

chapter 5

Deviance and Crime



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The term *deviance* suggests the unusual and strange behavior of people with twisted minds pursuing twisted things. However, what we think of as deviant is often an ordinary part of everyday life. More than a hundred years ago, for example, many students at the best U.S. colleges cheated most of the time. “Whole classes cheated on examinations,” says historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz (1987:33). “The use of ponies (translations of texts) was almost universal. At Yale in the 1860s, perhaps less than half of the compositions were actually written by the supposed author for the occasion.”

Today many campuses have honor systems run by the students themselves, yet cheating remains a common form of behavior among college students. In one study, 83 percent of university students admitted to at least one act of academic dishonesty. A quarter said they had lied to an instructor and falsified material on a term paper, a third said they had looked at other students’ answers during exams, and nearly a fifth said they had plagiarized a term paper (Cochran et al., 1999; see also Michaels and Miethe, 1989). Other studies suggest that the percentage of students who cheat in college is at least 90 percent and may be as high as 99 percent (Sperber, 2000). New technology helps: selling term papers on the Internet has become a profitable—but illegal—business (Hickman, 1998). And students aren’t alone. Nearly 10 percent of a sample of 4,000 U.S. researchers said they had witnessed research misconduct (including such acts as plagiarism and falsifying data) among other faculty, and 13 to 33 percent reported various types of misconduct among graduate students (Decoo, 2002). The motive typically is career enhancement, but the desire to “prove” a pet hypothesis also can lead to scientific misconduct (Kennedy, 2003).

Is cheating deviant or is it a normal feature of everyday life? If so many people cheat, why are there still rules against it? These

questions introduce two important ideas that form the backdrop for our analysis of deviance. First, whether something is deviant depends on who is evaluating it. In 19th-century colleges, for example, faculty believed that cheating was deviant. Students, on the other hand, believed it was deviant *not* to cheat, and being proud of having achieved good grades through “honest” means was clearly deviant (Horowitz, 1987).

Second, when important *norms*, or rules, are violated, norms and social control function to maintain social organization, social relationships, and the meanings that underlie them. Norms against cheating still exist in spite of widespread cheating because without such norms and mechanisms for their enforcement, the nature of the university and its place in society would be very different. When universities react to cheating, they protect the idea that people earn grades honestly and that grades are at least a rough measure of merit. Norms and defending norms in the face of violation are necessary for social order to exist and to be maintained over time.

Of course, as we made clear in Chapter 2, norms are important throughout social life. Without norms, we lack guideposts to tell us what is permissible and what constitutes the outer limits of allowable behavior. Yet norms can be more than just guideposts. In modern societies, the state is the mechanism by which many norms—that is, laws—are enforced (see Chapter 9). When laws are broken, crimes are committed.

In this chapter we will consider the nature and significance of deviance. We will discuss sociological definitions of deviance and see what various sociological perspectives contribute to our understanding of deviance. In addition, we will examine a form of deviance that is particularly prevalent in modern society: crime.

The Nature of Deviance

Deviant behavior is not an anomaly in social life. It is a part of ongoing social processes in all societies and groups and is both cause and consequence of other social processes and outcomes that we discuss in this section.

Social Properties of Deviance

Deviance is behavior that a considerable number of people in a society view as reprehensible and beyond the limits of tolerance. In most cases it is both negatively valued and provokes hostile reactions. Deviance does not exist independently of norms. Without norms, and without the application of norms in interpreting behavior, there is no deviance. Put another way, deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behavior (Erikson, 1962; Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1972); it is a property conferred upon particular behaviors by social definitions. In the course of their daily lives, people use the normative schemes available to them and make judgments regarding the desirability or undesirability of this or that behavior. They then translate their judgments into favorable or unfavorable consequences for those who engage in the behavior. In this sense, then, deviance is what people say it is. You will find this idea clarified by reading and reflecting upon the material in Box 5.1 (p. 138) dealing with the social construction of deviance. Then resume your consideration of deviance with the discussion below, in which we describe the relativity of deviance and how definitions of deviance are made to “stick.” We also consider the changing nature of deviance, allowances for some variations in behavior, and the functions and dysfunctions of deviance.

▲ The Relativity of Deviance

Which acts are defined as deviant vary greatly from time to time, place to place, and group to group. For example, in many cultures homosexual behavior is considered to be deviant, and any sexual behavior involving juveniles is criminal. For the Etoro of New Guinea, homosexual acts between adult males and young boys are not just a part of everyday life, they are an essential part of the culture.

As reported by anthropologist Raymond Kelly in 1976, the Etoro believe that humans have a special life force they call the *hame*. According to Etoro culture, this vital energy in men can be diminished through witchcraft and also through sexual relations, because it is especially concentrated in semen. Depletion of the life force is accompanied by weakness and illness and is characterized by labored breathing, coughing, short-windedness, and chest pains, all referred to as *hame hah hah*. Each act of sexual intercourse a man engages in depletes his *hame* further, and heterosexual relations among the Etoro are completely prohibited for as many as 260 days per year, or more than 70 percent of the time. The Etoro believe that breaking these prohibitions has serious repercussions, including crop failure. Thus, heterosexual intercourse during the exclusionary period, even between marital partners, is seriously deviant and is severely punished.

Why, then, are homosexual relations essential in this culture? Is not the vital life force lost through loss of semen whether that loss is to a female or a male? Yes, but for the male receiving the semen, it is an essential gain. Boys lack semen—the most critical attribute of manhood to the Etoro—and the Etoro believe that semen must be “planted” in them. Young Etoro males are continually inseminated from age 10 until the early to midtwenties, according to Kelly. All the physical and emotional changes that occur during this time are regarded as the direct

results of the oral insemination practiced by the Etoro. Because the *hame* of a youth is strengthened by insemination, there are no prohibitions about when or where such insemination can take place.

As norms vary from one society to the next and from one time to another, so too does deviance. A social audience, through the application of norms, decides whether or not some behavior is deviant. To the Etoro of New Guinea, sexual activity involving children is a normal part of everyday life. In the United States, it can cause an adult to be labeled a criminal.

The concepts that the Etoro use to think about sexuality and the moral system that governs sexual behavior are fundamentally different from the cultural principles that shape sexuality and behavior in our own society—so different, in fact, that some readers may find the example to be difficult to think about. Such reactions illustrate the point of the example: that deviance is relative, and such relativity often involves fundamental, even extreme, differences in how deviance is defined in different cultural systems. A less extreme example of relativity that is closer to home are the tattoos and body piercings that may be seen as deviant by children and older adults but as a normal, even valued, part of everyday life by college students and other young adults.

Saying that deviance is relative and is a matter of social definition does not mean that “anything goes” or that morality has no importance. On the contrary, the relativity of deviance means simply that there are many moralities across societies and over time and that we cannot understand deviant behavior and the reactions to it without knowing the normative context in which they occur. As the description of homosexual and heterosexual behavior in Etoro society makes clear, using a traditional Western antihomosexual moral



Hey, Baby, Want Some Spit? The Social Construction of Deviance

To set the stage on the first day of class for their courses in introductory sociology and in the sociology of deviance, Professors John R. Brouillette and Ronny E. Turner of Colorado State University (1992) undertake an exercise that demonstrates the social construction of deviance. After outlining course procedures and content, one of the professors calls on a student to provide a small amount of saliva in a sterilized spoon. Somewhat embarrassed, the student provides the saliva. The professor thanks her and then he gives a brief lecture on the benefits and functions of saliva for the human body; for instance, saliva moistens the linings of the mouth and throat, aids in the prevention of infection, and facilitates digestion.

After discussing the benefits of saliva, the professor offers the student who initially provided the valuable body fluid an opportunity to take the spoon and return the saliva to her mouth. Invariably the student declines. The instructor comments that he has difficulty comprehending why someone would reject such a valued substance in the age of recycling. He then offers the contents of the spoon to a classmate. Some students respond by making gagging sounds. The professor expresses “surprise” and reminds the students that they often share a can of soda, which also involves the sharing of saliva. The instructor then comments:

Not only that, but some students engage in a formerly

criminal action, French kissing, which most couples consider intimate, loving, and appropriate. Actually, two people place their lips together, intermingle their tongues, and exchange or mix their saliva. Is this deviant? Certainly not! It’s sexy . . . cool . . . and a “turn on.” Well, if you believe that’s cool, picture this. A couple are parked at the top of Lookout Mountain, passionately embracing each other. The woman pulls a spoon from her purse, which she uses to scrape some saliva from her mouth. To soothe her lover’s raging hormones and to show her love for him, she offers him the spoon. Do you think it will turn him on to a point of no return?

scheme to define deviance among the Etoro would reveal nothing about the processes of deviance and reaction that occur there.

By the same token, because deviance is relative, when sociologists study behavior that they refer to as deviant they are not implying that the behavior is, in fact, immoral or wrong. The issue of morality is a philosophical, ethical, or religious one. Deviance, however, is a matter of whether shared norms have been violated and/or there has been a social reaction to some presumed violation. For example, white southerners who supported the civil rights movement in the South in the 1960s were clearly deviant in that setting (Durr, 1985), though their behavior was a moral response to an immoral racist social order. And the German police officers who pursued and murdered thousands of Jews during the Holocaust were

not deviant in the context of the Nazi regime in Germany (Goldhagen, 1996), though today the term “immoral” hardly describes the severity of the moral reactions that their actions have provoked (e.g., Wiesel, 1961).

▲ The Power to Make Definitions Stick

When people differ regarding their definitions of what is and is not deviant behavior, it becomes a question of which individuals and groups will make their definitions prevail. For example, in 1776 the British labeled George Washington a traitor; 20 years later he was the first president of the United States and beloved as the father of his country.

In considerable measure, who is defined as deviant and what is defined as deviance depend on who is doing the defining and who has the power to make the definitions stick. Individuals

The professor next engages class members in a discussion of the difference between “saliva” and “spit.” In the course of the discussion he introduces the students to the sociological concept of the social construction of reality:

There is a difference between spit and saliva. But no chemist will ever find it because the difference is not chemical. It’s social. If people believe that spit and saliva are different, they are different. You had better know the difference or suffer the consequences. Spit is saliva in the wrong place or under the wrong circumstances. Nothing inherent in the mouth moisture itself necessitates a particular distinction between spit and saliva; no inherent change occurs. The difference is socially constructed. We social

beings have drawn lines around behavior to demarcate deviant from normal, acceptable behavior.

The sociology professor then points out that “spit” and “saliva” are defined differently, depending on who is engaging in a given behavior and on the social context in which the behavior occurs. Mothers are seen wiping dirt from an infant’s face with moisture from the mouth. Jesus and other religious leaders reportedly used their “sputum” to cure the blind and the infirm. Moreover, males spit incessantly during athletic contests, a behavior typically deemed “inappropriate” for female athletes. In sum, deviance is socially defined behavior.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever redefined a behavior in order to label your-

self or another deviant or non-deviant?

2. What behaviors that are considered “normal” in a classroom setting would be defined as deviant in another setting? What accounts for the different definitions of the same behaviors as deviant and nondeviant?

Source: Excerpt from “Creating the sociological imagination on the first day of class: The social construction of deviance,” by John R. Brouillette and Ronny E. Turner. Teaching Sociology, vol. 21, 1992. Reprinted by permission of the American Sociological Association.

stigmatized and victimized by prevailing social definitions see their circumstances quite differently from those who enjoy power and enforce norms that embody their moral codes. In recent years, some groups, such as gays, lesbians, the disabled, and welfare mothers, have entered the political arena and have had some success in challenging official definitions that portray them as “social problems.”

▲ Redefinitions of Normality and Deviancy

Within recent years, many behaviors Americans have traditionally judged to be deviant have undergone redefinition. Not too long ago compulsive gambling, alcoholism, drug addiction, and even many forms of mental illness were defined as evil and sinful. While such notions still persist, the view has increasingly gained

currency that these behaviors are medical problems. The disorders are considered illnesses analogous to physical ailments such as ulcers, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Their sufferers are placed in hospitals and given treatment by physicians.

Some people, including the late sociologist and former U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, believed that Americans are “defining deviancy down” so as to explain away and make “normal” what “a more civilized, ordered and healthy society” would and did label “deviant” not too many years ago. The birth rate among unmarried women has increased by nearly 40 percent since 1980, so that now one-third of all American youngsters are born to unmarried mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). According to Moynihan and others, fatherlessness and family breakup stand out as



Smoking, once deemed an innocent vice, is now increasingly regulated.

key variables associated with poverty, welfare dependency, crime, and other “social pathologies.” Yet unmarried parenthood has been systematically redefined as merely another “lifestyle choice.”

