2

MEASURING CRIME AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Learning Objectives

2.1 List the primary sources of criminologists' crime data.

2.2 Summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the Uniform Crime Reports.

2.3 Distinguish the National Incident-Based Reporting System from the Uniform Crime Reports.

2.4 Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of crime victimization survey data.

2.5 Identify areas of agreement between the UCR and NCVS.

2.6 Describe the strengths and weaknesses of self-report crime surveys.

2.7 Define crime mapping and explain how geography can influence crime.

2.8 Explain how criminologists measure white-collar crimes committed by organizations.

2.9 Define the dark figure of crime and identify the types of crimes unlikely to be reported to the police.

2.10 Provide examples of how different sources of crime data can resolve criminological arguments.

A WEARY ENGLISH BOBBY (a popular nickname for British police officers) patrolling his foot beat on a chilly November night hears the unmistakable sounds of sexual activity from the dark entranceway of a closed greengrocer's shop. He smiles to himself and tiptoes toward the sound. When he reaches the entranceway he switches on his flashlight and booms out the favorite line of the stereotypical bobby: "What's goin' on 'ere then?" The squeaking couple immediately come to attention and adjust their dress before the young man—obviously still in a state of arousal—stammers, "Why, nothing, constable." The officer recognizes the woman as a local "slapper" (prostitute) and vaguely recognizes the man (more of a boy of around 17 really) as a local supermarket worker. The constable reasons that he should arrest both parties for public indecency, but that would entail about an hour of paperwork (an hour in the warm police station with a nice cup of tea sounds good though) and lead to the profound embarrassment of the poor boy. He finally decides to give the boy some sound advice about sexually transmitted diseases and a stern warning to the woman and sends them both on their way.

This short story illustrates that official statistics measure police behavior as much as crime. Sir Josiah Stamp, director of the Bank of England in the 1920s, cynically stated this criticism: "The government are very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, raise them to the nth power, take the

cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchmen, who just puts down what he damn pleases" (in Nettler, 1984:39). We don't recommend this kind of cynicism, but we do counsel that you keep a healthy skepticism about statistics as you read this chapter. ≪

CATEGORIZING AND MEASURING CRIME AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

When attempting to understand, predict, and control any social problem, including the crime problem, the first step is to determine its extent. Gauging the extent of the problem means discovering how much of it there is, where and when it occurs most often, and among what social categories it occurs most frequently. It also helps our endeavors if we know the patterns and trends of the problem over time. Note that we did not address *why* questions (why does crime occur, why is it increasing or decreasing, who commits it and why, and so on); such questions can only be adequately addressed after we have reliable data about the extent of the problem. However, all social statistics are suspect to some extent, and crime statistics are perhaps the most suspect of all. They have been collected from many different sources in many different ways and have passed through many sieves of judgment before being recorded.

There is a wide variety of data provided by government and private sources to help us come to grips with America's crime problem, all with their particular strengths and weaknesses. The major data sources can be grouped into three broad categories: *official statistics*, *victimization survey data*, and *self-reported data*. Official statistics are those derived from the routine functioning of the criminal justice system. The most basic category of official statistics comes from the calls made to police by victims or witnesses and by crimes the police discover on patrol. Other major categories of official crime data consist of information about arrests, convictions, and correctional (prison, probation/parole) populations.

UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS: COUNTING CRIME OFFICIALLY

The primary source of official crime statistics in the United States is the annual **Uniform Crime Reports** (UCR) compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The UCR reports crimes known to the nation's police and sheriff's departments and the number of arrests made by these agencies; federal crimes are not included. Offenses known to the police are recorded whether or not an arrest is made or if an arrested person is subsequently prosecuted and convicted. Participation in the UCR reporting program is voluntary, and thus all agencies do not participate. Even for the agencies that do participate, they may not report their crime data to the FBI completely or consistently throughout the year. This is unfortunate for anyone hoping for comprehensive crime data. In 2017 law enforcement agencies active in the UCR program represented more than 310 million inhabitants of the United States—98.4% of the total population (FBI, 2018a). This means that crimes committed in the jurisdictions of agencies representing about 1.6% of the population (about 10.1 million people) were not included in the UCR data.

The UCR reports the number of each crime reported to the police as well as their rate of occurrence. The rate of a given crime is the actual number of reported crimes standardized by some unit of the population. We expect the raw number of crimes to increase as the population increases, so comparing the number of crimes reported today with the number reported 30 years ago, or the number of crimes reported in New York with the number reported in Wyoming, tells us little without considering population differences. For instance, California reported 1,930 murders to the FBI in 2017, and Louisiana reported 555. In which state are you most likely to be murdered? We can't say unless we take their respective populations into consideration. To obtain a **crime rate** we divide the number of reported crimes in a state by its population and multiply the quotient by 100,000, as in the following comparison of California and Louisiana rates.

Uniform Crime Reports (UCR): Annual report compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) containing crimes known to the nation's police and sheriff departments, the number of arrests made by these agencies, and other crime-related information.

Crime rate: The rate of a given crime is the actual number of reported crimes standardized by some unit of the population.

$$\text{CA murders} = 1{,}930$$

$$\text{CA population} = 39{,}780{,}350$$

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{1{,}930}{39{,}780{,}350} = 0.000048 \times 100{,}000 = 4.8 \text{ per } 100{,}000 \text{ residents}$$

$$\text{LA murders} = 555$$

$$\text{LA population} = 4{,}684{,}333$$

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{555}{4{,}684{,}333} = 0.000118 \times 100{,}000 = 11.8 \text{ per } 100{,}000 \text{ residents}$$

Thus, a person in Louisiana is at over twice the risk (11.8 versus 4.8 murders per 100,000 population) of being murdered than he or she is in California. This statement is based on the statewide rates; the actual risk will vary widely from person to person based on such factors as age, race, sex, socioeconomic status (SES), neighborhood, and urban versus rural residence. In other words, some people in some places in California will be at much higher risk of being murdered than some people in some places in Louisiana.

The UCR separates crimes into two categories: **Part I offenses** (or **index crimes**) and **Part II offenses**. Part I offenses include four violent (homicide, assault, forcible rape, and robbery) and four property offenses (larceny-theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson). Notice that these are all universally condemned mala in se offenses. Part I offenses correspond with what most people think of as "serious" crime. Part II offenses are treated as less serious offenses and are recorded based on arrests made rather than cases reported to the police. Part II offense figures understate the extent of criminal offending far more than do Part I figures because only a very small proportion of these crimes result in arrest.

The FBI's famous crime clock is presented in Figure 2.1. The clock shows how often on an average day one of the index crimes was reported in 2017; these are only rough estimates and should not be taken literally because many crimes are not reported.
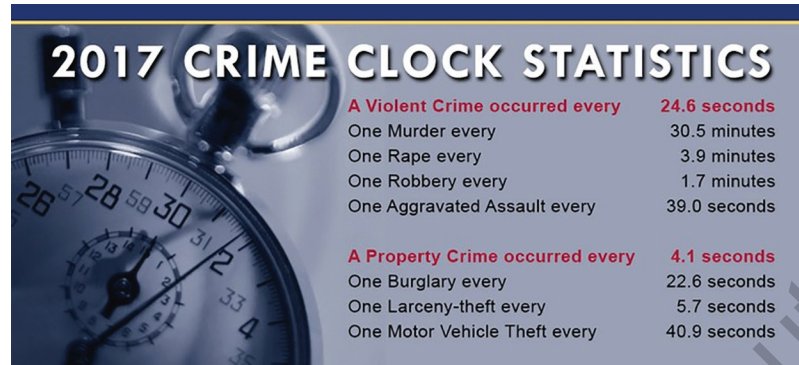
CLEARED OFFENSES

If a person is arrested and charged for a Part I offense the UCR records the crime as cleared by arrest, or a **cleared offense**. A crime may also be cleared by *exceptional means* when the police have identified a suspect and have enough evidence to support arrest but he or she could not be taken into custody immediately, or at all. Such circumstances exist when the suspect dies or is in a location where the police cannot presently gain custody. For instance, he or she is in custody on other

Part I offenses (or index crimes): The four violent (homicide, assault, forcible rape, and robbery) and four property offenses (larceny-theft, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson) reported in the Uniform Crime Reports.

