respond to gun calls—it takes them five hours to get there for that. But you tell them somebody's on the corner selling a bag of weed, here they come, 50 cars deep. But tell them someone's lying there dying, it takes the cops four hours to get there. This guy's been shot four times, he's laying on the ground.

Is he breathing?

Why are you asking me questions? Didn't I just say the man's been shot four times? Why not rush and find out if he's breathing?

It's the wrong mindset. We all know that. But how do you get into the mind of a juvenile or a young adult to tell them to do the right thing?

Would it be different in a white neighborhood?

Of course, it would. Of course. You get an automatic response. Automatic response.

As we move up the class system, as we see people who are less alienated, the code of the street is not so prevalent. The civil law comes into play. One of the things the street has taught me in the last four or five years is that a lot of young folks really don't want to be doing this crazy stuff they're doing—they just don't have someone showing them how to do something different. So, you become a creature of your environment because you've got to survive.

I can't keep talking about wanting to be a doctor or a lawyer or something like that. I can't say I'm going to own a car dealership if I don't get some money. Ain't no money going to come in. If you've got to kill somebody to survive, if you've got to rob somebody—and it's surviving right now—it's hard.

And I think this really gets right at America's racial divide.

[Music.]

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Transcript for Figure 7.9, DUI Probationer Participates in Restorative Justice Mediation Program

[Jonathan Rasmussen]: My name is Jonathan Rasmussen. I'm a music student here at Southwestern College. Music has always been important to me. It can convey feelings and expression and emotion.

Music has definitely been an outlet for me to help with the feelings and what I've been dealing with from the accident as well too, for sure.

The morning of the accident, I had gotten off of a graveyard shift. I went to get a burrito, had a couple drinks, couple beers with it and I was, I was going back home – driving back home – about a 5 minute drive back to my house.

[Donna Schneider]: We were hit from behind from a high rate of speed with someone that had double the alcohol limit.

[Jonathan]: They moved over into my lane and being impaired I just didn't have the reaction to be quick enough.

[Carl Schneider]: The bouncing way up in the air and down again then over the median and facing the other direction.

[Donna]: The car was crushed. The back seat had less than 5 inches left in it.

[Jonathan]: I got out of the car. I made sure they were okay until the ambulance and the cops came.

[Carl]: The window was down and he reached in and took my hand and asked my name.

[Donna]: And we just thought this was a really nice young man so when the police officer that came the next Sunday was asked about it she just looked at me and she said that's the one that hit you.

[Carl]: We were both recovering mentally, I guess, as well as emotionally.

[Donna]: Well he had Physical Therapy up through May, eight of them. I had a lot of emotional problems. I just couldn't be in a car, it was so hard.

[Jonathan]: It was very surreal. It just didn't feel like it was happening. It is such a big thing – I'd never seen myself or foreseen myself in that kind of situation before you know but had my life had just led me to be making that bad decision and I'm going to jail.

[Donna]: Well, from the beginning we felt very sad. From the very beginning, that this was a 23 year old and we thought we just hated to see him giving up his life.

[Jonathan]: They didn't know who I was. For all they knew I was some reckless young man who didn't care about their feelings, didn't really care for them.

[Donna]: We could give forgiveness but we didn't know we really were puzzled. Is this some guy that drinks and doesn't care? Or is this somebody that has any feelings – did he even care that he hit us?

[Jonathan]: I wanted them to know – to put a face, first of all, to the person that hit them – and for an opportunity to be able to apologize to them and let them know how I feel.

[Music.]

[Mary Acosta, Restorative Justice Mediation Program]: Our primary program is victim offender dialogue which involves face-to-face meeting between the person who committed the harm or the offender and the person that was harmed the victim, for a conversation about what happened, how it impacted them, and how together they can move forward in some way.

[Jonathan]: The most impacting thing that came from the dialogue was the healing that came from it. I mean the first thing I did when I went in there and saw him I gave them all a hug, said I'm sorry you know for everything and it's almost like they wanted that so badly, cuz they, they both came in tears.

[Donna]: Jonathan walked in and walked right over to hug me and said he was so glad that we were all right and went right to Carl to hug him so the feeling immediately was very grateful for what we were going to have ahead of us.

[Carl]: We were not antagonists but we felt as though we were now meeting on mutual ground and we could share some feelings of his as well as ours and feel as though we wanted to mend the situation better.