At the same time, many areas of behavior hitherto deemed benign have had their threshold radically “redefined upward.” Old concerns like child abuse and family violence have become amplified in recent years, receiving much media attention. Simultaneously new areas of deviancy, including date rape and politically incorrect speech, have been created. And smoking—once deemed an innocent vice—is coming under progressive regulation and even prohibition.

▲ A Zone of Permissible Variation

In our daily lives we typically find that norms are not so much a point or a line as a zone (Williams, 1970). Even rather specific and strongly supported norms allow a zone of permissible variation. In actual practice, norms

permit behavior that may depart from the strict letter of the law. For example, professors are expected to conduct their classes with dignity and decorum. Yet at almost every university some professor develops a reputation for unusual classroom behaviors: standing on the desk, sitting on the lectern, shouting and singing, dramatizing points by imitating voices, all in the course of a single class period. Since such professors often communicate well, are very popular, and are recognized authorities in their fields, the vast majority of students are quickly won over to their antics. Norms usually allow for *variant* behavior, new or at least different behavior that falls within the borders of the acceptable (Merton, 1968).

▲ The Functions and Dysfunctions of Deviance

Not all behavior has a purpose or a use. The same is doubtless true for many instances of deviance. Indeed, most of us think of deviance as “bad”—as behavior that poses a “social problem.” Such a view is not surprising given the negative or disruptive consequences of much deviance, or what sociologists call *dysfunctions* (see Chapter 1). But p. 19 deviance also has positive or integrative consequences for social life, what sociologists call *functions*.

The Dysfunctions of Deviance. Social organization derives from the coordinated actions of numerous people. Should some individuals fail to perform their actions at the proper time in accordance with accepted expectations, institutional life may be jeopardized. For instance, the desertion of a family by a parent commonly complicates the task of child care and rearing. And when a squad of soldiers fails to obey orders and runs away in the midst of battle, an entire army may be overwhelmed and defeated. Apparently most societies can absorb a good deal of deviance without serious consequences, but persistent and widespread

deviance can impair and even undermine organized social life.

Deviance also undermines our willingness to play our roles and contribute to the larger social enterprise. If some individuals get rewards, even disproportionate rewards, without playing by the rules, we develop resentment and bitterness. Morale, self-discipline, and loyalty suffer.

Moreover, our social life requires that we trust social institutions and one another. Trust makes conventional social life, from communities to economic exchange to families, possible. The most mundane, but essential, aspects of life would be impossible without trust. The use of checks and credit cards, for example, requires that we trust our banks to keep our money safe, to honor the checks that we write, and to charge our credit cards only as we have authorized. Normal community life is impossible where people cannot trust that those passing them on the street will not try to harm them. The maintenance of families and family life requires that people can trust others to live up to their obligations. Deviant behavior is dysfunctional because it can undermine this trust, threatening our most important social relationships and institutions.

The Functions of Deviance. Although deviance may undermine social organization, it may also facilitate social functioning in a number of ways. First, as sociologist Edward Sagarin (1975) has pointed out, reacting publicly to deviance can promote conformity. Such reactions create a community of the “good,” those who know the cost of deviating and who can now define themselves as an *in-group* in contrast to the *out-group* of deviants.

Second, because norms are not always clear, each time the members of a group censure some act as deviance, they highlight and sharpen the contours of a norm (Stevenson, 1991; Durkheim, 1893/1964). Their negative reactions clarify precisely what behavior is disallowed by the “collective conscience.” Sociol-

ogist Kai T. Erikson (1962) noted that one of the interesting features of agencies of control is the amount of publicity they usually attract. In earlier times the punishment of offenders took place in the public market in full view of a crowd. Today we achieve much the same result through heavy media coverage of criminal trials and executions.

Third, by directing attention to the deviant, a group may strengthen itself. A shared enemy arouses common sentiments and cements feelings of solidarity. The emotions surrounding “ain’t it awful” deeds quicken passions and solidify “our kind of people” ties. As we saw in Chapter 4, frictions and antagonisms pp. 106-107 between in-groups and out-groups highlight group boundaries and memberships. In the same way, campaigns against witches, traitors, perverts, and criminals reinforce social cohesion among “the good people.” For instance, Erikson (1966) showed that when the Puritan colonists thought their way of life was threatened, they created “crime waves” and “witchcraft hysterias” to define and redefine the boundaries of their community.

Fourth, deviance is a catalyst for change. Every time a rule is violated, it is being contested. Such challenges serve as a warning that the social system is not functioning properly. For instance, high robbery rates clearly indicate that there are large numbers of disaffected people, that institutions for socializing youth are faltering, that power relations are being questioned, and that the moral structures of the society require reexamination. Thus, deviance is often a vehicle for placing on a society’s agenda the need for social repair and remedies. By the same token, deviant activity can simultaneously be a call for an examination of old norms and a new model (Sagarin, 1975). For example, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and his supporters called the nation’s attention to the inhumanity of southern segregation laws through civil disobedience. In due course the civil rights movement led to these laws being changed.

Social Control and Deviance

If the work of the world is to get done, people must follow rules. Social order dictates that people have to be kept in line, at least most people, and that the line must be adhered to within allowable limits (Sagarin, 1975; Gibbs, 1989; Tyler, 1990; Liska, 1986). Without social order, interaction would be a real problem and expectations would be meaningless. Societies seek to ensure that their members conform with basic norms by means of **social control**, the methods and strategies that regulate behavior within society.

Functionalist and conflict theorists differ in how they view social control. As we will see in p. 292 Chapter 9, functionalists see social control, particularly as it finds expression in the activities of the state, as an indispensable requirement for survival. If large numbers of people were to defy their society's standards for behavior, massive institutional breakdown, malfunctioning of society, and chaos would result. In contrast, as we will discuss at greater length in the chapter, conflict theorists contend that social control operates to favor powerful groups and to disadvantage others. No social arrangements are neutral, they argue. Existing institutional structures distribute the benefits and burdens of social life unevenly while maintaining these structures through the techniques and instruments of social control.

There are three main types of social control processes operating in social life: (1) those that lead us to internalize our society's normative expectations, (2) those that structure our world of social experience, and (3) those that employ various formal and informal social sanctions. Let us briefly consider each of these processes.

▲ Internalization of Norms

As we saw in Chapter 3, the members of a society undergo continuous *socialization*, a process by which individuals acquire those ways of thinking, feeling, and acting characteristic of their society's culture. For infants and young

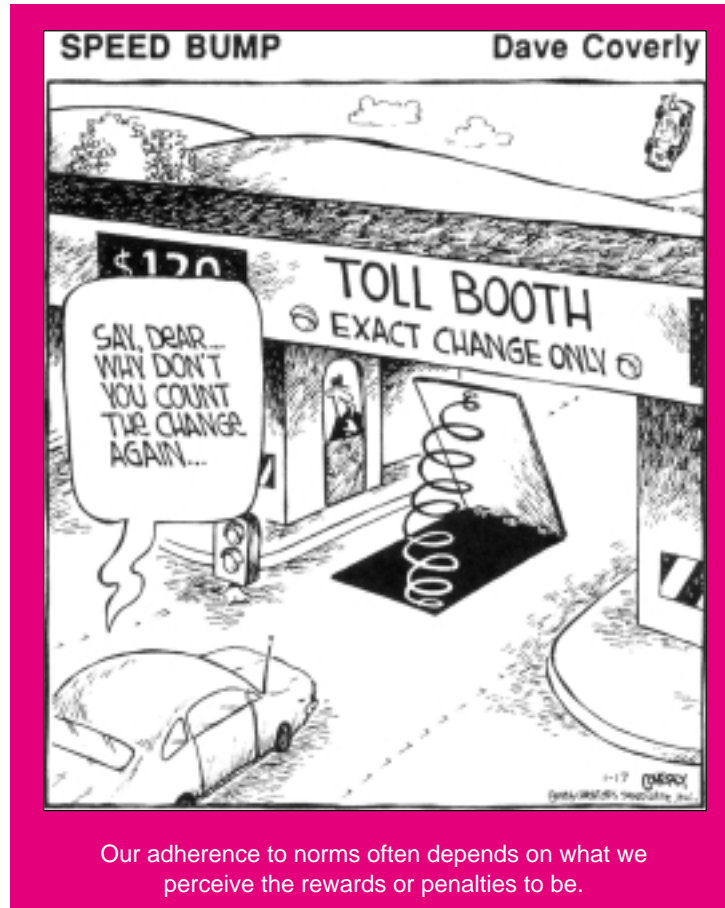
children, conformity to the expectations of others is primarily a product of external controls. As they grow older, an increasing proportion of their behavior becomes governed by internal monitors. These internal monitors carry on many of the functions earlier performed by external controls. **Internalization** is the process by which individuals incorporate within their personalities the standards of behavior prevalent within the larger society.

A good example is the set of norms in U.S. society regarding ownership of property. As all parents eventually learn, young children will pick up, play with, and sometimes destroy any item they find attractive. Only through interaction over a long period with parents, caregivers, and peers do children finally learn to "respect other people's property," even when they are not being watched by others.

Critical steps to social control through internalization are (1) learning what the norms are and (2) learning to believe that the norms are legitimate. In addition, through the process of internalization, norms become part of people's personalities, as discussed in Chapter 3 pp. 84–85 with the internalization of the "generalized other." Such standards are often accepted without thought or questioning—indeed, we commonly experience them as "second nature." As we immerse ourselves in the life of a group, we develop self-conceptions that regulate our conduct in accordance with the norms of the group. By doing what group members do, we acquire our identities and a sense of well-being. The group is our group, and its norms are our norms. Social control thus becomes self-control.

▲ The Structure of Social Experience

Our society's institutions also shape our experiences. In large part, we unconsciously build up our sense of reality by the way our society orders its social agendas and structures social alternatives. If we are locked within the social environment provided by our culture, we inhabit a somewhat restricted world and it may not occur to us that alternative standards exist.



Our adherence to norms often depends on what we perceive the rewards or penalties to be.

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A song popular during World War I questioned what might happen if this form of social control failed: “How ya gonna keep ‘em down on the farm after they’ve seen Poree?” That is, how would the American soldiers be able to resume their conformist rural life after experiencing the wild city life available in Paris, France, in 1917 and 1918, with nightclubs, dancing girls, and prostitutes in abundance? Without experiences that take us out of the patterned routines dictated by the institutions that make up our society, we are *culture-bound*. Many nonconformist patterns do not occur to us because they are not known to our society.

▲ Formal and Informal Sanctions

Finally, we conform to the norms of our society because we realize that to do otherwise is to incur punishment. Those who break rules are met with dislike, hostility, gossip, ridicule, and ostracism—even imprisonment and death—while the conformist wins praise, popularity, prestige, and other socially defined good things. Clearly there are disadvantages to nonconformity and advantages to conformity.

Formal sanctions are reactions of official agents of social control, such as the courts, the honor systems that control cheating, and the

principal's office in the high school. Students who are caught cheating, for example, may be formally sanctioned by being expelled from school. *Informal sanctions* are reactions to deviance that occur in small communities, in groups of friends, and in the family. Students who report cheating by their friends may be deviant from the point of view of their friendship group, and may be informally sanctioned by being ostracized. Informal sanctions generally are more effective than formal sanctions, particularly if they are part of the interaction in the primary groups to which people are strongly committed.

Theories of Deviance

Deviance may have both positive and negative consequences for the functioning and survival of groups and societies. But why, we may ask, do people violate social rules? Why are some acts defined as deviance? Why are some individuals labeled deviants when they engage in essentially the same behaviors as other individuals who escape retribution? And why does the incidence of deviance vary from group to group and society to society? It is these types of questions that interest sociologists.

We should keep in mind that a complete understanding of human behavior, including deviant behavior, requires the inclusion of biological and psychological factors along with social factors (Gove, 1994). For example, both biology and psychology have contributed a good deal to our understanding of *schizophrenia*—a severely debilitating form of mental illness that affects about 1 percent of the population. Biologists and psychologists have shown that hereditary factors predispose individuals to some forms of schizophrenia. Studies show that among identical twins (who share 100 percent of their genes), if one twin is schizophrenic, the other has a 50 percent chance of being schizophrenic (Cockerham, 1996).