Part II offenses: The less serious offenses reported in the Uniform Crime Reports and recorded based on arrests made rather than cases reported to the police.
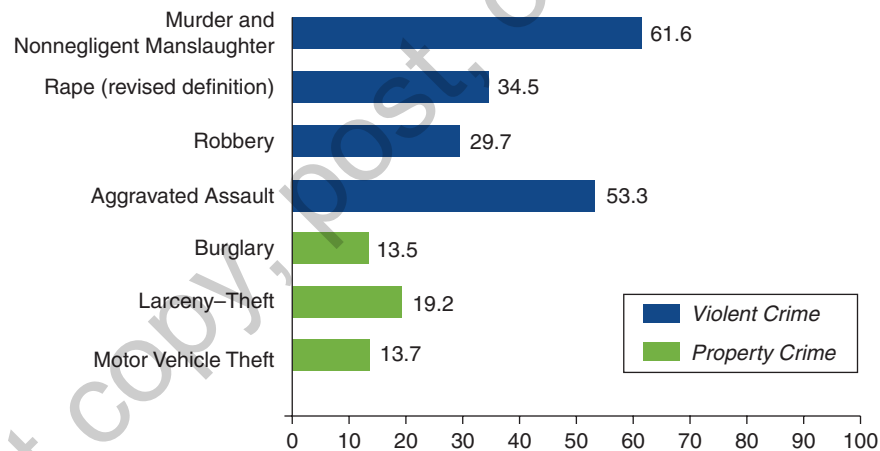
Cleared offense: A crime is cleared by the arrest of a suspect or by exceptional means (cases in which a suspect has been identified but he or she is not immediately available for arrest).

FIGURE 2.1

The 2017 FBI Crime Clock

2017 CRIME CLOCK STATISTICS

A Violent Crime occurred every	**24.6 seconds**
One Murder every	30.5 minutes
One Rape every	3.9 minutes
One Robbery every	1.7 minutes
One Aggravated Assault every	39.0 seconds
A Property Crime occurred every	**4.1 seconds**
One Burglary every	22.6 seconds
One Larceny-theft every	5.7 seconds
One Motor Vehicle Theft every	40.9 seconds

Note: Most recent data available at publication.
Source: FBI (2018a).

FIGURE 2.2

Percentage of Crimes Cleared by Arrest or Exceptional Means in 2017

Crime	Percentage
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	61.6
Rape (revised definition)	34.5
Robbery	29.7
Aggravated Assault	53.3
Burglary	13.5
Larceny–Theft	19.2
Motor Vehicle Theft	13.7

Violent Crime
Property Crime

Source: FBI (2018a).

charges in another jurisdiction or is residing in a country with no extradition treaty with the United States. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, which gives 2017 clearance rates, violent crimes are more likely to be cleared than property crimes because violent crime investigations are pursued more vigorously and because victims of such crimes may be able to identify the perpetrator(s).

Table 2.1 is a page from the 2017 UCR listing all Part I and II crimes broken down by sex and percentage change in crime rates from 2008 to 2017. This provides us the male/female differences in arrests (and well as the increases or decreases in their respective rates of offending) and provides interesting discussions of why these gender differences exist. Part II crimes are all those listed as "other assaults" and all offenses listed after that.

CRIME TRENDS

One thing about the UCR is that it is very useful for tracking crime trends. Table 2.2 shows trends from 2008 to 2017 (FBI, 2018). Note that total crime dropped by almost 14% (307,768 – 264,829 = 42,939/307,768 = 13.95%), and property crime fell by just over 25%. It is much easier to note

TABLE 2.1

Ten-Year Arrest Trends for Part I and Part II Crimes by Sex, 2008 and 2017

Offense charged	Male						Female					
	Total			Under 18			Total			Under 18		
	2008	2017	Percent Change	2008	2017	Percent Change	2008	2017	Percent Change	2008	2017	Percent Change
TOTAL[1]	6,684,673	5,006,416	-25.1	911,744	380,337	-58.3	2,183,085	1,872,513	-14.2	371,761	157,996	-57.5
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	6,727	6,407	-4.8	662	488	-26.3	817	935	+14.4	54	42	-22.2
Rape[2]	13,445	14,341	–	2,014	2,390	–	153	418	–	28	92	–
Robbery	68,320	48,568	-28.9	18,716	9,986	-46.6	9,132	8,450	-7.5	1,892	1,166	-38.4
Aggravated assault	219,276	195,513	-10.8	27,345	13,653	-50.1	59,873	58,972	-1.5	8,460	4,968	-41.3
Burglary	172,133	105,800	-38.5	48,260	17,996	-62.7	30,796	24,815	-19.4	7,059	2,465	-65.1
Larceny-theft	485,729	378,305	-22.1	121,620	50,722	-58.3	350,042	265,548	-24.1	97,138	30,222	-68.9
Motor vehicle theft	48,194	44,239	-8.2	12,082	7,668	-36.5	10,162	12,964	+27.6	2,360	1,839	-22.1
Arson	7,987	4,908	-38.6	3,992	1,358	-66.0	1,460	1,194	-18.2	549	228	-58.5
Violent crime[3]	307,768	264,829	-14.0	48,737	26,517	-45.6	69,975	68,775	-1.7	10,434	6,268	-39.9
Property crime[3]	714,043	533,252	-25.3	185,954	77,744	-58.2	392,460	304,521	-22.4	107,106	34,754	-67.6
Other assaults	612,453	491,125	-19.8	98,121	51,063	-48.0	213,142	199,319	-6.5	51,097	30,572	-40.2
Forgery and counterfeiting	36,845	24,342	-33.9	1,199	659	-45.0	22,947	12,888	-43.8	604	175	-71.0
Fraud	86,861	52,167	-39.9	3,332	1,826	-45.2	68,796	31,487	-54.2	1,807	940	-48.0
Embezzlement	6,948	5,201	-25.1	502	187	-62.7	7,529	5,300	-29.6	361	185	-48.8

(Continued)

TABLE 2.1 (Continued)

Offense											
Stolen property; buying, receiving, possessing	59,620	51,469	-13.7	11,650	5,828	-50.0	15,782	14,567	-7.7	2,806	1,074	-61.7
Vandalism	154,800	98,927	-36.1	61,575	21,276	-65.4	31,493	28,204	-10.4	9,402	4,546	-51.6
Weapons; carrying, possessing, etc.	101,938	92,702	-9.1	22,675	10,377	-54.2	8,195	9,869	+20.4	2,292	1,262	-44.9
Prostitution and commercialized vice	11,333	7,705	-32.0	195	73	-62.6	23,154	10,427	-55.0	554	75	-86.5
Sex offenses (except rape and prostitution)	45,409	28,773	-36.6	8,469	5,082	-40.0	3,480	2,234	-35.8	899	664	-26.1
Drug abuse violations	843,915	813,824	-3.6	93,476	48,663	-47.9	200,143	263,816	+31.8	18,561	15,540	-16.3
Gambling	2,035	1,083	-46.8	259	70	-73.0	396	357	-9.8	17	13	-23.5
Offenses against the family and children	55,945	39,753	-28.9	2,293	1,603	-30.1	18,376	17,024	-7.4	1,275	955	-25.1
Driving under the influence	763,493	488,769	-36.0	8,041	3,090	-61.6	211,475	166,006	-21.5	2,623	1,014	-61.3
Liquor laws	293,557	94,685	-67.7	55,777	14,105	-74.7	117,198	43,144	-63.2	34,275	9,838	-71.3
Drunkenness	342,258	182,844	-46.6	8,273	1,934	-76.6	67,886	47,517	-30.0	2,711	809	-70.2
Disorderly conduct	322,117	163,874	-49.1	82,845	27,063	-67.3	117,293	69,062	-41.1	40,315	15,242	-62.2
Vagrancy	12,512	10,594	-15.3	862	315	-63.5	3,527	3,359	-4.8	226	92	-59.3
All other offenses (except traffic)	1,869,437	1,549,710	-17.1	176,123	72,074	-59.1	569,560	569,306	*	64,118	28,647	-55.3
Suspicion	623	150	-75.9	124	31	-75.0	182	51	-72.0	28	11	-60.7
Curfew and loitering law violations	41,386	10,788	-73.9	41,386	10,788	-73.9	20,278	5,331	-73.7	20,278	5,331	-73.7

[1] Does not include suspicion.

[2] The 2008 rape figures are based on the legacy definition, and the 2017 rape figures are aggregate totals based on both the legacy and revised Uniform Crime Reporting definitions. For this reason, a percent change is not provided.

[3] Violent crimes are offenses of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes are offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

* Less than one-tenth of 1 percent.

Note: Most recent data available at time of publication.