[Jonathan]: Being able to talk it out so I could actually know what happened to them. I wasn't really aware of everything that fully happened to them and how it fully affected them.

[Donna]: His whole position was one of sorrow. He didn't ever ask for any pity or anything; he told us about his part of it, what had been happening to him.

[Jonathan]: They all forgave me and that was huge to me cuz then at that point I could forget myself.

[Donna]: And there's no way that this could have happened without this program. It's something that I would recommend for anyone.

[Acosta]: The ultimate goal is to not recidivate to not, you know, do the crime again to learn the lesson.

[Jonathan]: The hurt that I felt from that and the hurt that I've caused has now been able to be healed and forgiven through this program.

[Donna]: The biggest thing to us was when he said that he and his girlfriend have vowed never to touch alcohol again and we were just so grateful to think that this man – he said he wants to make something of himself and we just dearly love him, we feel like he's going to be a good citizen, he's going to make a good life for himself and we support him in that.

[Jonathan]: With the accident and everything it's helping me to be more of a standup

person and example to others around me and what I ultimately hope to do with all that is to give back and help people find their purpose in life and get back on the right track in their lives.

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Transcript for Figure 9.7, Environmental Racism

[Narrator]: Many times when we think of racism we tend to think of direct actions of people of a dominant group towards a subordinate group. These actions tend to cause physical, mental, and emotional harm, but perhaps one of the most subtle forms of racism is environmental racism.

Environmental racism is the way in which minority groups are burdened with a disproportionate number of hazards, including toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps, and other sources of environmental pollution. This type of racism is quietly practiced through the passing of bills and laws that allow companies such as coal plants, landfills, and toxic waste facilities to be built in places that are disproportionately in areas where low income and people of color live. These facilities fill the air with harmful contaminants and lead to health issues.

But what does this really look like? Environmental racism can be seen in people drinking contaminated groundwater, children playing on school playgrounds next to a plant producing toxic emissions, people being exposed to asbestos and lead in older homes, and schools or corporations attempting to build nuclear waste dumps on protective native lands because those lands are not protected by tough state environmental regulations. Coal power plants are some of the worst offenders, and according to a recent

NAACP report, 39% of people that live within 3 miles of a coal power plant are people of color. And those coal plants that are in urban areas are

overwhelmingly placed in communities of color worldwide.

The dumping of toxic waste in developing countries is prevalent due to lower environmental standards in developing countries, the power of multinational corporations, the lack of power in developing countries, and putting corporate profit before people.

E-waste or the dumping of discarded and used electronics is causing a global concern too. Twenty to 50 million tons of e-w are generated each year globally and approximately 80% of

e-waste is exported to Asia each year. The Environmental Protection Agency or EPA estimates that only 15 to 20% of E-waste is recycled yearly.

Examples of health issues related to environmental racism include asthma and respiratory illnesses, lead poisoning, and higher rates of lung cancer for those living within close proximity to coal producing plants. The highest rate of asthma tend to be in low socioeconomic communities and communities of color. Asthma results from exposure to air pollution, cigarette

smoke, dust, and pesticides, according to the Center for Disease Control or CDC. Asthma is most prevalent among multi-racial populations at 14.8% Puerto Rican Hispanics, 14.2% non-asian blacks, 9.5% while asthma rates among non-hispanic whites is at 7.8%. When it comes to exposure to air pollution that can contribute to asthma and other respiratory illnesses, the CDC found that racial and ethnic minority groups who tend to live in urban areas experience greater disparity and illness. Toxic facilities tend to be built in environments that have little resources and political power to protect their communities. The Environmental Protection

Agency is meant to help protect the environment and people from the harmful effects of facilities but has proven to be unresponsive. According to the Center for Public Integrity, more than nine of every 10 times that communities have turned to it for help, the EPA has either rejected or dismissed their title VI complaints. Title VI is part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that states public

funds cannot be used to encourage discrimination. In the EPA's 22-year history of processing almost 300 environmental discrimination complaints, the office has never once made a formal finding of a title VI violation and 95% of the time communities of color that live in communities with polluting facilities have their filed claims of civil rights violations denied by the Environmental Protection Agency.