Yet an understanding of the biological and psychological factors involved in schizophrenia

does not provide us with the full story. We also need to take into account sociological factors. Consider the following example. A man living in the Ozark Mountains has a vision in which God speaks to him, and he begins preaching to his relatives and neighbors. People say he has a “calling.” His reputation as a prophet and healer spreads, but when he ventures into St. Louis and attempts to hold a prayer meeting—blocking traffic at a downtown thoroughfare during rush hour—he is arrested. When the man tells the police officers about his conversations with God, they take him to a mental hospital where attending psychiatrists say he is “schizophrenic” and hospitalize him (Slotkin, 1955). Thus, we return full circle to sociological concerns. Again we are reminded that deviance is not a property inherent in behavior but a property conferred upon it by social definitions.

In this section, we depart from our usual consideration of the functionalist, interactionist, and conflict perspectives to discuss five specific theories of deviance that have emerged from these perspectives: the anomie, cultural transmission, conflict, labeling, and control theories. As you will see, each theory of deviance has a connection to the basic reasoning in the three theoretical perspectives we use in this book. Anomie and control grew out of *functionalism*, cultural transmission and labeling emerged from *symbolic interactionism*, and conflict theory is the application of the *conflict perspective* to deviance.

Anomie Theory

As we noted earlier in the chapter, Émile Durkheim (1893/1964, 1897/1951) contended that deviance can be functional for a society. But he also realized that deviance is simultaneously dysfunctional and made another contribution to our understanding of deviance with his idea of **anomie**—a social condition in which people find it difficult to guide their behavior by norms that they experience as weak, unclear, or conflicting. As Durkheim pointed out, anomie is a common occurrence when people's expectations about rewards and gratifications are not

closely matched by what they actually receive. In a gold rush, for example, many people believe that they can become wealthy overnight. The norms that bind people to their conventional lives become weak, and as a result, some people abandon their families and jobs, travel long distances in search of riches, and set up nontraditional communities that promote crime, violence, prostitution, and general disorder. Similarly, when an economy collapses and few jobs are available, the rewards that people are used to receiving are no longer available, the norms that have governed people's work and family lives weaken, and deviance, including crime and delinquency, increases.

▲ Merton's Theory of Structural Strain

Robert K. Merton's theory of structural strain is an adaptation of Durkheim's anomie theory that emerged from the *functionalist* perspective (Liska and Messner, 1999). Merton (1968) built on Durkheim's ideas and linked them to American life. He said that for large numbers of Americans, worldly success—especially as it finds expression in material *wealth*—has become a cultural goal. However, only certain *means*—most commonly securing a good education and acquiring high-paying jobs—are the institutionalized and approved ways to achieve success. There might not be a problem if all Americans had equal access to these institutionalized means for realizing monetary success, but this is not the case. The poor and minorities often find themselves handicapped by little formal education and few economic resources.

Americans who internalize the goal of material success but who do not have access to the institutionalized means are pushed by strong social structural strains toward the use of unconventional means. They cannot achieve the culturally approved goals by using the institutionalized means for attaining them. One solution to this dilemma is to obtain the prestige-laden ends by any means whatsoever, including vice and crime.

Merton emphasized that a “lack of opportunity” and an exaggerated material emphasis

are not enough to produce strains toward deviance. A society with a comparatively rigid class or caste structure may lack opportunity and simultaneously extol wealth—the medieval feudal system serves as a case in point. Only when a society extols common symbols of success for the entire population, while structurally restricting the access of large numbers of people to the approved means for acquiring these symbols, is antisocial behavior generated.

Merton identifies five responses to the ends-means dilemma, four of them deviant adaptations to conditions of anomie (see Figure 5.1).

Conformity. Conformity will be common in a society in which people accept the cultural goal of material success and the institutionalized means to achieve this goal are available. Such behavior is the bedrock of a stable and properly functioning society.

Innovation. In innovation, individuals hold fast to the culturally emphasized goals of success, but because the institutionalized means to achieve the goals are not available, they pursue their goals in innovative ways. Such people may engage in prostitution, peddle drugs, forge checks, swindle, embezzle, steal, burglarize, rob, or extort to secure money and purchase the symbols of success.

Ritualism. Ritualism involves losing touch with success goals while abiding compulsively by the institutionalized means. For instance, the ends of the organization become irrelevant for many zealous bureaucrats. Instead, they cultivate the means for their own sake, making a fetish of regulations and red tape (see Chapter 4).

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Retreatism. In retreatism individuals reject both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means without substituting new norms. For example, skid row alcoholics, drug addicts, vagabonds, and derelicts have dropped out of society; they “are in society but not of it.”

Modes of Adaptation	Cultural Goals	Institutionalized Means
I Conformity	+	+
II Innovation	+	–
III Ritualism	–	+
IV Retreatism	–	–
V Rebellion	±	±

+ = Acceptance

– = Rejection

± = Rejection of prevailing values and substitution of new values

Figure 5.1

Merton's Typology of Modes of Individual Adaptation to Anomie

Source: Adapted with the permission of The Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster from *Social Theory and Social Structure* by Robert K. Merton. Copyright © 1949, 1957 by The Free Press; copyright renewed 1977, 1985 by Robert K. Merton.

Rebellion. Rebels reject both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means and substitute new norms for them. Such individuals withdraw their allegiance from existing social arrangements and transfer their loyalties to new groups with new ideologies. Radical social movements on the right and left, such as the militia movement and radical socialism, are good illustrations of this type of adaptation.

▲ Applying Structural Strain Theory

Sociologists have applied structural strain theory to a variety of problems. In a classic study, Albert Cohen (1955) found that lower-class boys often find themselves failing in middle-class school environments that reward verbal skills, neatness, and an ability to defer gratification. The boys respond by banding together in juvenile gangs where they evolve “macho” standards that reward “toughness,” “street smarts,” and “troublemaking”—standards that allow them to succeed. Sociologists Steven Messner and Richard Rosenfeld (1997a, 1997b) extended Merton’s structural strain theory. They argue that the strain toward deviance,

particularly crime, is stronger when the economy is the dominant institution in society and when social status is primarily dependent on performance in economic roles. Crime rates are particularly high in societies where people are completely dependent on the labor market for resources necessary for survival; on the other hand, societies that guarantee an acceptable level of income regardless of participation in the labor market have less crime.

▲ Evaluating Structural Strain Theory

Merton’s theory of structural strain tells us a good deal about monetary crime (Sagarin, 1975) and particularly about how individual adaptations to variation and change in the structure of opportunities (i.e., means) in society can influence rates of deviance and crime (Shoemaker, 2000). However, critics have pointed out that not all deviance stems from gaps between goals and means (Cohen, 1965). As we will see, people sometimes learn to deviate. If subcultural values and norms are different from those in the mainstream, when people conform to their subculture, they may be in violation of some important

societal norms. Violations of fish and game laws among Native Americans, common-law marriage among some ethnic minorities, cockfighting among some groups with southern rural backgrounds, and the production of moonshine liquor among some Appalachian groups are all examples of such subcultural deviance. In sum, the problem may not be anomie or structural strain but a conflict of values.

Cultural Transmission Theory

Structural strain theory provides us with insight into how society may unwittingly contribute to deviance by the way it structures its goals and opportunities. A number of other sociologists have emphasized the similarities between the way deviant behavior is acquired and the way in which other behavior is acquired (Schwendinger and Schwendinger, 1985). One of the first was French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), who in the late 19th century formulated a theory of imitation to explain deviance. Tarde, who had spent time as a provincial magistrate and director of criminal statistics for the French Ministry of Justice, was impressed by the importance of imitation in human behavior. He argued that criminals, like “good” people, imitate the ways of individuals they have met, known, or heard about. In contrast to law-abiding people, however, they imitate other criminals.

During the 1920s and 1930s, sociologists at the University of Chicago were struck by the concentration of high delinquency rates in some areas of Chicago (Thrasher, 1927; Shaw, 1930; Shaw and McKay, 1942; Sampson and Groves, 1989). In a series of investigations, they found that neighborhood delinquency rates remained much the same over time despite the changing composition of the neighborhoods (Shoemaker, 2000). They concluded that delinquent and criminal behaviors are in part a product of economic conditions, but are also culturally transmitted from one generation of juveniles to the next. As new ethnic groups

enter a neighborhood, their children learn the delinquent patterns from the youth already there. Hence, the Chicago sociologists contended that youths become delinquent because they associate and make friends with other juveniles who are already delinquent.

▲ Sutherland’s Theory of Differential Association

A classic statement of the cultural transmission of deviance is Edwin H. Sutherland’s **differential association** theory. Sutherland (1939) was a sociologist associated with the Chicago tradition of sociology. His theory builds on the *interactionist perspective* and emphasizes the part social interaction plays in molding people’s attitudes and behavior. Sutherland said that individuals learn deviance primarily in intimate groups of deviant others, such as small groups of friends (Shoemaker, 2000). People learn not only how to be deviant—for example, how to mug people, how to smoke marijuana, and how to apply graffiti—but also they learn attitudes favorable to deviance. Of course, people who are involved in deviant groups are also usually involved in more conventional relationships in their families, at school, at work, in church, and in other settings. Sutherland argued that if the definitions favorable to deviance outweigh the definitions unfavorable to deviance learned in other situations, deviance is likely to occur.

The differential association theory provides a sophisticated version of the old adage that “good companions make good children; bad companions make bad children.” When parents move to a new neighborhood to get their children away from gang influences, they are applying the principle of differential association. So are parole officers who try to restrict the associations of the paroled prisoners they supervise. By the same token, the theory suggests that imprisonment may be counterproductive when juveniles are incarcerated with experienced criminals.

Drink 'Til You're Sick: What Explains College Binge Drinking?

Binge drinking—five drinks at a sitting for males, four for females—is on the rise in the United States (Naimi et al., 2003). Although 69 percent of binge-drinking episodes occur among adults ages 26 and older, binge-drinking rates—the number of binges in a given time period—are highest for 18- to 25-year-olds. Indeed, close to half of the college students who drink say that they usually binge when they drink and that getting drunk is a good reason for drinking (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). Why is binge drinking so common among college students? No carefully designed studies have been done to answer this question, but available evidence supports both control theory and differential association theory.

Let's look at differential association first. In spite of some recent attempts at change, many campus fraternal organizations seem to encourage excessive drinking (Sperber, 2000). As we can see from the figure, students

who are members of fraternities and sororities are much more likely to binge drink than are students in general. And for those who live in fraternity or sorority houses, the percentage of binge drinking is even higher (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). Differential association is even more important for underage drinkers, who are six times more likely to binge drink if they live in a fraternity or sorority house than if they live in a traditional single-sex dormitory (Wechsler, Kuo et al., 2000). Fraternal organizations are not the only social contexts that facilitate excessive drinking in college. Despite being exposed to more alcohol education programs than other students are, student athletes—both male and female—are significantly more likely to binge drink than are nonathletes (Nelson and Wechsler, 2001). A primary reason for this, consistent with differential association theory, is that college athletes are more likely than other students to have friends who are binge drinkers,

who value partying and sports, and who spend a great deal of time socializing.

What about control theory? Students who are married are far less likely to binge drink, and control theory explains this by pointing to the process of commitment. People who are married have strongly invested in social relationships that could be threatened, damaged, or destroyed by deviant behavior such as binge drinking.

No one theory provides a complete explanation for deviance, and survey data such as that presented here leave us with many unanswered questions. Do students drink excessively because they live in fraternities and sororities, or do they choose to live in fraternities and sororities because they like to drink? Do married students drink less because they are married, or are those who drink little or no alcohol more likely to marry? Carefully designed experiments or surveys that collect data from high

▲ Applying Cultural Transmission Theory

Recent studies of differential association have provided strong support for the theory (Matsueda, 1988; Shoemaker, 2000). Sociologist James Orcutt (1987), for example, found that having marijuana-smoking friends and favorable attitudes about marijuana are strong predictors of marijuana smoking. However, just as Sutherland's theory suggests, favorable attitudes lead to marijuana smoking only when they are stronger than unfavorable attitudes. Haynie's (2001) study showed that the impact of friends' delinquency on one's own delinquency is much

greater when one is popular and central to the group and where the density of ties among friends is high. Box 5.2 shows how differential association helps explain college binge drinking.