Source: FBI (2018a).

that crime increased or decreased by some percentage over a specified period than it is to explain why it did so, however. Despite the accumulation of tons of factual data, it is difficult to arrive at a sturdy conclusion that fit them together to everyone's satisfaction; facts only describe events, they do not explain them. Any explanation for major fluctuations in crime rates requires that we have an understanding of the historical, social, political, economic, and demographic processes unfolding around the same time that increases or decreases in crime are recorded and how those processes interact. The effects of any particular process on crime may be immediate, such as a series of riots and general mayhem following some perceived injustice, or it may only be felt a decade or so down the road, such as an economic policy decision that later affects job creation. Whatever process or alleged cause we examine, you should keep in the forefront of your mind that just as there is no single cause of crime or criminality, there is no single cause that explains crime trends.

Year	Violent	Property
1963	168.2	2,021.1
1993	747.1	4,740.0
2003	475.8	3,591.2
2017	382.9	2,362.2

Examine the previous UCR violent and property crime rates per 100,000 for 1963, 1993, 2003, and 2017 and ask yourself whether crime has gone up or down. If we compare 1993 with 2003 we conclude that crime dropped significantly, but if we take 1963 as our beginning year and compare it with 2017, we would conclude that crime has gone up significantly. Whether crime has "gone up" or "gone down" thus depends on what years we choose to look at. Interpretations of crime trends should be read with caution because the author may have chosen a beginning and ending year to support his or her favored explanation. So before we begin to congratulate or berate ourselves because the crime rate has gone up or down, it is wise to ask "Compared to what year?" Whenever we are assessing crime data, crime trends, or a piece of crime-related information we must contextualize that information by asking ourselves "Compared to what?" where we take the new piece of information we are interested in and compare it to tidbits of other relevant information. Only then will we be able to more accurately grasp what that information is telling us.

Take also the murder rate trends from 1900 to 2017 presented in Figure 2.3. The graph looks like a rugged mountain range with peaks and troughs, indicating that at some points in American history murder rates were more than twice as high as they were at other points. The 1900 rate of 1.0 per 100,000 is highly suspect given the descriptions of life in such cities as New York and Boston at the turn of the century, as well as the still semicivilized condition of much of the western United States. We should never take national statistics at face value unless we are sure of their quality, and national reporting of crime statistics was in a terrible state in the early part of the 20th century.

With the advent of the UCR in 1930 national data became somewhat more reliable. The homicide rate started a steep climb after the Volstead Act prohibiting the production and sale of alcohol was passed in 1920 as gangs fought over the lucrative and now illegal alcohol market. The rate started to fall with the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933, which effectively removed criminals from the alcohol business. It dropped even further during World War II when most young men (the age category that commits the lion's share of crime) were in uniform and overseas, showed a sharp rise when they returned, and then settled into a relatively peaceful period during the 1950s and early 1960s. Murder rates then started a precipitous rise beginning in the late 1960s.

The late 1960s through the mid-1970s saw tumultuous changes in American society. Opposition to the Vietnam War combined with the civil rights and feminist movements led to the widespread questioning of many of the fundamental values of American society that treated some groups of people as second-class citizens. When values and norms are questioned, they become weaker in their ability to regulate behavior. The weakened power of traditional social norms to control behavior led to all kinds of experimentation with alternative lifestyles, including the use of drugs. The emergence of crack cocaine in the early 1980s led to a period of gang wars over sales territory, just like the gang wars over alcohol did in the 1920s. Crack cocaine is easier to make, conceal, and sell than barrels of beer or bottles of whiskey, so crack dealing is more of an "equal opportunity" enterprise than supplying illegal alcohol was. Numerous young "gang-bangers" took

FIGURE 2.3

Murder Rates in the United States 1900 to 2017
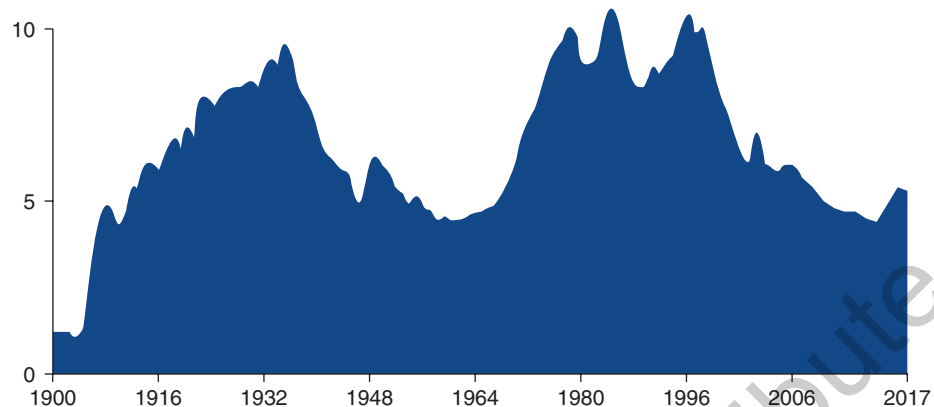
Source: FBI (2018a).

advantage of the opportunity for easy money in places where jobs were scarce, sparking a decade-long street war with other like-minded individuals.

The decrease in the homicide rate in the early 1990s can be attributed to several factors including a large decrease in the crack market and in gang warfare as territories became consolidated by the strong pushing out the weak. Severe penalties for sale and possession of crack and the danger from others trafficking in the same market may have also driven out many dealers. Other popular explanations for the great crime decline of the '90s include the population of young adults who are most crime prone aging out of their criminal propensities, the booming tech economy, the ban on leaded gasoline almost two decades prior, and even the availability of legal abortion nationwide after *Rowe v. Wade* in 1973.

PROBLEMS WITH THE UCR

UCR data have limitations that restrict their usefulness for criminological research, particularly research seeking to uncover causes of crime. Some of the more serious of these limitations are outlined here.

- The UCR data significantly underrepresent the actual number of criminal events in the United States each year. According to a nationwide victim survey, only 45% of victims of violent crime and 36% of victims of property crime indicated that they reported their victimization to the police (Morgan & Truman, 2018). Victims are more likely to report violent crimes if injuries are serious and are more likely to report property crimes when losses are high. Females are more likely than males to report violent victimization; males and females are about equally as likely to report property victimization.
- Costly white-collar crimes such as stock market fraud, hazardous waste dumping, tax evasion, and false claims for professional services are not included.
- Crimes committed in the jurisdictions of nonparticipating law enforcement agencies are not included in the data. Even with full voluntary compliance, all departments would not be equally as efficient and thorough (or honest) in their record keeping.
- Crime data may be falsified by police departments for political reasons. The National Center for Policy Analysis (1998) reports that police departments in Philadelphia; New York; Atlanta; and Boca Raton, Florida, had underreported and/or downgraded crimes in their localities (and these are just the departments we know about).
- The UCR even underreports crimes that are known to the police because of the FBI's hierarchy rule. The **hierarchy rule** requires police to report only the highest (most serious) offense committed in a multiple-offense single incident to the FBI and to ignore the others. For instance, if a man robs five patrons in a bar, pistol-whips one patron who tried

Hierarchy rule: A rule requiring the police to report only the most serious offense committed in a multiple-offense single incident to the FBI and to ignore the others.

to resist, locks the victims in the beer cooler, and then rapes the female bartender, only the rape is reported to the FBI. Arson is the sole exception to this rule. If some other violent or property crime is committed in conjunction with an arson, both offenses are reported.

## PROBLEMS WITH COMPARING INTERNATIONAL CRIME RATES

Problems such as the hierarchy rule and the different ways in which different nations record crime make it extremely difficult to compare crime rates across nations. For instance, which two nations have the highest rate of recorded kidnappings in the world: (A) Australia and Canada or (B) Colombia and Mexico? The answer is A. According to United Nations figures for 2012, Australia had 17 kidnappings per 100,000 population and Canada 12.7, compared with 0.6 in Colombia and 1.1 in Mexico (Alexander, 2013). If you are skeptical, you have learned the lesson of the opening vignette. According to Alexander (2013), these differences are simply a matter of how the different countries define kidnapping. In Australia or Canada, "If a divorced parent takes a child for the weekend, and the other parent objects and reports it to the police, the police will record the incident as a kidnapping." In most countries, "real" kidnapping is unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or fraud and detaining that person against his or her will with the purpose of committing some other crime (e.g., rape, slavery, a ransom demand).