This is a complicated picture and our dependence on energy production and electronics makes it difficult to walk away from but that shouldn't mean that disproportionate numbers of lower socioeconomic groups and people of color should have to pay the higher price. So what other examples of environmental racism can you think of that impact you or your community? What

is a long-term impact on society when groups of people continue to experience environmental racism and how does our current lifestyle contribute to environmental racism? Is change possible?

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Publisher's Message to Instructors by

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Author Message to Instructors

This textbook provides an introduction to the origins, evolution, and current field of criminology. It differs from other similar textbooks in a few key ways. This textbook is student and teaching-centered without sacrificing rigor. All contributing authors are both scholars and educators who have experience engaging students in the classroom, so many of the activities included in this textbook have been piloted in many classrooms. This book was written from a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The text explicitly acknowledges and highlights the positionality of theorists who created concepts and theories that built the field of criminology. Criminological theories are contextualized in time, place, and culture to help students understand what biases may be inherent in their formation and the policies that followed. Each core theory chapter includes a "modern application" section at the end to help students see how the theories are relevant now. The text also invites students to reflect on their own positionality, identities, and biases that they bring to the study of criminology.

Students often feel challenged by the content of their first introduction to theory course—thus, each chapter utilizes relevant and current examples to make the material more accessible. There are multiple links and references to popular streaming shows, podcasts, films, and more to engage a variety of learning styles. Additionally, each chapter includes activities and discussion questions that have been used in undergraduate classrooms.

Specifically, this textbook features:

- Multiple choice and true/false H5P activities (auto-graded formative assessments) at the end of each Pressbook page to help students assess their learning (and can be drawn upon for quizzes/exams)
- Figures and images with captions that prompt students to think deeply about the text
- "Learn More" and "Activity" sections in each chapter can be used for class discussion, homework/online assignments, or to prompt student exploration
- "Modern Application" sections in the core theory chapters that discuss the relevance of the theories now and/or how they might inform current crime policy
- Supplemental resources that can assist students in research for projects or papers
- Links to media sources such as podcasts, documentaries, TV shows, or YouTube videos that can be used in assignments or class discussion
- Activities, resources, and discussion questions that prompt students to critically reevaluate definitions of crime through the lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion

Integrated Openly Licensed Course Materials

This book includes openly licensed course materials that fully integrate with the open textbook. Anyone can retain, revise, remix, reuse, and redistribute them. Best of all, future instructors can build on existing learning pathways that are aligned with textbook and chapter learning outcomes.

You can access openly licensed course materials in two ways:

- [Introduction to Criminology Instructor Course Packs](#): A collection of aligned and accessible course materials shared by pilot instructors teaching at multiple Oregon institutions. Instructors designed each course pack with an equity lens in consultation with an instructional designer. In most cases, each course pack was revised with feedback from Oregon students and an advisory board of workforce members. Each course pack includes a complete course map, an instructor guide, and ancillary materials including weekly assignment prompts, rubrics, and suggested activities.
- [Introduction to Criminology OER Commons Group](#): An ongoing repository of instructor-created course materials that integrate with the open textbook. Materials may include syllabi, assessments and assignments, lesson plans, activities, and entire course shells. Please note: not all OERC resources are reviewed for digital accessibility.

You are welcome to contribute your own openly licensed course materials that align with this textbook to the OERCommons Group. Thank you for building a more inclusive future for students and future educators!

Last Update

This book was last updated on September 22, 2024. This second version has several exciting changes, including new chapters focused on criminological theorizing in the 21st century, updated resources and supplemental materials to improve student understanding, and equity-focused revisions designed to support students from all backgrounds.

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Manuscript Development Process

This book went through an extensive pre-production process before it was launched in order to be accountable to the project's equity lens; revise drafts for quality; and incorporate feedback from scholars, practitioners, and students in the discipline.

Outline peer reviewers

- Miyuki Arimoto, Western Oregon University
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- Monica McKirdy, Linn-Benton Community College
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Additional Resources

Google Doc Version of This Book

Link to view-only Google Doc version of this book – make a copy to start editing!

Detailed Outline

The following detailed outline lists the sequence of topics and sub-topics covered in each chapter. We hope that reviewing this sequence will help future educators who may wish to adapt parts of the textbook for a specific course or project. Please note that the Pressbooks Table of Contents offers a high-level outline of this sequence, whereas this detailed outline shows each subtopic. Content can also be located by keyword by searching this book (upper right).

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