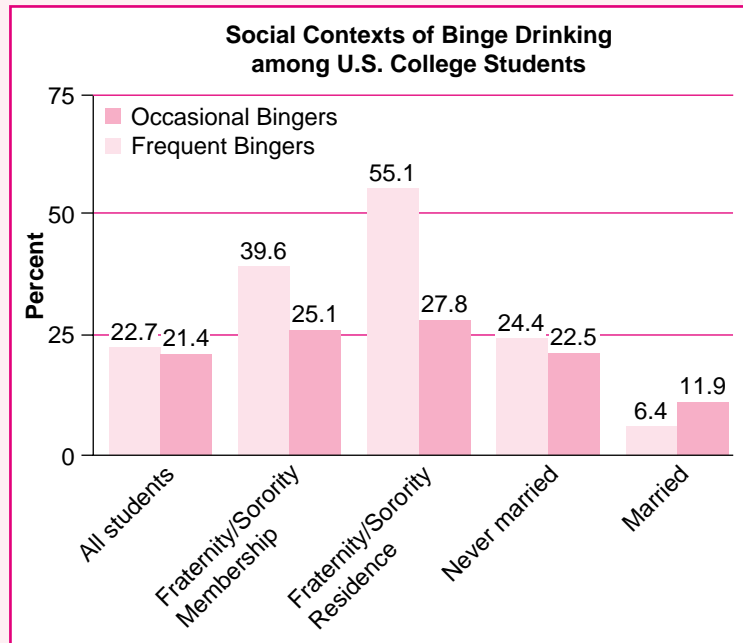
▲ Evaluating Cultural Transmission Theory

Cultural transmission theory shows that socially disapproved behaviors can arise through the same processes of socialization as socially approved ones (Kaplan, Johnson, and Bailey, 1987). It is a particularly useful tool for understanding why deviance varies from group to group and from society to society (Matsueda

school and college students at several points in time might help us sort out these questions with more certainty.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do these studies support your experiences or the experiences of other students on your campus?
2. How could labeling theory be used to challenge the implicit claim made in this box that binge drinking is deviant?
3. Which theory or theories of deviant behavior offer an understanding of binge drinking that could be used to develop strategies to control it? How and why?



and Heimer, 1987; Crane, 1991). However, the theory is not applicable to some forms of deviance, particularly those in which neither the techniques nor the appropriate definitions and attitudes are acquired from other deviants. Illustrations include naive check forgers; occasional, incidental, and situational offenders; nonprofessional shoplifters; non-career-type criminals; and people who commit “crimes of passion.” Further, not everyone who has deviant associates is deviant. Different individuals may interpret the same social relationships differently, producing different outcomes.

Although most of the emphasis in cultural transmission theory has been on how criminal behavior is learned from friends, relatives are probably also important. Most incarcerated juvenile delinquents, and about a third of such adult offenders, have immediate family members who also have been in jail or prison. The more severe and chronic the criminal behavior, the more likely that an offender has relatives who have been imprisoned (Butterfield, 1992). More research is needed to determine if this association is due to learning (as cultural transmission theory suggests), to shared environment, to shared genetic inheritance, or to some combination of these factors.



According to differential association theory, deviant behavior occurs because the definitions favorable to deviance outweigh unfavorable definitions. Those who want marijuana legalized clearly do not share the definitions of marijuana smoking common in mainstream society.

Conflict Theory

Cultural transmission theorists emphasize that individuals who are immersed in different subcultures will exhibit somewhat different behaviors because they are socialized in different traditions. Conflict theorists argue that the most important question is, “Which group will be able to translate its values into the rules of a society and make these rules stick?”

Although in recent decades the conflict approach has taken many new directions (Hagan, 1989; Messner and Krohn, 1990; Grant and Martinez, 1997), its early roots can be traced to the Marxist tradition and the conflict perspective that

grew out of it (see Chapter 1). pp. 20–22
 According to orthodox Marxism, a capitalist ruling class exploits and robs the masses, yet avoids punishment for its crimes. Individuals victimized by capitalist oppression are driven by their struggle to survive to commit acts that the ruling class brands as criminal (Bonger, 1936; Liska and Messner, 1999). Marxists regard other types of deviance—alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, family violence, sexual immorality, and prostitution—as products of the moral degeneration and estrangement fostered by the oppression and exploitation of the poor, women, and African Americans or other minorities.

▲ Quinney's Theory of Class, State, and Crime

Because Marx wrote little about crime, it fell to a 20th-century U.S. sociologist, Richard Quinney (1974, 1980), to write a now-classic statement of the conflict theory of crime. Quinney said that the U.S. legal system reflects the interests and ideologies of the ruling capitalist class. Law makes illegal certain behavior that is offensive to the morality of the powerful and that threatens their privileges and property:

Law is the tool of the ruling class. Criminal law, in particular, is a device made and used by the ruling class to preserve the existing order. In the United States, the state—and its legal system—exist to secure and perpetuate the capitalist interests of the ruling class. (Quinney, 1974:8)

Quinney (1980:39) contended that if we are “to understand crime we have to understand the development of the political economy of capitalist society.” Since the state serves the interests of the capitalist class, crime is ultimately a class-based political act embedded in capitalist social arrangements.

In striving to maintain itself against the internal contradictions eating away at its foundations, capitalism commits *crimes of domination* (Quinney, 1980:57). Indeed, “one of the contradictions of capitalism is that some of its

laws must be violated in order to secure the existing system.” These crimes include those committed by corporations and range from price fixing to pollution of the environment. But there are also *crimes of government* committed by the officials of the capitalist state, Watergate being a well-publicized instance. In contrast, much of the criminal behavior of ordinary people, or *predatory crime*—burglary, robbery, drug dealing, and hustling of various sorts—is “pursued out of the need to survive” in a capitalist social order. *Personal crime*—murder, assault, and rape—is “pursued by those who are already brutalized by the conditions of capitalism.” And then there are *crimes of resistance* in which workers engage in sloppy work and clandestine acts of sabotage against employers.

▲ Applying Conflict Theory

Conflict theory has led social scientists to investigate the ways in which the making and administration of law are biased by powerful interests (Jacobs and Helms, 1996, 1997). Numerous sociologists have noted that crime is defined primarily in terms of offenses against property (burglary, robbery, auto theft, and vandalism), whereas corporate crime is deemphasized (Sutherland, 1949; Coleman, 1987). Moreover, the penalty for crimes against property is imprisonment, whereas the most common form of penalty for business-related offenses is a monetary fine. In the most comprehensive study of its kind, Clinard and Yeager (1980) found that over a 2-year period, the federal government charged nearly two-thirds of the Fortune 500 corporations (the 500 largest U.S. corporations) with violations of the law. Estimates of the yearly cost of such crimes run as high as \$200 billion, compared with \$3 to \$4 billion a year for conventional street crimes (Clinard and Meier, 1995). This basic problem appears not to have improved over time (Clinard, 1990). In 1994, for example, at the end of a 7-year investigation the 10 largest defense contractors serving the U.S. government were fined more than \$250 million for engaging in fraud, and 54 corporate employ-

ees involved were convicted of crimes (Clinard and Meier, 1995). And while the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) keeps track of every murder, rape, assault, and auto theft reported in the United States, no agency keeps a record of crimes committed by corporations themselves.

▲ Evaluating Conflict Theory

Though there may be much in conflict theory that is true (Liska and Messner, 1999), statements of the theory are not always clear (Hawkins, 1987). In addition, it is sometimes hard to tell which specific individuals or groups are covered by such terms as “ruling elites,” “governing classes,” and “powerful interests.” In addition, research results are not always consistent with the theory. For example, the theory predicts that “When sanctions are imposed, the most severe sanctions will be imposed on persons in the lowest social class” (Chamblis and Seidman, 1971:475). Some studies have found few (Bernstein, Kelly, and Doyle, 1977) or no (Chiricos and Waldo, 1975) links between the class level of criminal offenders and the sentences received or between unemployment and incarceration (D’Alessio and Stolzenberg, 1995); other studies have found the relationship to be substantial (Lizotte, 1978; Bridges, Crutchfield, and Simpson, 1987); and still others have found that the relationship depends on specific circumstances (Hagan, Bernstein, and Albonetti, 1980; Humphrey and Fogarty, 1987). Although corporations often seek to influence legislation and public policy about deviance, they do not necessarily predominate over other interest groups (Hagan, 1980, 1989). Clearly, additional research is needed. Conflict propositions cannot be accepted as articles of faith but should be more clearly articulated and more carefully investigated.

Labeling Theory

Conflict theorists contend that people often find themselves at odds with one another because their interests diverge and their values clash. Some people gain the power and ascendancy to

translate their values and normative preferences into the rules governing institutional life. They then successfully place negative labels on violators of these rules. A number of sociologists took this core notion, expanded on it using ideas from the *interactionist perspective*, and developed labeling theory. Labeling theorists are interested in the process by which some individuals come to be tagged as “deviants,” begin to think of themselves as deviants, and enter deviant careers.

▲ Edwin Lemert, Howard S. Becker, and Kai T. Erikson: The Social Reaction to Deviance Approach

The three sociologists responsible for making the classic statements of labeling theory—Edwin M. Lemert (1951, 1972), Howard S. Becker (1963), and Kai T. Erikson (1962, 1966)—make a number of points. First, they contend that no act by itself is inherently criminal or noncriminal, deviant or not deviant. The “badness” of an act does not stem from its intrinsic content but from the way other people define and react to it. Deviance is always a matter of social definition. Similarly, according to labeling theory, a person who engages in deviant behavior is deviant only if he or she has been so labeled.

Second, labeling theorists point out that we all engage in deviant behavior by violating some norms. They reject the popular idea that human beings can be divided into those who are normal and those who are pathological. For example, some of us exceed the speed limit, experiment with cocaine, shoplift, cheat on a homework assignment, sample homosexual publications, underreport our income to income tax authorities, swim in the nude, become intoxicated, commit vandalism in celebration of a football victory, or trespass on private property. Labeling theorists call these actions **primary deviance**—behavior that violates social norms but usually goes unnoticed by the agents of social control.

Third, labeling theorists say that whether people’s acts will be seen as deviant depends both on what they do and on what other people do about it. In short, deviance depends on which rules society chooses to enforce, in which situations, and with respect to which people. Not all individuals are arrested for speeding, shoplifting, underreporting income on their tax returns, trespassing, or the like. African Americans may be censured for doing what whites are “allowed” to do, women censured for doing what men are “allowed” to do, certain individuals censured for doing what their friends are also doing, and some may be labeled as deviants even though they have not violated a norm but simply because they are so accused (e.g., they appear “effeminate” and are tagged as “gay”). Of critical importance is the social audience and whether or not it labels the person a deviant.

Fourth, labeling people as deviants has consequences for them. It tends to set up conditions conducive to **secondary deviance**—deviance individuals adopt in response to the reactions of other individuals. In brief, labeling theorists contend that new deviance is manufactured by the hostile reactions of rule makers and rule abiders. An individual is publicly identified, stereotyped, and denounced as a “delinquent,” “mental fruitcake,” “forger,” “rapist,” “drug addict,” “bum,” “pervert,” or “criminal.” The label serves to lock the individual into an outsider status. Such a master status overrides other statuses in shaping a person’s social experiences and results in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Rule breakers come to accept their status as a particular kind of deviant and organize their lives around this master status.

Fifth, people labeled “deviant” typically find themselves rejected and isolated by “law-abiding” people. Friends and relatives may withdraw from them. In some cases they may even be institutionalized in prisons or mental hospitals. Rejection and isolation push stigmatized individuals toward a deviant group with

other individuals who share a common fate. Participation in a deviant subculture becomes a way of coping with frustrating situations and for finding emotional support and personal acceptance. In turn, joining a deviant group solidifies a deviant self-image, fosters a deviant lifestyle, and weakens ties to the law-abiding community.

In sum, labeling theorists say that the societal response to an act, not the behavior itself, determines deviance. When the behavior of people is seen as departing from prevailing norms, it sets off a chain of social reactions. Other individuals define, evaluate, and label the behavior. Norm violators then take these labels into account as they shape their actions. In many cases they evolve an identity consistent with a label and embark upon a career of deviance.

▲ Applying Labeling Theory

Unlike structural strain and cultural transmission theory, labeling theory does not focus on why some individuals engage in deviant behavior. Rather, labeling theory helps us to understand why the same act may or may not be considered deviant, depending on the situation and the characteristics of the individuals who are involved.

Sociologist William J. Chambliss (1973) employed labeling theory to explain the differing perceptions and definitions that community members had of the behavior of two teenage gangs. At Hanibal High School, Chambliss observed the activities of the Saints, a gang of eight white upper-class boys, and the Roughnecks, a gang of six lower-class white boys. Although the Saints engaged in as many delinquent acts as the Roughnecks, it was the Roughnecks who were in “constant trouble” and universally considered to be “delinquent.” The community, the school, and the police related to the Saints as though they were good, upstanding youths with bright futures, but they treated the Roughnecks as young punks headed for trouble.