Another example is Sweden's rape rate, which is officially the highest in the world, but is it really? The Swedes record every incident of sexual violence separately, so if a woman goes to the police and tells them that her partner raped her at least once a month over the last year, the police will record 12 separate events (Alexander, 2013). In the United States it would be recorded as a single incident—one case of rape. So, it is not just the village watchman who "puts down what he damn pleases" that confounds our efforts to make comparisons but also the legal peculiarities of each country or changing emphases on different crimes and changing police practices.

Another example shows how you may make a fool of yourself if you throw around statistics without knowing how they were obtained. A TV news reporter in Cincinnati reported that in the United

FIGURE 2.4

Average Subregion Homicide Rates According to Criminal Justice and Public Health Data
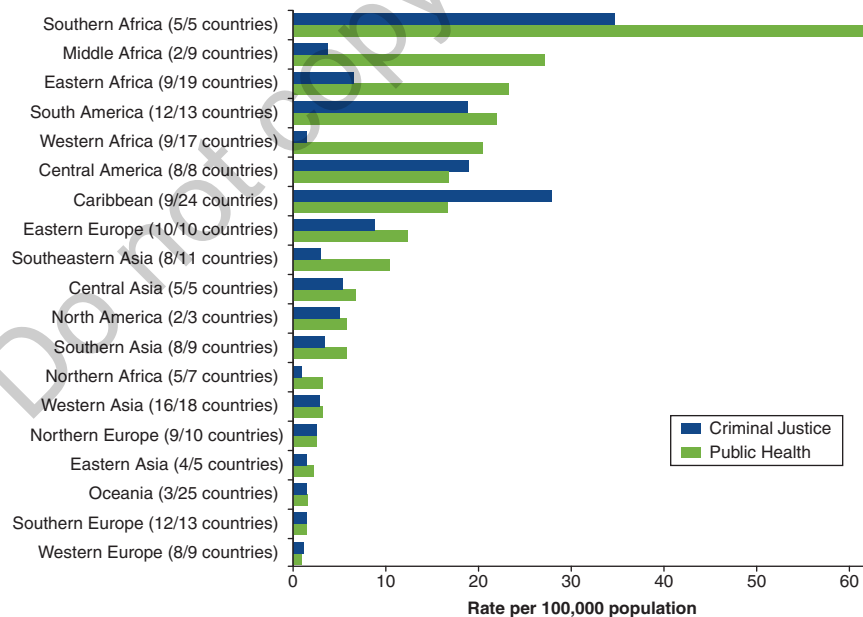
Source: From *International Statistics on Crime and Justice,* by Harrendorf, S., Heiskanen, M., & Malby, S, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, © 2010 United Nations. Reprinted with the permission of the United Nations.

Kingdom in 2012 there were 2,034 violent crimes per 100,000 people while in the United States the figure was 466 violent crimes per 100,000; the reporter claimed the United Kingdom was 5 times more violent than the United States (Bier, 2013). Because these startling figures reflect fundamentally different ways of recording violent crime, comparing them is not like comparing apples to oranges but more like comparing apples to pork chops. The vast majority of crimes recorded as violent in the United Kingdom include such relatively innocuous offenses as simple assault without injury such as slapping and spitting; harassment; "possession of an article with a blade or point"; and causing "public fear, alarm, or distress." The United Kingdom also reports as sexual offenses everything from rape to groping and flashing. In contrast, in the United States the FBI records only the truly injurious crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault as violent crimes (let's also not forget the FBI's UCR hierarchy rule, which is not followed in the United Kingdom, further boosting its crime count vis-à-vis that of the United States).

Then there is the problem of the efficiency, accuracy, capacity, and/or honesty of the police in various countries in recording and reporting their crimes, especially homicides. Figure 2.4 compares rates of homicides reported by countries in various subregions of the world by the criminal justice system and by various health agencies such as the World Health Organization (Harrendorf, Heiskanen, & Malby, 2010). Note in general that in the less developed countries the homicides recorded by public health agencies greatly outnumber those recorded by the developed countries. Also note that in the more developed regions there is hardly any discrepancy between criminal justice and public health sources of data.

NIBRS: THE "NEW AND IMPROVED" UCR

Efforts to improve the reliability and validity of official statistics happen all the time, with the most ambitious being the **National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS)**. NIBRS began in 1982 and is designed to collect more detailed and comprehensive crime statistics than does the UCR (which it is supposed to replace). As opposed to the current UCR, which monitors only a few crimes and gathers few details associated with them, NIBRS collects data on 46 "Group A" offenses and 11 "Group B" offenses. There is no hierarchy rule under the NIBRS system; it reports multiple victims, multiple offenders, and multiple crimes that may be part of the same incident. It also provides information about the circumstances of the offense and about victim and offender characteristics, such as the offender–victim relationship and age, sex, and race of victims and perpetrators (if known).

According to the Incident-Based Reporting Resource Center (2013), "As of June 2012, 32 states have been certified to report NIBRS to the FBI, and three additional states and the District of Columbia have individual agencies submitting NIBRS data. Approximately 29% of the population is covered by NIBRS reporting, representing 27% of the nation's reported crime and 43% of law enforcement agencies." Unfortunately, many police departments lack the manpower and technical expertise to collect and process the wide and detailed range of information that is part of each crime incident their officers deal with, and administrators see little benefit to their department to justify the effort (Dunworth, 2001). However, the Justice Department is working to increase NIBRS using incentives such as grants because the FBI will be transitioning to a NIBRS-only data collection system by 2021.

Photo 2.2

Is a mother leaving her spouse and taking their child considered kidnapping? It depends on what country you live in. This illustrates the difficulties in collecting and comparing crime statistics internationally.

© iStockphoto.com/JackF

NIBRS, THE UCR, AND POLICE BIAS IN ARRESTS

NIBRS may miss an awful lot of crime, but it makes up for it in other areas. Because NIBRS data provide information about the offender and the victim (victims can identify physical characteristics of perpetrators), it can be used to try to resolve some important criminological issues. One issue is the disproportionately high rate of arrest for African Americans in the United States. The question for criminologists is this: Is the disproportion in arrests the result of disproportionately high black involvement in crime or the result of discriminatory arrest patterns of police? For instance, although they constitute only about 13% of the population, the 2013 UCR shows that

African Americans accounted for 38.5% of arrests for all violent crimes and 29.3% for all property crimes. If we only had raw arrest data from the UCR, we could argue without end about whether the data reflect police bias or disproportionate black involvement in crime.

This issue was explored by D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (2003) using NIBRS data from 17 states and 335,619 arrests for rape, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault. Their results indicate the odds of arrest for robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault were significantly greater for white offenders than for black offenders, but there was no significant racial difference in the probability of arrest for rape. In other words, white offenders were more likely to be arrested for violent crimes other than rape (blacks and whites were arrested with almost equal probability for rape). For instance, African Americans committed 5,278 robberies in those states for which only 21.4% were arrested; whites committed 2,620 robberies for which 30.8%

Photo 2.3
The use of technology by police has been credited in part for crime reduction during the 1990s. © iStockphoto.com/Kali9

were arrested. The researchers concluded that the disproportionately high black arrest rate is attributable to disproportionately higher black involvement in crime. Similar results based on NIBRS data were found in Pope and Snyder's (2003) analysis of 102,905 violent incidents committed by juveniles; that is, white juveniles were significantly more likely to be arrested than black juveniles even though African American juveniles were more involved in violent incidents.

Multiple data sources show that some people, or groups of people, are differentially involved in crime, and this differential involvement explains the bulk of racial disparities we see in arrest numbers and other crime statistics, such as stop-and-frisk frequencies or use-of-force instances. However, differential involvement does not explain all the racial disparity. Differential enforcement can help explain the remaining racial gap in arrest statistics and occurs when agents of the criminal justice system treat people unequally based on extralegal factors such as race (but also factors such as gender, age, and class). Several examples of differential enforcement can be identified. For example, according to the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (2018), African Americans and whites use marijuana at equal rates, yet blacks are several times more likely to be arrested for a marijuana offense. Additionally, the city of Milwaukee recently agreed to pay $3.4 million to settle a racial profiling lawsuit where the police were using stop-and-frisk and pretext traffic stop tactics disproportionately against minority citizens. More concerning is when police differentially use force. Nix and colleagues (2017) examined 990 fatal police shootings in the United States in 2015 and found that unarmed African Americans were more than twice as likely to be shot and killed by police than unarmed whites even while controlling for the threat posed to police and citizens.

CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY DATA AND ITS PROBLEMS

Crime victimization surveys involve asking large numbers of people if they have been criminally victimized within some specified time frame regardless of whether they reported the incident to police. Census Bureau personnel interview a nationally representative sample of people age 12 and over on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) twice each year. This survey is known as the **National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)**, and in 2017 239,541 people from 145,508 households were interviewed (Morgan & Truman, 2018). The NCVS requests information on crimes committed against individuals and households, the circumstances of the offense, and personal information about victims (e.g., age, sex, race, income, and education level) and offenders (e.g., approximate age, sex, race, and victim–offender relationship). Figure 2.5 presents highlights from the 2017 NCVS report.

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS): A biannual survey of a large number of people and households requesting information on crimes committed against individuals and households (whether reported to the police or not) and circumstances of the offense (time and place it occurred, perpetrator's use of a weapon, any injuries incurred, and financial loss).

Highlights From the 2017 Criminal Victimization Survey

❖ The number of persons age 12 or older who were victims of violent crime increased from 2.7 million in 2015 to 2.9 million in 2016 (up 9% from 2015) and 3.1 million in 2017 (up 17% from 2015).

❖ The portion of persons age 12 or older who were victims of violent crime increased from 0.98% in 2015 to 1.14% in 2017.

❖ From 2015 to 2017, the percentage of persons who were victims of violent crime increased among males, whites, those ages 25 to 34, those age 50 and over, and those who had never been married.

❖ From 2016 to 2017, the rate of overall property crime declined from 118.6 victimizations per 1,000 households to 108.4, while the burglary rate fell from 23.7 to 20.6.

❖ The rate of robbery victimization increased from 1.7 per 1,000 persons in 2016 to 2.3 in 2017.

❖ About 45% of violent victimizations and 36% of property victimizations were reported to police, based on the 2017 survey.

❖ The percentage of rapes or sexual assaults that were reported to police rose from 23% in 2016 to 40% in 2017.

Source: Morgan & Truman (2018).

Victimization surveys have their own problems that make them almost as suspect as the UCR. Some of these problems include the following:

- Crimes such as drug dealing and all "victimless" crimes such as prostitution and gambling are not revealed in such surveys for obvious reasons. And because murder victims cannot be interviewed, this most serious of crimes is not included.
- Because NCVS only surveys households, crimes committed against commercial establishments such as stores, bars, and factories are not included. This exclusion results in a huge underestimate of crimes such as burglaries, robberies, theft, and vandalism.
- Victimization data do not have to meet any stringent legal or evidentiary standards to be reported as an offense; if the respondent says he or she was robbed (it may have actually been a theft or a burglary), a robbery will be recorded. UCR data, on the other hand, pass through the legal sieve to determine whether the reported incident was indeed a robbery.
- Other problems involve memory lapses, providing answers the respondent thinks the interviewer wants to hear; forgetting an incident; embellishing an incident; and any number of other misunderstandings, ambiguities, and even downright lies that occur when one person asks another about his or her life experiences.
- Consistent with this are suggestions that just as underreporting plagues UCR data, overreporting may plague NCVS data (O'Brien, 2001). Whatever the case may be, we find many anomalies when comparing the two sources of data. For instance, substantially more crimes appear in police records than NCVS victims claim to have reported to the police. The discrepancy is easily explained for burglary and motor vehicle theft because the NCVS does not include commercial establishments in their reports. It is more difficult to explain discrepancies in violent crime, however. One explanation for this is that the NCVS does not include victims less than 12 years of age whereas the UCR does, although it is difficult to believe that children under 12 account for 15% to 20% of the violent victimization known to the police.

NCVS researchers are aware of the problems that arise when asking people to recall victimization and have initiated interview improvements in their methodology, one of which is the *bounding interview*. This technique involves comparing reported incidents from the same household in the current interview with those reported 6 months prior. When a report appears to be a duplicate, the respondent is reminded of the earlier report and asked if the new report represents the incident previously mentioned or if it is different. Other techniques used to minimize some of the reported problems mentioned earlier are available on the NCVS website (www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/NCVS). Figure 2.6 provides an example of the kinds of questions asked by NCVS survey workers.

FIGURE 2.6

Example NCVS Victimization Questions

29.	**How were you attacked? Any other way?**	646
	Mark (X) all that apply.	1 ☐ Raped
		* 2 ☐ Tried to rape
		3 ☐ Sexual assault other than rape or attempted rape
	FIELD REPRESENTATIVE – *If raped, ASK –*	4 ☐ Shot
	Do you mean forced or coerced sexual	5 ☐ Shot at (but missed)
	Intercourse?	6 ☐ Hit with gun held in hand
	If No, ASK – What do you mean?	647
		7 ☐ Stabbed/cut with knife/sharp weapon
		* 8 ☐ Attempted attack with knife/sharp weapon
	If tried to rape, ASK –	9 ☐ Hit by object (other than gun) held in hand
		10 ☐ Hit by thrown object
	Do you mean attempted forced or	648
	coerced sexual Intercourse?	11 ☐ Attempted attack with weapon other than gun/knife/sharp weapon
	If No, ASK – What do you mean?	* 12 ☐ Hit, slapped, knocked down
		13 ☐ Grabbed, held, tripped, jumped, pushed, etc.
		14 ☐ Other – *Specify* ↙
		_____

30.	**Did the offender THREATEN to hurt you before you were actually attacked?**	649
		1 ☐ Yes
		2 ☐ No
		3 ☐ Other – *Specify* ↙
		_____

31.	**What were the Injuries you suffered, if any? Anything else?**	655
	Mark (X) all that apply.	1 ☐ None – *SKIP to 40*
		* 2 ☐ Raped
		3 ☐ Attempted rape
	FIELD REPRESENTATIVE – *If raped and box 1 in item 29 is NOT marked, ASK –*	4 ☐ Sexual assault other than rape or attempted rape
		5 ☐ Knife or stab wounds
	Do you mean forced or coerced sexual	6 ☐ Gun shot, bullet wounds
	Intercourse?	656
	If No, ASK – What do you mean?	7 ☐ Broken bones or teeth knocked out
		* 8 ☐ Internal injuries
	If attempted rape and box 2 in item 29 is NOT marked, ASK –	9 ☐ Knocked unconscious
		10 ☐ Bruises, black eye, cuts, scratches, swelling, chipped teeth
	Do you mean attempted forced or coerced sexual Intercourse?	11 ☐ Other – *Specify* ↙
	If No, ASK – What do you mean?	_____

32.	*ASK OR VERIFY –* **Were any of the injuries caused by a weapon other than a gun or knife?**	657
		1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 33*
		2 ☐ No – *SKIP to 34*

33.	**Which injuries were caused by a weapon OTHER than a gun or knife?**	658
	Enter code(s) from 31.	* ☐ ☐ ☐
		Code Code Code

34.	**Were you injured to the extent that you received any medical care, including self treatment?**	659
		1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 35*
		2 ☐ No – *SKIP to 40*

35.	**Where did you receive this care? Anywhere else?**	660
	Mark (X) all that apply.	1 ☐ At the scene
		* 2 ☐ At home/neighbor's/friend's
		3 ☐ Health unit at work/school, first aid station at a stadium/park, etc.
		4 ☐ Doctor's office/health clinic
		5 ☐ Emergency room at hospital/emergency clinic
		6 ☐ Hospital (other than emergency room)
		7 ☐ Other – *Specify* ↙
		_____

CHECK ITEM E	Is (box 6) "Hospital" marked in 35?	☐ Yes – *Ask 36* ☐ No – *SKIP to 38*

36.	**Did you stay overnight in the hospital?**	662
		1 ☐ Yes – *Ask 37*
		2 ☐ No – *SKIP to 38*

37.	**How many days did you stay (In the hospital)?**	663
		_____ Number of days

Source: Rand and Catalano, Bureau of Justice Statistics NCVS Survey (2006).

AREAS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UCR AND NCVS

To the extent that two or more data sources tell us the same thing, our confidence in both is increased. The UCR and NCVS agree on the demographics of crime in that they both tell us that males, the young, the poor, and African Americans are more likely to be perpetrators and victims of crime than are females, older persons, wealthier persons, and persons of other races. Both sources also agree as to the geographic areas and times of the year and month when crimes are more likely to occur. Over a 3-year period, O'Brien (2001) found that NCVS victims reported that 91.5% of those who robbed them and 87.7% of their aggravated assault assailants were male, as were 91.2% and 84.3%, respectively, of those arrested for those offenses. Likewise, NCVS victims reported that 64.1% of those who robbed them and 40% of their aggravated assault assailants were African American. These percentages fit the UCR arrest statistics for race almost exactly; 62.2% arrested for robbery were African American, as were 40% of those arrested for aggravated assault. Thus, the two data sets agree almost perfectly with respect to these two violent crimes.