A number of factors contributed to the differential treatment given the two groups. For one thing, the Saints had access to automobiles

and engaged in out-of-town escapades that were less visible to Hanibal citizens than those undertaken by the Roughnecks in the center of town. For another, when the Saints were confronted with an accusing police officer, they were apologetic and penitent, whereas the Roughnecks were hostile and belligerent. Finally, police officers knew that irate and influential upper-middle-class parents would come to the aid of their youngsters, whereas powerless lower-class parents would have to acquiesce in the law’s definition of their son’s behavior.

Chambliss (1973) concluded that when the community responded to the Roughnecks as boys in trouble, the boys’ pattern of deviancy was reinforced. As their self-conception as deviants became more firmly entrenched, they began to try new and more extreme acts of deviance. Their growing alienation led to greater disrespect and hostility, which increased the community’s negative attitude toward them.

▲ Evaluating Labeling Theory

Evidence on the operations of social control organizations often supports labeling theory. From 1880 to 1920, unprecedented numbers of Americans were confined to mental hospitals. But the labeling perspective showed that this was not due to Americans becoming suddenly mad, but rather was caused by a boom in state mental hospital construction and increased funding of state departments of mental hygiene (Grob, 1983; Sutton, 1991). The capacity to confine people had increased.

Research also shows that once people are hospitalized for mental illness, some feel stigmatized by the label “mental patient,” and this may make reintegration into the world outside the hospital more difficult (Link et al., 1989, 1991).

Labeling theory also has its critics. While it may help us understand how individuals are labeled as deviants and how labels can promote secondary deviance, labeling theory tells us little about the initial causes of deviant

behavior. Indeed, in many forms of deviance it is the behavior or condition of the people themselves that is primarily responsible for their being labeled deviant. For example, a vast majority of people who are hospitalized for mental illness suffer acute disturbance associated with internal psychological or neurological malfunctioning (Gove, 1970) that cannot be explained solely in terms of the reactions of other people.

Another criticism of labeling theory is its almost exclusive focus on societal reactions in the definition of deviant behavior. If behavior is not deviance unless it is labeled, we cannot classify secret and undetected deviance, such as the embezzlement of funds, the failure to pay income taxes, and the clandestine sexual molestation of children. Clearly, deviance cannot be understood without reference to norms.

Control Theory

The theories discussed above are all attempts to explain why people deviate. Control theory turns the question around and asks why people *do not* deviate (Reckless, 1961, 1967; Hirschi, 1969; Shoemaker, 2000). Though we are frequently concerned that there is too much deviance in our society, what is truly remarkable is how much conformity there is. As you walk to and attend class each day, your behavior and that of others around you almost always fits within a narrow and predictable pattern. Most of us conform most of the time; even “deviants” conform most of the time. Such rigid control is particularly remarkable given that the possibilities for human behavior are virtually infinite, limited only by physical laws and people’s imaginations.

Control theory’s answer to why people conform is an outgrowth of *functionalist* ideas. People conform because they are integrated into mainstream institutions. Societies that have properly functioning institutions will have low deviance.

▲ Travis Hirschi and the Elements of the Social Bond

Travis Hirschi’s study (1969) of juvenile delinquency in Richmond, California, provided a classic statement of control theory. Hirschi’s argument is that young people are more likely to conform if their bond to society is strong. This bond has four parts: attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief.

Attachment is the process of being involved in social relationships with others. All social relationships entail some degree of control for all participants. Control is more likely where the psychological and emotional connections among group members are high and members care about one another’s opinions (Shoemaker, 2000). Being involved in a family, having friends in the community, and being a member of a club are all examples of attachments that reduce the chance that deviance will occur.

By *involvement*, Hirschi meant involvement in conventional activities. One way to keep people from being deviant is to get them to spend their time conforming. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, youth fellowship, band, and athletics are only a few of the myriad activities that parents, schools, religious organizations, and neighborhood associations create to take up the leisure time of children and adolescents. A main purpose of these activities is to provide an alternative to drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, vandalism, and crime.

Commitment refers to the strength of the investment people have made in conventional social ties and relationships. People who have strong commitments in their social lives are not likely to deviate because of the losses they may incur if they are identified as deviant. A student who aspires to become a police officer and who has earned the trust and respect of teachers, school administrators, and local law enforcement officials is unlikely to become a drug dealer; she would risk losing the benefits of the investments she has made in pursuit of her career.

Finally, the bond to society is cemented by *belief* in conventional values and ideas about morality. The less people believe in the conventional values of society, the more likely it is that deviance will occur. If young people do not believe in the conventional idea that having a job or running a legitimate business is the acceptable way to make money, they are more likely to attempt to get money in criminal ways.

▲ Applying Control Theory

Because the essence of control theory is that people will be less likely to deviate if they are integrated into mainstream institutions, much research on control theory has focused on the controlling power of three primary social institutions: religion, the family, and education (Shoemaker, 2000).

Somewhat surprisingly, a number of studies have found that religion seems to have little or no impact on deviant behavior (Jensen and Rojek, 1992; Hirschi and Stark, 1969). The reason is not that religion is ineffective in social control, but that religion is only one of a number of social institutions involved in controlling behavior and therefore it is hard to see its impact. It is easier to see the controlling effect of religion where there is low consensus about the deviant nature of acts; nearly everyone agrees that murder is wrong, but fewer people would argue strongly that smoking marijuana is wrong. Religion does control deviant behavior, and its effect is clearly seen where competing secular controls are weak (Tittle and Welch, 1983; Burkett and White, 1974).

Most studies of the family and deviant behavior have been concerned with young people. These studies have shown that intact families and good family relations decrease the chances of delinquent behavior among youths (Shoemaker, 2000). However, the effect of intact families is relatively weak and has not been found in all studies. The more important factor is not family structure (broken versus intact), but the way parents communicate and get along with

their children (Yablonsky and Haskell, 1988; Cernkovich and Giordano, 1987).

Involvement in schooling controls deviant behavior not only because it takes up people's time in conventional pursuits, but also because it promotes conventional attachments, commitment, and beliefs. Hirschi (1969) found that attachment to school and having positive relationships with teachers reduced the chance of delinquency. More recent studies continue to find a positive influence in schools. Cernkovich and Giordano (1992) found that attachment and commitment to school reduced delinquency, although this effect was somewhat less among black males. Zingraff's 1994 study showed that schooling is an important deterrent to delinquency even when family relations are poor or abusive. And Crutchfield and Pitchford (1997) showed that among people 18 years and over, being a student reduces the likelihood of criminal involvement.

▲ Evaluating Control Theory

Though much of the research on deviance and delinquency is in accord with control theory (Shoemaker, 2000), some problems remain. First, the social bond does not control deviance equally well across social groups (Cernkovich and Giordano, 1992; Gardner and Shoemaker, 1989) or as well in other societies as in the United States (Rahav, 1976; Tanioka and Glaser, 1991; Hartjen and Kethineini, 1993). Second, factors other than the bond to society are clearly important; even the best studies show that no more than 50 percent of delinquent behavior is explained by factors emphasized in control theory (Shoemaker, 2000). Third, in some circumstances elements of the social bond are not associated with reduced deviance. For example, as differential association theory indicates, when attachment is to delinquent peers, we observe more deviance. Involvement in conventional activities likewise is not related to less deviance if it allows unstructured time with no authority present

(Osgood et al., 1996), as members of traveling high school marching bands and athletic teams often attest. Indeed, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the largest-ever national study of adolescents, showed that spending unsupervised time with friends is much more closely linked to drinking, smoking, using weapons, attempting suicide, and having sex than are race, income, or family structure (Stepp, 2000; see also Blum et al., 2000). Finally, control theory cannot explain deviance that occurs among those who are fully integrated into mainstream society. Those implicated in the deviant acts of white-collar, corporate, and government crime are often the employed, married, churchgoing, respectable middle class.

None of the theories of deviance we have examined provides a complete explanation of deviant behavior. Each one highlights for us an important source of deviance (for example, see Hoffmann, 2003). Deviant behavior takes many forms, so we must approach each form in its own right to determine the specific factors involved. We turn next to a consideration of crime, a form of deviance that is particularly prevalent in modern societies.

Crime and the Criminal Justice System

Within modern societies, law is a crucial element in social control. Unlike informal norms such as folkways and mores, laws are rules enforced by the state. As we defined it at the beginning of the chapter, *deviance* is behavior that a considerable number of people view as reprehensible and beyond the limits of tolerance. **Crime** is an act of deviance that is prohibited by law. As we have seen, not all deviant acts are crimes; they may break rules defined only by folkways and mores. As with other forms of deviance, there is nothing inherent in an act that makes it criminal. For an

act to be considered criminal, the state must undertake a political process of illegalizing—or *criminalizing*—it. Because anything can be a crime if a law is established making it illegal, an infinite variety of acts can be crimes.

What crimes have in common is not that they are necessarily acts we regard as immoral or wicked. For example, many Americans consider it no more “evil” to cheat on their income taxes than did their parents or grandparents to purchase and consume illegal alcoholic beverages during Prohibition. Rather, the distinguishing property of crime is that people who violate the law are liable to be arrested, tried, pronounced guilty, and deprived of their lives, liberty, or property. In brief, they are likely to become caught up in the elaborate social machinery of the **criminal justice system**—the reactive agencies of the state that include the police, the courts, and prisons. So common are “scrapes with the law” that U.S. men have nearly a 50 percent chance of being arrested at least once in their lives (Uggen, 2000).

In this section we will describe various forms of crime and discuss the measurement of crime. We will examine the relationship between drugs and crime and consider the criminal behavior of women. Finally, we will describe the components of the criminal justice system and take a look at the purposes of imprisonment.

Forms of Crime

In this section we consider a number of forms of crime within the United States: violent crime, juvenile crime, organized crime, white-collar and corporate crime, crime committed by government, and victimless crime.

▲ Violent and Property Crime

The Federal Bureau of Investigation annually reports on eight types of crime in its Uniform Crime Reports. These offenses are called **index crimes** and consist of four categories of violent

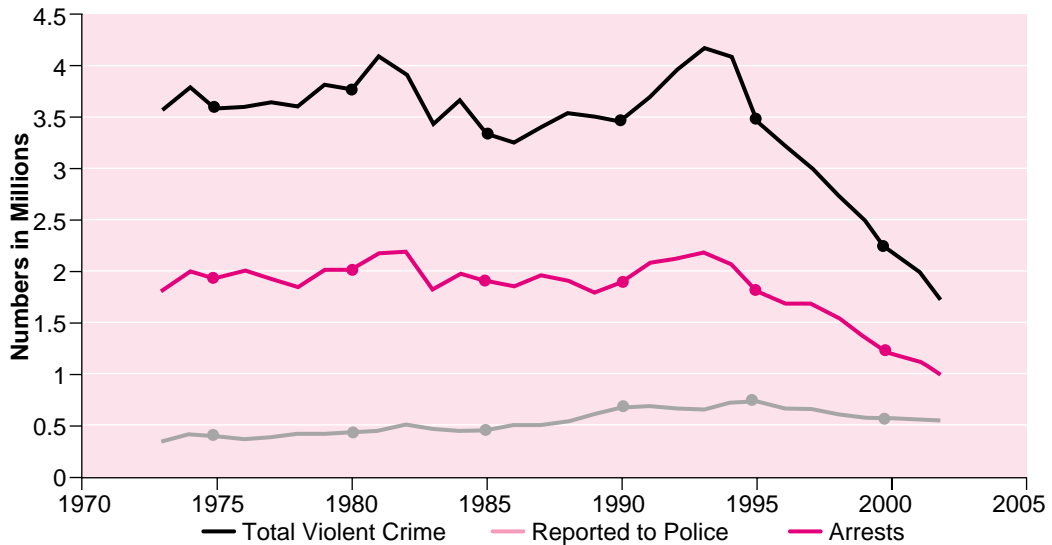


Figure 5.2

Numbers of Violent Crimes, Violent Crimes Reported to Police, and Arrests for Violent Crimes in the U.S., 1973–2001

The crime rate has been declining since the early 1990s and in 2001 was the lowest recorded since 1973.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (<http://www/ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/cv2.htm>).

crime against people—murder, rape, robbery, and assault—and four categories of crimes against property—burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Index crimes are declining in the United States, with property crimes dropping steadily since 1974 and violent crime since 1994 (Rennison, 2002a). In 2001, the rates of overall violent crime, simple assault, overall property crime, burglary, and theft were the lowest ever recorded by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which was initiated in 1973 (see Figure 5.2). Rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and motor vehicle theft rates also were at their lowest points in 2000 and 2001. Between 1993 and 2001, property crime dropped by 48 percent, violent crimes by 50 percent, and personal theft by 65 percent. Survey respondents' attitudes reflect this drop: in 1994, 29 percent of a random sample named crime and violence as the most important problem in their community,

compared to only 12 percent in 2001 (Pastore and Maguire, 2003).