Comparisons of UCR and NCVS data have often proven useful to resolve issues such as these. Another such issue is the so-called masculinization hypothesis put forward by some feminist criminologists. The essence of this hypothesis is that women are becoming more "masculinized" as a result of assuming "male" roles in the workforce and that this is reflected in the increased rates of female arrests for violent crimes. Darrell Steffensmeier and his colleagues (2006) used a comparison of data trends reported in the UCR and NCVS from 1980 to 2003 to explore the issue of whether the violent crime gap between males and females is closing. They found that both sources reported little or no changes in the gender ratio for violent crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery but that the UCR indicated a sharp rise in assaults by females. Does this mean that women became more violent over the period examined, or does the increase reflect the behavior of the police more than the behavior of women? The authors conclude that net-widening policy shifts have escalated the arrest proneness of females for "criminal assault" (e.g., policing physical attacks, threats of marginal seriousness) rather than women having become any more violent. In other words, UCR increases in female arrests for simple assault are explained by changes in police policy in the form of mandatory arrests for domestic violence. This could not have been determined without examining both data sources. The addition of the NCVS and NIBRS to the nation's crime databases thus has great utility for settling some major quarrels among criminologists of different ideological persuasions, although not to the satisfaction of everyone.

RESEARCH SNIPPET
How Dangerous Is Police Work?

Although imperfect, the UCR program is a treasure trove of information that is easily accessible for anyone with internet access. The information about the UCR in this chapter is just a small taste of what is available. Many criminology and criminal justice students consider a career in police work and are interested in understanding the dangers involved. The UCR reports data on law enforcement officers killed or assaulted (LEOKA). In 2014, 51 police officers were feloniously killed while on duty. Most officers were killed by handguns, and most officers were killed by white men. Another 45 officers were accidently killed, primarily due to traffic accidents.

Also in 2014, more than 48,000 officers were assaulted while on duty. Nearly 28% of those sustained at least minor injuries. The data suggest that police work has become less dangerous over recent decades, with 2013 being the safest year for police on record. Policing is a dangerous job, much more dangerous than higher education or accounting, for example. However, policing is not the most dangerous job in the country. Fishermen, truckers, loggers, and pilots sustain higher rates of death and injury than police while on the job. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, police work does not break the top 10 in fatal occupational injuries.

Sources: FBI (2014); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018).

Note from Table 2.1 that this trend was still in evidence comparing UCR arrests for aggravated assault and simple (labeled "other assaults" in the table) assault from 2008 to 2017. In contradiction to the masculinization hypothesis, female aggravated assault decreased by 6.5%. During the same period, female arrests for simple assault increased by 11.8%, a figure that in conjunction with the female decrease in other violent offenses favors the police behavior hypothesis.

SELF-REPORT CRIME SURVEYS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Self-report surveys of offending provide a way for criminologists to collect data without having to rely on government sources. Questionnaires used in these surveys typically provide a list of offenses and request subjects to check each offense they recall having committed and how often and sometimes if they have ever been arrested (and if so, how many times). Self-report surveys have relied primarily on college and high school students for subjects, although prison inmates and probationers/parolees have also been surveyed.

The greatest strength of self-report research is that researchers can correlate a variety of characteristics of respondents with their admitted offenses that go beyond the demographics of age, race, and gender. For instance, they can attempt to measure various constructs thought to be associated with offending, such as impulsiveness, empathy, and sensation seeking, as well as their peer associations and attitudes. The evidence indicates that self-report crime measures provide largely accurate information about some illegal act sometime in their lives. However, there are a number of reasons why self-report crime surveys also provide a distorted picture of criminal involvement.

- The majority of self-report studies in the past surveyed "convenience" samples of high school and college students, populations in which we don't expect to find many seriously criminally involved individuals. Most self-report studies thus eliminate the very people we are most interested in gathering information about. One strength of the self-report method, however, is that it appears to capture the extent of illegal drug use among high school and college students, something that neither the UCR nor the NCVS attempt to do.
- Self-report studies typically uncover only fairly trivial antisocial acts such as fighting, stealing items worth less than $5, smoking, and truancy. Almost everyone has committed one or more of these acts. These are hardly acts that help us to understand the nature of serious crime. A connected problem is that some researchers lump respondents who report one delinquent act together with adjudicated delinquents who break the law in many different ways many different times.
- Even though most people are forthright in revealing minor antisocial behaviors, most people do not have a serious criminal history, and those who do have a distinct tendency to underreport their crimes (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981). As the number of crimes people commit increases, so does the proportion of offenses they withhold reporting, with those arrested for the most serious offenses having the greatest probability of denial (Farrington 1982).
- Males tend to report their antisocial activities less honestly than females and African Americans less honestly than other racial groups (Cernkovich, Giordano, & Rudolph, 2000; Kim, Fendrich, & Wislar, 2000). This evidence renders any statements about gender or racial differences regarding antisocial behavior based on self-report data suspect. When it comes to relying on self-report data to assess the nature and extent of serious crime it is well to remember the gambler's dictum: "Never trust an animal that talks."

Self-report surveys: The collecting of data by criminologists themselves asking people to disclose their delinquent and criminal involvement on anonymous questionnaires.

Photo 2.4

A woman completing a self-report survey. When using self-report data, we must ask ourselves, "How accurate are people's memories? Do people lie on surveys?" © iStockphoto.com/JackF

We should not end on a pessimistic note about self-reports, however. Several studies have addressed the issue of the accuracy and honesty of self-reported offenses in various ways, and the results have generally been encouraging, at least for uncovering the extent

of minor offenses. On average, known delinquents and criminals disclose almost 3 times as many offenses as nondelinquents. Many major multimillion dollar longitudinal studies taking place today have built-in safeguards against researchers naively taking subjects at their word. A number of studies verify self-report accounts with police records and other social agencies, a practice that further helps us to gain a grasp on the reliability of self-report studies. For instance, a large longitudinal (a study following the same people across the life span) cohort study (studying a set of individuals who share a common characteristic, such as being born in the same month in the same geographic area) showed that individuals from the lowest social class category reported 3.21 times more offenses than individuals from the highest social class category (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2004). However, when researchers compared individuals from these two classes for official juvenile and adult arrests, the members of the lowest class had 25.82 times more officially recorded arrests than members of the highest class. Thus, the more actively involved delinquents/criminals do report more antisocial behavior than others, but they also tend to greatly underreport it.

CRIME MAPPING

Crime statistics are also gathered by individual police departments for their own use in the battle against crime in their jurisdictions. These statistics enable police departments to view areas and trends across time periods (the where, when, and how of crime) so they can allocate their resources where and when they are most needed. The most sophisticated of these methods is known as crime mapping.

FIGURE 2.7

Mapping Homicide Locations and Methods in Washington, DC
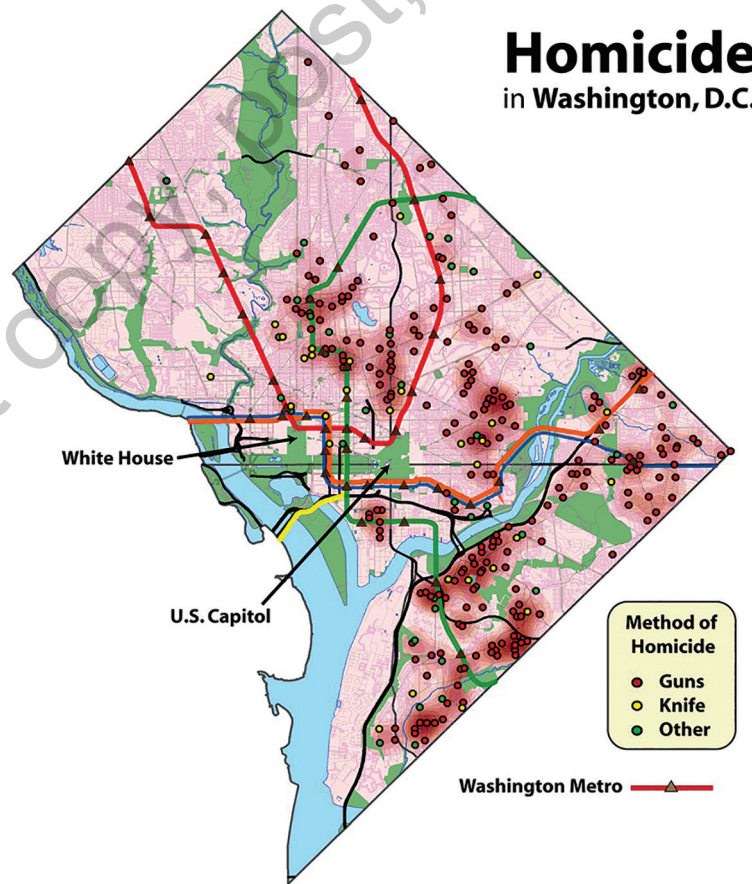
Crime mapping is the use of modern technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by police departments to "map" (visualize) and analyze patterns of crime.

The geography of a city can strongly influence crime because the features and characteristics of an area of a city or town can make it easier or more difficult for crime to occur (Kumar & Chandrasekar, 2011). For instance, the location of alleys, buildings, and open spaces, as well as the houses and businesses that occupy the areas, such as bars, banks, marijuana dispensaries, payday loan centers, pawn shops, derelict buildings, schools, parks, and factories, all affect the likelihood that a crime will occur. By combining such geographic information with police report data and then displaying the information on a computerized map, police analysts find it to be an effective way to analyze where, when, and how crime occurs. To accomplish such mapping, information about all serious criminal incidents is fed into a computer equipped with special software, allowing analysts to pinpoint crime hot spots and other trends and patterns over time. This is the basis for hot spot policing, intelligence-led policing, and other data-driven police practices, which have been enormously useful to police departments in their relentless battle with crime. Figure 2.7 is an example of the pattern of homicides by location and methods of killing in Washington, DC, from 2004 to 2006.

WHITE-COLLAR CRIME: THE FBI'S FINANCIAL CRIMES REPORT

The only white-collar crimes, that is, crimes committed by guile as opposed to force, listed in the UCR are embezzlement, forgery/counterfeiting, and fraud, which are mostly committed by individuals. There is, however, a separate accounting of major white-collar crimes committed by organized groups (e.g., banks, law firms, medical practices) and corporations called the **Financial Crimes Report** (FBI, 2012). This report is not issued regularly as is the UCR, but it contains results of investigations carried out by the Financial Crimes Section (FCS) of the FBI. The role of the FCS is to oversee the investigation of financial fraud and to supervise the forfeiture of assets from individuals engaged in such crimes. The FCS is composed of the Asset Forfeiture/Money Laundering Unit (AF/MLU), the Economic Crimes Unit (ECU), the Health Care Fraud Unit (HCFU), the Forensic Accountant Unit (FAU), and the National Mortgage Fraud Team (NMFT).

The crimes investigated by the Financial Crimes Section are more fully discussed in Chapter 16, but we highlight the FBI's major successes in 2011 as reported in the 2012 Financial Crimes Report. FBI investigations led to 242 indictments and 241 convictions for corporate fraud, mostly cases involving fraudulent accounting and insider trading. The FBI obtained $2.4 billion in restitution and $16.1 million in fines from convicted corporate criminals. The latest figures available show an ever-growing number of fraud cases being investigated since 2001. Figure 2.8 provides the number of cases, convictions, fines and recoveries, and convictions in 2011 as well as white-collar prosecutions in 2013.

The FBI obtained 520 indictments and 394 convictions for securities/commodities fraud—market manipulation, Ponzi schemes, cyberscams, foreign currency exchange fraud, and so on. As a result of these investigations, the FBI recovered $36 million and obtained $8.8 billion in restitution, $752 million in forfeitures, and $113 million in fines.

In the health care field, the FBI investigated 2,690 cases resulting in 1,676 indictments and 736 convictions. This type of fraud involves billing for services not provided, duplicate claims, medically unnecessary services, and kickbacks for referring patients for services paid for by Medicare or Medicaid. The FBI obtained $1.2 billion in restitution, $1 billion in fines, $96 million in seizures, $320 million in restitution, and $1 billion in settlements in 2011.

Because of tighter underwriting standards, mortgage fraud was at its lowest level since 2001. Mortgage fraud includes foreclosure rescue schemes and a wide variety of other types of misrepresentations or omissions aimed at distressed homeowners who bought homes under greatly relaxed loaning standards prior to the 2007 housing crash. In 2011, the FBI had 2,691 pending mortgage fraud cases and obtained convictions on 1,082 criminals. It obtained $1.38 billion in restitution, $116.3 million in fines, and $23 million in seizures/forfeitures.

Finally, the FBI obtained 521 indictments and 429 convictions for financial institution fraud, a type of crime that includes embezzlement, check fraud, counterfeit negotiable instruments, check kiting, and fraud contributing to the failure of financial institutions. These convictions resulted in $1.38 billion in restitution, $116.3 million in fines (being exactly the same value as listed for mortgage fraud, this figure may have been erroneously listed twice), and $15.7 million

Crime mapping: The use of modern technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) by police departments to "map" and analyze patterns of crime.

Financial Crimes Report: The FBI's annual tally of financial ("white-collar") crimes in the United States.

Summary of FBI White-Collar Prosecutions in 2011 and 2013
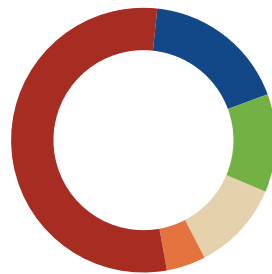
The FBI conducted **2,001** **white collar prosecutions** in 2013:

- ● Financial institution (17.7%)
- ● Mortgage (12.0%)
- ● Healthcare (11.0%)
- ● Securities (4.8%)
- ● Other (54.5%)

In 2011, the **FBI investigated:**

2,691 mortgage fraud cases

resulting in **1,223** indictments/informations

1,082 convictions

$1.4 billion in restitution orders

$116.3 million in fines

2,690 healthcare fraud cases

resulting in **1,676** indictments/informations

736 convictions

$1.2 billion in restitution orders

$1 billion in fines

$1 billion in civil settlements

1,846 securities fraud cases

resulting in **520** indictments/informations

394 convictions

$8.8 billion in restitution orders

$113 million in fines

$36 million in recoveries

$751 million in forfeitures

Note: Most recent data available at time of publication.
Source: National Center for Victims of Crime (2016).

in seizures. Wall Street in New York City may well be the most crime-ridden street in America given how often white-collar and corporate crimes are committed there and how damaging they are to everyday citizens. Certainly, students of criminology should give adequate attention to studying white-collar crime.

THE DARK FIGURE OF CRIME

The **dark** (or hidden) **figure of crime** is that portion of the total crimes committed each year that never comes to light. Figure 2.9 presents three diagrams that show the different dark figures for the three major measures of criminal behavior. (The dark figures are represented by the dark shading in each diagram.)

Each diagram shows the degree to which crimes of varying degrees of seriousness are most likely to be detected by each measure ("victimless" crimes excluded). In the top diagram displaying UCR data, you can see that very few trivial offenses are reported in official statistics, and most of those that are will be dismissed as unfounded by the police. For official statistics, then, the dark figures are highly concentrated at the nonserious end of the crime spectrum.

The middle diagram reveals that the dark figures for victimization data are primarily concentrated in the nonserious end of the spectrum also, although to a lesser degree than in the case of official data. The failure of victimization data to pick up these minor offenses is largely due to survey subjects not remembering all incidences of victimization.

In the bottom diagram we see that most of the dark figures in the case of self-reports are concentrated in the upper end of the seriousness continuum rather than the lower end. This is partly due to (a) nearly all self-report surveys excluding most persistent serious offenders from their subject pools, and (b) many of the most serious offenders who remain in self-report subject pools do not reveal the full extent of their criminal histories.

WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE ABOUT THE THREE MAIN MEASURES OF CRIME IN AMERICA?