In spite of this reduction, there is still a large amount of crime in the United States. In 2000 there were 15,517 murders in the United States. The rate of murder and manslaughter combined was 5.5 per 100,000 people. The total number of criminal victimizations—both property and violent crimes—in 2001 was 24.2 million. Violent crimes in the United States decreased to 25 per 1,000 people, and property crimes dropped to 167 per 1,000 households. One rape or sexual assault per 1,000 people was recorded, along with 9 motor vehicle thefts per 1,000 households and 5 aggravated and 16 simple assaults per 1,000 people (Rennison, 2002a).

These decreases in violent crime during the 1990s represent a greater decline than at any time since World War II and resulted in many headlines and discussions on television talk shows. While significant, the rates of decline

during the 1990s were not as great as the rates of increase experienced during the 1960s and early 1970s (LaFree, 1999). What accounts for the drop in violent and property crime over recent decades? Pinpointing the causes of crime trends (“booms” and “busts”) is difficult because the kinds of data necessary to draw such conclusions have not been collected over a long enough time period. But various explanations have been suggested. Some authors believe that changes in drug subcultures are linked to changes in violent crime rates, with the cocaine/crack subculture of the 1980s responsible for more crime than the marijuana subculture of the 1990s. Others associate the crime rate decreases with higher rates of incarceration, more effective gun policies, changes in policing (Bartollas, 2003), a stronger economy, and growing family stability (LaFree, 1999).

Crime data provide information about how crimes occur. For example, 44 percent of murder victims in 2000 knew their assailants, and more than three-quarters of all murder victims are male (Rennison, 2002a). Twenty-nine percent of all murders were precipitated by arguments, and firearms were the weapons used in 66 percent of all murders in 2000. In rapes and sexual assaults, 66 percent of victims know their assailant. Seventy percent of female assault victims know their assailant, 22 percent of them intimately; in other words, women’s assailants are likely to be husbands, boyfriends, and acquaintances. Among male assault victims, 49 percent know their assailants, but only 2 percent are intimately involved with their assailants. Crime victimization rates also show that victims of violent crime are likely to be male, poor, urban, young, and black or Hispanic (see Table 5.1).

Despite its declining crime rate, the United States has a reputation for violent crime. Although its property crime rate is similar to or lower than the rate of property crime in other industrialized nations, the U.S. violent crime rate is higher than that of Western Europe or Aus-

Table 5.1

Rates of Violent Crime and Personal Theft, 2001

Victims per 1,000 Persons*	
Gender	
Male	27
Female	23
Age	
12–15	55
16–19	56
20–24	45
25–34	29
35–49	23
50–64	10
65+	3
Race	
White	24
Black	31
Other	18
Ethnicity	
Hispanic	30
Non-Hispanic	24
Family income	
Less than \$7,500	47
\$7,500–\$14,999	37
\$15,000–\$24,999	32
\$25,000–\$34,999	29
\$35,000–\$49,999	26
\$50,000–\$74,999	21
\$75,000+	18
Residence	
Urban	33
Suburban	22
Rural	21

These crime victimization rates for rape, sexual assault, robbery, assault, and personal theft show that victims of violent crime are more likely to be male, black or Hispanic, poor, urban, and young.

Source: Rennison, Callie. 2002. *Criminal victimization 2001*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice (NCJ 194610).

*Rates are calculated per 1,000 population ages 12 and older.

tralia. Why? Social scientists Franklin Zimring and Gordon Hawkins explored the question in their 1997 book *Crime Is Not the Problem: Lethal Violence in America*. One answer they suggested is that Americans are more heavily armed than citizens of other nations so that property crimes are more likely to lead to death. Guns do not answer the question entirely, however. Even in robberies in which no guns are used, the death rate is three times higher in New York City than in London. Further, 30 percent of U.S. homicides do not involve a gun. Another explanation for the higher violent crime rate in the United States, then, is that people are more likely to have more frequent and more violent personal conflicts than in other countries.

The influence of American television and other media is often invoked as a possible explanation for high rates of violent crime. But James Q. Wilson cites historical evidence that shows that “the homicide rate in New York City has exceeded that of London by a factor of at least five *for the last two hundred years*” (Wilson, 1997:41)—during which, of course, America’s youth were not watching crime shows on TV. The assessment by Zimring and Hawkins that lots of conflict and lots of guns are responsible for a high U.S. violent crime rate fits with those of analysts who see a stable economy, family stability, and effective gun control as accounting for the recent drop in the crime rate.

▲ Juvenile Crime

We have seen that young people are more likely to be victims of crime. They also are more likely than older people to commit crime. Though persons 13 to 18 years of age represent only 8.5 percent of the population, they constitute 20.5 percent of those arrested for committing crimes (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). The peak age for property crime is 16 to 18 and for violent crime it is 18 to 19 (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Juvenile involvement in violent crime has increased over the past several decades (Bartollas, 2003). The percent-

age of people arrested for committing crimes drops steadily with increasing age. If we could prevent all crimes committed by persons under 25 years of age, much of conventional crime would be eliminated from society, though we would still have many white-collar, corporate, and government crimes and about half the homicides. With an ever-increasing number of young people in the country, however, many of whom are at high risk for delinquent behavior, some analysts predict a violent juvenile crime wave (Bartollas, 2003).

Although school crime and school violence grab big headlines, school crime has declined just as societywide levels of crime have (DeVoe et al., 2002). In the mid-1990s, 1 in 10 students reported having been a victim of crime at school. By 2001, this number had dropped from 10 percent to 6 percent. Children of school age are more than twice as likely to be crime victims outside of school (DeVoe et al., 2002). For example, only 1 percent of all homicides of youth and two-tenths of a percent of youth suicides are associated with school. Rates of nonfatal serious violent crime victimizations are 14 per 1,000 students away from school and 5 per 1,000 at school.

On the other hand, the proportion of high school students who have been threatened or injured with a weapon at school has remained steady at 7 to 9 percent since the early 1990s, despite the fact that over the same period of time the percentage of students who reported carrying a weapon dropped by half (DeVoe et al., 2002). Other sorts of problem behaviors, however, such as bullying, have increased. In 2001, 12 percent of students of middle and high school age reported that hate-related words had been used against them, 20 percent of students reported that their school has street gangs, 5 percent of high school students reported having drunk alcohol on school grounds, and nearly 30 percent said someone had “offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property” (DeVoe et al., 2002:x).

It is clear that the present system of juvenile justice has encountered substantial failures either in deterring violent crime by the young or in rehabilitating young criminals. Critics point to statistics by some researchers showing that about 7 percent of young offenders are responsible for up to three-quarters of the violent crimes committed by juveniles (Tracy, Wolfgang, and Figlio, 1990).

How are young people who commit crimes treated? In 1972, half of all juveniles taken into police custody were referred to juvenile court, and nearly half were handled within the arresting police department and released. Only 1.3 percent were referred to criminal or adult court (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). In 2000, the proportion handled within a police department and released had dropped to 20 percent, and nearly three-quarters were referred to juvenile court. Referrals to criminal or adult court rose to 7 percent. Although juveniles may end up in juvenile detention centers, they are not exempt from more serious punishment, including the death sentence. In 2001, the minimum age authorized for capital punishment was 14 for 3 states, 16 for 10 states, 17 for 4 states, and 18 for 14 states and the federal system (Snell and Maruschak, 2002). Only 2.3 percent of those currently on death row were 17 or younger at the time of their arrest; 10.8 percent were 18 to 19, and 26.6 percent were 20 to 24. Nearly two-thirds of U.S. survey respondents say that juveniles should be treated the same as adults (Pastore and Maguire, 2003).

▲ Organized Crime

Organized crime refers to large-scale bureaucratic organizations that provide illegal goods and services in public demand. Such crime is likely to arise where the state criminalizes certain activities—prostitution, drugs, pornography, gambling, and loan-sharking—that large numbers of citizens desire and for which they are willing to pay. Drug and arms trafficking by major crime organizations is the largest business in the world, bringing in between

\$700 billion and \$1 trillion a year (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004).

The most publicized crime organization has been an Italian-American syndicate, variously termed the Mafia or Cosa Nostra, which gained a substantial impetus from Prohibition. The Mafia seems to be a loose network or confederation of regional syndicates coordinated by a “commission” composed of the heads of the most powerful crime “families” (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004; Tittle and Paternoster, 2000). Organized crime is hardly an Italian monopoly, however. Chinese gangs, Colombian and Cuban drug rings, and groups of southern white moonshiners also fall under the category of organized crime. Although we may associate organized crime with various immigrant groups, it is not the case that immigration is tied to higher crime. For example, Hispanic immigrants are less involved in crime than are U.S. citizens (Hagan and Palloni, 1999).

▲ White-Collar and Corporate Crime

One type of crime that has been of particular interest to sociologists is **white-collar crime**—crime most commonly committed by relatively affluent persons, often in the course of business activities (Sutherland, 1949). Martha Stewart and the Enron scandal are well-known examples of white-collar crime in the news. Included in white-collar crime are corporate crime, fraud, embezzlement, corruption, bribery, tax fraud or evasion, stock manipulation, insider trading, misrepresentation of advertising, restraint of trade, and infringement of patents. More recent research has focused on workplace misconduct at a different level, including such things as drinking or doing drugs on the job, short-changing customers, damaging or stealing employers’ property, and falsifying time records (Wright and Cullen, 2000).

White-collar crime costs society just as other crimes do, and we are more likely to be victims of corporate crime than of street crime (Simon and Eitzen, 1993). In 1999, the U.S. Department

of Justice had nearly 9,000 cases of financial institution fraud and failure pending (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Tax evasion is the most costly white-collar crime in the United States. Fraud, the second-most costly white-collar crime, costs citizens \$300 per household in higher insurance premiums (Soupiset, 2003). And *shrinkage*, a term used by retailers to encompass theft by employees, shoplifting, and clerical errors, cost \$33.2 billion in 2001 (Pressler, 2003).

Bank and insurance frauds are commonplace; taxpayers are still paying off the cost of the savings and loan industry collapse of the 1980s—\$500 billion according to the U.S. General Accounting Office (Calavita, Tillman, and Pontell, 1997), or nearly \$2,000 for every adult and child in the United States.

Corporations have been implicated in a variety of crimes, including overcharging the government on contracts, polluting the environment, shortchanging consumers, violating employee privacy, price-rigging school milk contracts, disposing of hazardous waste in violation of the law, adulterating fruit juice, and engaging in accounting irregularities (Clinard, 1990; Rothchild, 1993).

The U.S. criminal justice system is ill-equipped to deal with white-collar and corporate crime (Wheeler, Mann, and Sarat, 1988; Shapiro, 1990). A stock or insurance fraud is typically complex and difficult to unravel. Changes in the corporate world can result in new varieties of white-collar crime, such as the theft of employee health benefits that emerged in the wake of corporate restructuring (Tillman and Indergaard, 1999). Local law enforcement officials commonly lack the skills and resources necessary to tackle crimes outside the sphere of street crime. Federal agencies will handle only the more serious white-collar and corporate crimes. Many crimes committed in the course of business by persons of upper socioeconomic status are handled by quasi-judicial bodies. As a result, many businesspeople are able to avoid being stigmatized as criminals.

The small number of white-collar criminals who are prosecuted and convicted are rarely given sentences comparable to those of other criminals. Street criminals who steal \$100 may find their way to prison, while an executive who embezzles \$1 million may receive a suspended sentence and a relatively small fine.

▲ Crime Committed by Government

Conflict theorists have drawn our attention to crime committed by governments (Barak, 1991). Nazi Germany provides an extreme example: More than 6 million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust of the Hitler years (Dawidowicz, 1975). More recently, other governments have participated in “ethnic cleansing” and murdered citizens who were the “wrong” religion or ethnic background. The U.S. government massacred countless Native Americans during the colonization of the country; even as late as 1890, U.S. Army forces armed with machine guns mowed down nearly 300 Sioux at Wounded Knee, South Dakota (Brown, 1971).

But there are other sorts of government crimes. At the federal level, the Iran-contra scandal during President Reagan’s term showed that operatives of the nation’s security organizations engaged in secret arms shipments to the Nicaraguan contra rebels during the years that Congress barred aid to them. The Oval Office tapes of the Richard Nixon White House revealed a president bent on victimizing his enemies by using his presidential powers illegally. The accusations of perjury against President Clinton with regard to his testimony about a relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinski consumed much of his second term in office. Today’s students have grown up with at least one well-publicized scandal for every presidential administration.

“Government” is, of course, made up of people, and those people are at least as likely to be involved in white-collar crime as those employed in the private sector. Similarly, illegalities with respect to civil rights and equal

opportunity employment are not uncommon. At the municipal level, the 1993 beating of black motorist Rodney King by Los Angeles police drew attention to the violence and racism of the police departments of many large cities (Skolnick and Fife, 1993).

Bribery and corruption have been documented at all levels of government. The illegal dumping of toxic materials, prostitution, gambling, drug running, smuggling of valuable goods from other countries, and a variety of other crimes often occur because officials at various levels find it worth their while to “look the other way.” While fraud and embezzlement are significant costs to society, when they occur in government bureaucracies the money comes directly out of taxpayers’ pockets. As with white-collar and corporate crime, those involved in government crime are less likely than “street criminals” to be caught and punished despite the fact that their crimes probably cost us more.

▲ Victimless Crime

Usually a crime has an identifiable victim who suffers as a result of another person’s criminal behavior. A **victimless crime** is an offense in which no one involved is considered a victim (Schur, 1965). These crimes include gambling, the sale and use of illicit drugs, and prohibited sexual activities between consenting adults (e.g., prostitution and, in some states, fornication and homosexuality). In victimless crime, if there is any suffering, it is by the offenders themselves, by “innocent bystanders” (as in the case of experiencing the odors associated with public urination), or by the tax-paying public at large.

The behaviors in question in victimless crime are criminalized because society, or powerful groups within a society, defines them as immoral or in some other way a threat to society. There are those who argue that victimless crime involves acts that are private matters and thus are not rightfully the concern of government or other people. Others argue that some

acts are “inherently evil” and justify public action in the same manner that those opposed to rape, theft, murder, and incest undertake to impose their moral standards on society. Still others point to the generalized “costs” to society and argue that victimless crimes that degrade the quality of life for others ought to be prosecuted.

As we have pointed out, crime is an act of deviance that is prohibited by law. Laws prohibiting victimless offenses, thereby, create crime and cost society money by way of the efforts to arrest and process suspects. When such laws are struck down, the act is decriminalized, as in the 2003 Supreme Court decision overturning Texas’s ban on private consensual sex between same-sex adults (Lane, 2003a).

▲ Technology and Crime

The information revolution has generated new crimes and made old crimes easier to commit. These **high-technology crimes** are defined as attempts to commit crime through the use of advanced electronic media (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004). High-tech crimes include child pornography, credit card fraud, mail bombings, software piracy, industrial espionage, and computer network break-ins.

Identity theft may be the most dramatic and widespread of the new high-tech crimes. In identity theft, the offender obtains enough information to impersonate someone else and uses this identity to access bank and financial accounts and to apply for credit to obtain goods and funds fraudulently. Estimates of victimization range from 750,000 to 7 million people a year (O’Harrow, 2003). Identity theft has cost \$24 billion over the past decade. And it is not just money that is at stake: Terrorists increasingly use the Internet to obtain identities for themselves as well as information critical to their planning.

Some of the “new technology” crime isn’t considered to be crime by the generation that has grown up with the Internet, but the crime

victims are fighting back. The provision of super-fast Internet connections to college students has made the downloading of music fast and easy, but this “file swapping” reportedly cost the record industry 10 percent of their profits annually for several years (Dana, 2003). Although pressure from the industry resulted in legislation making such downloads illegal, the practice continued and prompted the Recording Industry Association of America to serve subpoenas in 2003 to frequent file swappers. College students in New York, New Jersey, and Michigan paid between \$12,000 and \$17,500 in settlements (Dana, 2003). In spite of the criminalization of downloading and file swapping, these activities continue to be widespread, suggesting that consensus on their moral status in the United States has yet to develop.

Measuring Crime

How do we know how many crimes are committed in the United States? Statistics on crime are among the most unsatisfactory of all social data (Biderman and Lynch, 1991). Official crime records suffer from numerous limitations (Tittle and Paternoster, 2000). First, a large proportion of the crimes that are committed go undetected; others are detected but not reported; and still others are reported but not officially recorded when police officers and politicians manipulate their reports to show low crime rates for political purposes. Second, perceptions of crime vary from community to community; what is viewed as a serious crime by a citizen of a small town may be shrugged off by a big-city resident as an unpleasant bit of everyday life.

Two main data sources are used by researchers who study violent crime trends: the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), collated by the FBI, and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), collected by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (LaFree, 1999; Klaus, 2002). The rates of various crimes in the United States are sub-

stantially higher according to the NCVS than the UCR, which are based on reports to police. Justice Department studies reveal that less than half of all crimes are reported to the police.

What accounts for the public’s apparent reluctance to report crime? With property crimes, the most common response is that the crime was not reported because the offender was unsuccessful. People also say they don’t report crimes to the police because they reported to another official (14 percent), because the matter wasn’t important enough (7 percent), or because they thought the police would not want to be bothered (5 percent) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). In 2001, 37 percent of property crimes and 49 percent of violent crimes were reported to the police (Rennison, 2002a). Only about a third of rapes and attempted rapes are reported, whereas 82 percent of motor vehicle thefts were reported in 2001. Other research shows that whether citizens report crimes depends primarily on how serious they perceive the crime to be, and there is considerable evidence that the Uniform Crime Reports are valid indicators of serious crimes as defined by the citizenry (Gove, Hughes, and Geerken, 1985).

Self-report-based measures of crime, involving anonymous questionnaires that ask people which offenses they have committed, also reveal much higher rates of crime than those found in official crime statistics. For instance, studies of juvenile crimes show that many youngsters of all social classes break some criminal laws, and that the amount of unreported crime is enormous (Regoli and Hewitt, 2000; Tittle and Paternoster, 2000).

The Uniform Crime Reports focus on crimes that are most likely to be committed by young people and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Statistics on many categories of crime, such as white-collar, government, and organized crime, are not routinely compiled. Additionally, some cases of criminal offenses, such as income tax evasion and fraud, are unlikely to be reported in victimization studies.

Drugs and Crime

Drugs have been part of American life since the Jamestown colonists first harvested tobacco in 1611; cocaine and heroin use took root as long ago as the 1890s (Musto, 1987). There's an obvious connection between drugs and crime: Selling, using, and possessing illegal drugs are crimes, and drug involvement often leads to other sorts of crime. A significant proportion of violent offenders are either drug suppliers fighting over territorial rights or drug abusers seeking the means to feed their habit. About a quarter of convicted property and drug offenders say they committed their crime to raise money for drugs (Dorsey, Zawitz, and Middleton, 2003). For older adolescents, drug dealing is one of two primary determinants of illegal gun carrying (Lizotte et al., 2000). Overall, illegal drugs account for approximately \$50 billion in criminal income (MacCoun and Reuter, 1997).

The link between drugs and crime is complicated by the fact that society defines which drugs are legal and normative and which are illegal and deviant. Approximately half the adults in the United States have used illegal drugs or used prescription drugs without a physician's prescription in their lifetime (Warner et al., 1995), making half of the population criminals in that sense. But significantly less than half the population is involved in serious drug-related crime. On the other hand, many of us use legal drugs, such as alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine, in ways that endanger our lives and the lives of others. And 3 to 4 million American children take prescription psychiatric drugs, despite the fact that most of these drugs have never been tested for use in children (Brown, 2003).

Despite our ambivalence about drug use, the relationship between drugs and crime is of interest to criminal justice officials, criminologists, and sociologists. For 11 percent of U.S. citizens, drugs and alcohol are the single most important problem facing their community (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). America's "War

on Drugs" seems to focus primarily on arrests rather than treatment or prevention. In 2001, the largest category of all arrests was drug abuse violations, and the number of arrests involving marijuana rose dramatically in the 1990s. Since 1996, the number of arrests involving marijuana has been greater than for any other type of drug (Dorsey, Zawitz, and Middleton, 2003).

Many argue that continuing to arrest people for drug violations is not the answer. One problem is that the country lacks the facilities to imprison violators. Perhaps more importantly, drug abuse causes long-lasting changes in the abuser's brain (Nestler, 2001), and there is strong evidence that drug addiction is a brain disease, not something that can be cured by a term of imprisonment. Further, the demand for drugs is at the base of the country's drug problem. When an accused "drug lord" was arrested, he stated that violent drug-trafficking gangs would thrive "as long as Americans keep buying marijuana, cocaine and heroin" (Sullivan and Jordan, 2002).

There are many proposals for dealing with drug abuse, including continued prohibition, removing penalties for possession of drugs (depenalization), and legalizing distribution of drugs (legalization). Some argue that depenalization and legalization would decrease crime rates. Marijuana has been depenalized in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, and the Dutch have adopted a formal policy of nonenforcement for sales of limited amounts of cannabis (MacCoun and Reuter, 1997). Increasing numbers of U.S. citizens support legalizing marijuana, with the proportion of survey respondents indicating it should be legal rising from 12 percent to 34 percent between 1969 and 2001, but 62 percent are still against it (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Among college freshmen, the percent supporting legalization rose from 17 in 1989 to 36 in 2001.

Little consensus exists among either the lay public or professionals on the most effective strategies to fight crime through fighting drug use (MacCoun, 1993). Many countries have

laws similar to those of the United States, yet the United States has higher rates of drug abuse than other countries (Wilson, 1997); clearly more than government policy plays a part in drug abuse. The connection between drugs and crime also varies among countries; although Australia and the United States have similar drug laws, there are 60 times as many drug-connected deaths in Los Angeles as in Sydney (Zimring and Hawkins, 1997).

While government officials struggle with approaches to slowing crime through fighting drug abuse, statistics show that drug use is on the rise among Americans of college age. One report showed that use of illegal drugs by college students increased during the 1990s (Gledhill-Hoyt et al., 2000), and marijuana use increased at all types of colleges except for those with low binge-drinking rates. Among high school seniors, 73 percent reported having drunk alcohol during 2001 and 37 percent reported having used marijuana; nearly all high school seniors report that they could easily obtain marijuana, and 40 percent to 57 percent reported that they could easily obtain crack, LSD, cocaine, and amphetamines (Dorsey, Zawitz, and Middleton, 2003). Another survey showed that 29 percent of high school students had been given, sold, or offered illegal drugs at school (DeVoe et al., 2002). When survey respondents were asked why teenagers try illegal drugs, 82 percent said peer pressure was a major factor, 79 percent that lack of parental supervision played a major role, and 74 percent that the ease with which teenagers can get drugs was a major factor (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Box 5.2 (p. 148) presents some of the factors that affect alcohol abuse among college students.

Women and Crime

Women accounted for 22 percent of all arrests in 2000 (Pastore and Maguire, 2003), a proportion that reflects the 1990s trend of an increasing percentage of females in the criminal population

(Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996). In the 2000 arrest rate data, women accounted for 17 percent of violent crime arrests and 30 percent of property crime arrests (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). In some crimes, women outnumber men as perpetrators; 59 percent of those arrested as runaways are female, and 62 percent of prostitution arrests are women. Arrest rates are about equal for women and men in embezzlement; other crimes in which women are arrested at high rates are fraud (45 percent), forgery and counterfeiting (39 percent), and larceny and theft (36 percent). Women's participation in violent crime is much lower than men's, and in 2001 only 51 of the 3,581 prisoners on death row were female (Snell and Maruschak, 2002).

With the increased participation of women in crime has come an increase in research on women's criminal behavior. Recent studies have included investigations on women in prison (Kruttschnitt, Gartner, and Miller, 2000), prostitutes and drug selling and use (Maxwell and Maxwell, 2000), and juvenile offending (Haynie, 2003; Uggen, 2000).

The participation of females in juvenile delinquency is higher than the proportion of adult female criminals; one-quarter of the youths arrested in the United States are females. Girls are typically arrested for less serious offenses than boys; half of all girls arrested are charged with either larceny-theft (often shoplifting) or with running away from home (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998). Studies show that females seem to perceive legal sanctions as more threatening than do males (Blackwell, 2000).

Theories of female delinquency are just emerging (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998). Contemporary research suggests that girls' delinquency is related to many of the same factors as that of boys, but there also are factors unique to females. For example, two-thirds to three-quarters of the girls in runaway shelters and juvenile detention facilities have been sexually abused; such abuse can be the primary



Race, Crime, and Punishment

African Americans account for 12 percent of the U.S. population, 30.4 percent of all those arrested for index crimes, and 45 percent of the prison population nationwide (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004; Pastore and Maguire, 2003). During their lifetimes, 28.5 percent of African-American men will spend time in prison, which makes them 6.5 times more likely to “do time” than white men (Bonczar and Beck, 1997). Race also plays a part in capital punishment, with offenders being more likely to be sentenced to death when the victim is white, and some research shows that the race of the offender also affects outcomes (Radelet and Borg, 2000).