All three main measures of crime in America are imperfect, and which one of them is "best" depends on what we want to know. UCR data are still probably the best single source of data for studying serious crimes and, indeed, the only one for studying murder rates and circumstances. NIBRS is best for a more comprehensive picture of criminal events such as the demographics (sex, race, age) of offenders and victims, although it is not as nationally representative as either the UCR or the NCVS. For studying less serious but much more common crimes, either victimization or self-report survey data are best. If the interest is in drug offenses, self-reports are the preferable data source.
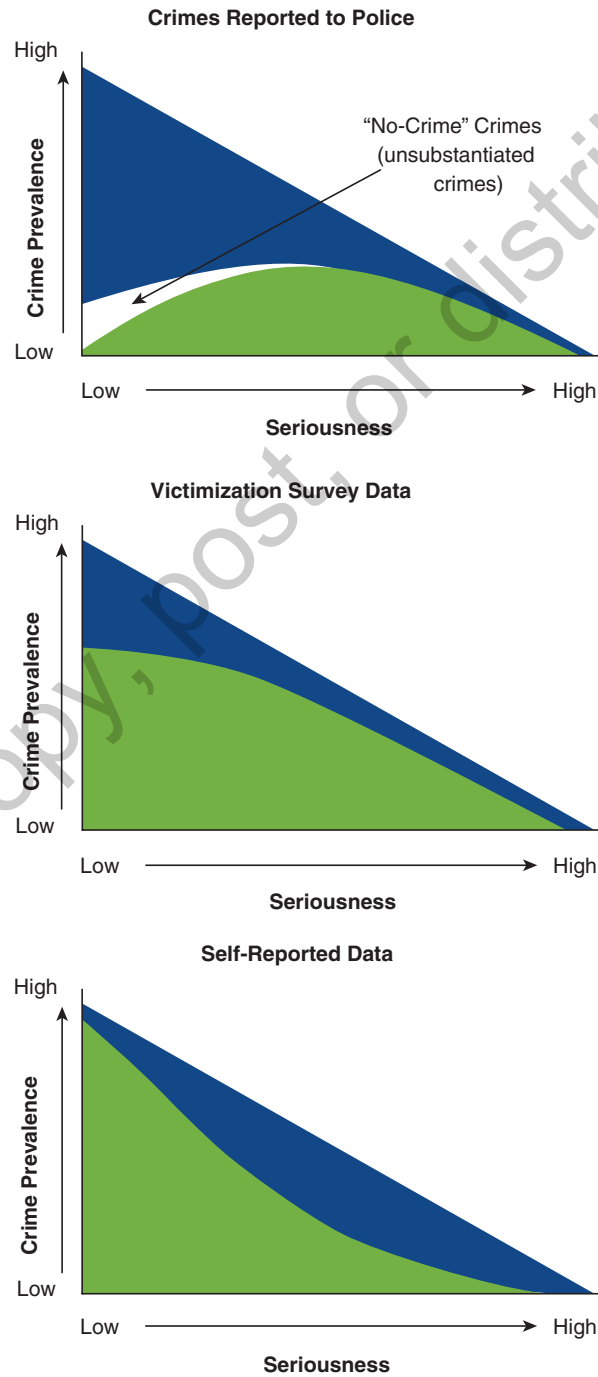
Because all three data sources converge on some important points about crime, they enable us to proceed with at least some confidence in our endeavors to understand the *whys* of crime. This convergence of information is known as triangulation. Triangulation occurs when two or more methods or data sources are used in concert to cross-validate research findings; when the findings from independent sources are consistent with each other then we can be more confident in the accuracy of those findings. Research finds remarkable consistency across multiple methods and sources of data regarding the relationship between demographic characteristics and crime. The basic demographics of crime constitute the raw social facts that are the building blocks of our criminological theories. If street crime is concentrated among the lower socioeconomic classes and in the poorest neighborhoods, we can begin to ask such things as whether poverty "causes" crime, or does some other variable or set of variables cause both? Is social

Dark figure of crime: The dark (or hidden) figure of crime refers to all of the crimes committed that never come to official attention.

disorganization in a neighborhood independent of the people living in it or completely dependent on the people living in it? Why do females always and everywhere commit far less crime (particularly the most serious crimes) than males? These and many dozens of other *why* questions can be asked once we have a firm grip on the raw facts supplied by the methods described in this chapter.

FIGURE 2.9

Differing Proportions of Reported and Unreported Crimes for the Three Major Measures of Crime

Crimes Reported to Police

"No-Crime" Crimes (unsubstantiated crimes)

Crime Prevalence — High / Low
Seriousness — Low / High

Victimization Survey Data

Crime Prevalence — High / Low
Seriousness — Low / High

Self-Reported Data

Crime Prevalence — High / Low
Seriousness — Low / High

Light shading = proportion of crimes reported. Dark shading = proportion not reported.

CRIMINOLOGY IN POP CULTURE
The Reality of Crime Rates

Shortly after being confirmed as attorney general in 2017, Jeff Sessions claimed that America was experiencing a dangerous and permanent increase in crime. However, the data suggest otherwise. We are currently experiencing historic low rates of crime and violence. To be fair, the violent crime rate did increase from 2014 to 2016, but only marginally so, and violence decreased again in 2017 according to the UCR. Gallup polls also routinely find that the public perception of crime trends is inaccurate, and hearing inaccurate information from our political leaders and criminal justice officials is a likely culprit for these misperceptions. Many Americans wrongfully believe that the crime rate is currently high, getting higher, and much higher now than it was 10 to 20 years ago. The reality is that crime peaked in the early '90s, and the current crime rates are about half of what they were back then.

Summary

- Crime and criminal behavior are measured in several ways in the United States. The oldest measure is the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), a tabulation of all crimes reported to the police in most of the jurisdictions in the United States in the previous year. The UCR is divided into two parts: Part I records the eight index crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson), and part II records arrests made for all other crimes.

- UCR data seriously underestimate the extent of crime because it only records reported crimes, ignores drug offenses, and only reports the most serious crime in a multiple-crime event. The problems with the UCR led to the implementation of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).

- The second major source of crime statistics is the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This survey consists of many thousands of interviews of households throughout the United States asking them about their crime victimization (if any) during the previous 6 months. The NCVS also has problems because it leaves out crimes against commercial establishments and relies exclusively on the memory and word of interviewees.

- The third source of crime data is self-report data collected by criminologists themselves. The advantage of self-report data is that it is derived "from the horse's mouth," and typically the questionnaires used ask about "victimless" offenses not covered in either the UCR or NCVS. The major problems with self-report data are that it does not capture serious criminal behavior and is subject to dishonesty in the form of underreporting, especially by those most seriously involved in criminal activity.

- The UCR, NCVS, and self-report data come to different conclusions on a variety of points, but they agree about where, when, and among whom crime is most prevalent and the fact that crime has fallen dramatically in the United States over the past two decades. Taken together, then, we have a fairly reliable picture of the correlates of crime from which to develop our theories about explanatory mechanisms.

- The FBI's Financial Crimes Report is the white-collar version of the UCR. This report focuses on ongoing and completed investigations of many kinds of white-collar crime such as insider trading, fraudulent schemes, and medical fraud.

- The "dark figure" of crime refers to the amount of crime that goes unreported and unknown every year. All measures of criminal activity discussed in this chapter have weaknesses that obscure an unknown amount of crime, but taken together they provide a roughly accurate picture of annual crime rates in the United States.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. Go to the website https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten for the FBI's 10 most wanted and research the background and crimes of one of the men listed there. Then write a one- to two-page summary and report to the class.

2. Do you think it wise to make "authoritative" statements or formulate theories of criminal behavior, especially serious criminal behavior, based on self-report data?

3. Can you think of other problems possibly associated with asking people about their delinquent or criminal behavior or their victimization other than those discussed in the chapter?

4. If you were the American "crime czar," what would you do to get the various law enforcement agencies to fully implement NIBRS (no, you can't just order them to do so)?

Useful Websites

Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://bjs.gov.

National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD.

National Crime Victimization Survey Resource Guide. www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/NCVS/.

National Incident-Based Reporting System Resource Guide. www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/NACJD/NIBRS.

Uniform Crime Reports. www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr.

Chapter Terms

Cleared offense 25
Crime mapping 39
Crime rate 24
Dark figure of crime 41
Financial Crimes Report 39
Hierarchy rule 30

National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) 33
National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) 32
Part I offenses (or index crimes) 25
Part II offenses 25
Self-report surveys 37
Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) 24

Student Study Site

$SAGE edge™

Visit the open-access Student Study Site at **edge.sagepub.com/walshess4e** to access additional study tools including mobile-friendly eFlashcards, web quizzes, multimedia resources, and more!

Media Library

Visit the interactive eBook to watch SAGE premium videos. Learn more at **edge.sagepub.com/walshess4e/access.**

Theory in Action

Theory in Action 2.1: Types of Crime

Career Video

Career Video 2.1: Crime/Statistical Analyst: Technology
Career Video 2.2: Challenges and Misconceptions