How much of the disproportionate representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system is due to racial discrimination? Research is divided. Studies of traffic stops show that black men are a third more likely than white men to be stopped by the police and twice as likely to have their cars searched once they are stopped (Lundman and Kaufman, 2003). Whites who favor the death penalty are more likely to be racially prejudiced and to prefer convicting the innocent over letting a murderer go free (Young, 2004); since potential jurors who oppose the death penalty are typically dismissed from jury duty on capital cases,

death penalty juries are thus more likely to be both prejudiced and in favor of conviction.

But other studies on arrests, processing, and sentencing do not provide consistent evidence of racial bias. Some studies show that black offenders receive harsher sentences, some find that there are no significant racial differences, and some find that race influences sentencing in certain circumstances (Spohn, 2000). A review by the National Institute of Justice of forty recent studies of race and sentencing severity showed that race plays a role in sentencing but that the primary determinants of sentencing decisions are the seriousness of

motivator for their running away from home, a significant contributor to their total number of arrests. However, self-report studies of crime show that the patterns and causes of male and female delinquency are becoming more alike, and the structural sources of high levels of offending are very similar for men and women (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996; Steffensmeier and Haynie, 2000).

Gender also plays a part in crime victimization. Whereas males are more likely to be victims of robbery, total assault, and aggravated assault, females are more likely to be victims of rape and sexual assault (Rennison, 2002a). Female victims account for 89 percent of sexual assaults, 91 percent of attempted rapes, and 94 percent of completed rapes (Rennison, 2002b). However, only about a third of rapes and sexual assaults are reported to the police,

and thus there is a very low conviction rate for perpetrators. Although rates of violent victimization have been declining in recent years, they have not been declining for women as fast as for men (Rennison, 2002a).

The Criminal Justice System

On television, the evildoer nearly always gets caught and punished. In real life, however, the picture is quite different. According to statistics from the Justice Department, of every 100 criminal victimizations committed in the United States, only 36 are reported to the police. Of these 36, only 7 or 8 are cleared by arrest, meaning that someone is arrested for the crime. Of these 7 persons arrested, only 5 are prosecuted and convicted. Of these, only 1 is sent to prison; the other cases are rejected or dismissed because

the offence and the offender's prior criminal record (Spohn, 2000).

Regardless of the causes of the disproportionate representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system, it has serious consequences. The losses to African Americans are not limited to disproportionate imprisonment and execution. Those imprisoned—approximately 12 percent of all young black men—are unable to support their families or contribute to their communities, and the economic cost of serving time continues beyond one's sentence. Once out of prison, a criminal record is a major barrier to employment, and this problem is substantially greater for blacks than for whites (Pager, 2003). Ex-inmates who find employment earn an average of 10 to 20 percent less than those who have not been in prison, and incarceration reduces the rate of

wage growth for workers by 30 percent (Western, 2002).

Participation in our political system also is taken away, and this appears to have affected election outcomes; 48 of 50 states bar felons, including those on probation or parole, from voting and 10 states bar ex-felons (Uggen and Manza, 2002). As the prison population has grown, the percentage of the population that is disenfranchised also has grown, and that disenfranchised population is made up primarily of young, poor, black males.

For many people, punishing those who commit crime seems rational and just. But as this analysis shows, pursuing these policies has unintended consequences. The imprisonment of so many young black men reduces their life chances, damages the economic life of the black community, dampens civic

involvement, and promotes alienation.

Questions for Discussion

1. Are you aware of a specific instance of a member of a minority group who got involved with the criminal justice system? What was his or her experience?
2. What social interest is furthered by preventing felons from voting? For example, is this a deterrent to crime? Does it serve as a reasonable form of retribution? Does it serve as a symbolic marker that distinguishes morally upright citizens from law violators? Does it prevent incompetent people from voting? How can a society pursue both the goals of reducing crime and promoting the inclusion of everyone in civic engagement and economic growth?

of problems with the evidence or witnesses, or the perpetrators are diverted into treatment programs. Of those convicted in state courts, more than half receive a sentence of at least 3.5 years, but the average inmate is released in about 1.5 years (see Figure 5.3a for data on the processing of serious criminals). Perhaps not surprisingly, only 27 percent of survey respondents say they have much confidence in the criminal justice system (Pastore and Maguire, 2003).

In this section we will briefly consider the components of the criminal justice system: the police, the courts, and the prisons. Each of these components operates at local, state, and federal levels.

▲ The Police

The police are a citizen's first link with the criminal justice system, and in many ways the

most important one. When a crime occurs, the police are usually the first agents of the state to become involved. Yet, police officers spend only about 15 percent of their time dealing with crime. Competing demands on their time vary from filling out reports and directing traffic to handling complaints about uncollected trash and responding to medical emergency calls.

Many U.S. communities have implemented "community-based policing" or "problem-oriented policing," in which officers establish positive relationships with residents of specific areas and focus on crime prevention as well as reacting to crime. In 2002, between 61 percent and 73 percent of respondents said police are excellent or pretty good at solving crime, preventing crime, treating people fairly, not using excessive force, responding quickly, and being helpful (Pastore and Maguire, 2003).



A growing percentage of youth and adults in the criminal population is female.

▲ The Courts

In the United States the criminal justice system is an adversary system. The person accused of a crime—the *defendant*—is presumed to be innocent until proved guilty in a court of law by the representative of the state—the *prosecutor*. In many nations the questioning of witnesses is handled by judges, and guilt and innocence are decided by a judge or panel of judges. But the U.S. system assumes that justice is best served by pitting opposing lawyers against each other before a neutral judge and jury.

In practice, the fate of most of those accused of crime is determined by prosecutors. Prosecutors typically reject or reduce the severity of 50 to 80 percent of the criminal charges filed by police. The reasons prosecutors cite range from case overload to police inefficiency in producing evidence. Of some 2 million serious criminal cases filed each year in the United States, fewer than one in five goes to trial. The others end in dismissals or guilty pleas.

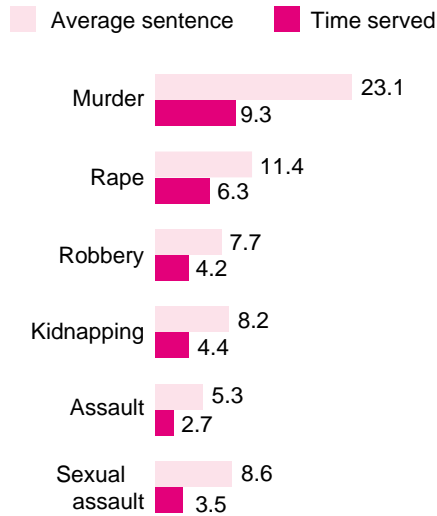
▲ Prisons

We have said that the crime rate has been declining over the past decades. The prison population, on the other hand, has been steadily increasing. In 2002, 6.7 million people in the United States were in jail, in prison, on probation, or on parole, comprising a total of 3.1 percent of the adult population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). There were nearly 1.5 million inmates in state and federal prisons and more than 0.5 million in local jails, more than four times as many as 30 years ago. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world (see Figure 5.4).

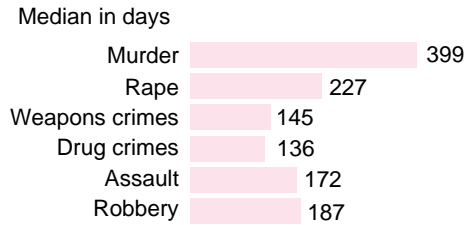
Why do we incarcerate more prisoners during a period of declining crime? Some analysts point to a “culture of control,” with crime management resources devoted to protecting potential victims by locking away offenders rather than working to eradicate any of the causes of criminal behavior (Garland, 2003). In *The Challenge of Crime*, authors Henry Ruth and

(a) Sentences versus Time Served, 2000

Average years *sentenced* to prison and average years *actually served* by state prison inmates for various convictions



(b) Time from Arrest to Sentencing in State Courts, 1998



(c) Percentage of Crimes That Result in Arrests, 2000

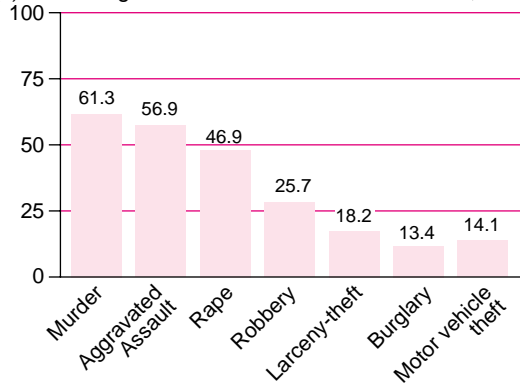


Figure 5.3

The Operation of the Criminal Justice System in the United States

Sources: (a) Bureau of Justice Statistics (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm>); (b) and (c) Pastore and Maguire, 2003.

Kevin Reitz explain the expanding prison population this way:

From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, the U.S. prisons expanded because the courts were sending more “marginal” felons to prison than they had in the past. Many burglars or auto thieves who might have been put on probation in the 1950s or 1960s were instead sentenced to incarceration. . . . Then, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, prison growth was driven most forcefully by the war on drugs. . . . In the 1990s, the primary cause of prison growth changed again. For the first time in the expansionist era, the chief engine of the prison buildup became longer sentences rather than more prison admissions. (2003: 95–96)

Other researchers suggest different causes of prison growth. Sociologist John Sutton (2000) has documented connections between the labor market and prison populations and concluded that when opportunities for employment increase, prison growth decreases. Further, he found that declines in welfare spending result in increases in incarceration rates.

What purpose is served by locking offenders away? Let’s take a look at traditional purposes of imprisonment.

Punishment. Prior to 1800 it was widely assumed that the punishment of deviants was required if the injured community was to feel morally satisfied. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in punishment. The “moral



Figure 5.4

The United States Imprisons a Larger Share of Its Population than Does Any Other Nation

According to the most recent report from the Sentencing Project, a research group that promotes changes in sentencing, the United States has increasingly high incarceration rates compared to other countries. High incarceration rates in the United States are the result of the high crime rate and to increasingly harsh criminal justice policies.

Source: www.sentencingproject.org/policy/9030.htm; Walmsley, 2003.

order” argument runs like this: Certain acts are basically antisocial and heinous (e.g., murder, rape, genocide, and the sexual abuse of children). When grossly immoral behavior goes unpunished, people’s commitment to social order and to basic values and norms is weakened; punishment is essential to maintain moral order. This approach draws on the functionalist perspective for support.

Rehabilitation. Toward the latter part of the 18th and the early part of the 19th centuries, the idea that prisons might rehabilitate criminals came to the forefront. The word *penitentiary*

was coined to describe a place where a criminal might repent and then resolve to follow a law-abiding life. Rehabilitation may include educational, vocational, or psychological programs geared at helping inmates overcome drug and alcohol addiction, earn their general equivalency diplomas, and gain job skills.

Critics of rehabilitation cite statistics on the high rate of **recidivism** (relapse into criminal behavior). In a recent study, it was found that 67.5 percent of those released from prisons were rearrested within 3 years. The prisoners had been charged with an average of 5 offenses each before

their release, and another 2.7 in the 3 years after their release (Langan and Levin, 2002). Recidivism is particularly high for those charged with robbery and property crimes. With overcrowded prisons and budgets stretched to the limit, rehabilitation programs become a low priority.

Deterrence. The notion of deterrence rests on assumptions about human nature that are difficult to prove. Even so, sociological studies seem to suggest that the certainty of apprehension and punishment does tend to lower crime rates (Waldo and Chiricos, 1972; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin, 1972; Paternoster, 1989). But allegiance to a group and its norms typically operates as an even stronger force than the threat of societal punishment in bringing about conformity (Heckathorn, 1988, 1990). By the same token, informal standards and pressures within delinquent subcultures may counteract the deterrent effects of legal penalties (Tittle and Rowe, 1974; Heckathorn, 1988, 1990).

Incapacitation. There are those who argue that neither rehabilitation nor deterrence really works, but that imprisonment can be used to reduce crime rates because it keeps criminals off the streets. Peter W. Greenwood (1982) asserts that incarcerating one robber who is among the top 10 percent in offense rates prevents more robberies than incarcerating 18 offenders who are at or below the median. On the other hand, long prison sentences may represent a waste of prison capacity; most crimes are committed by young people, and most “career criminals” retire fairly early from these careers.

▲ Capital Punishment

Capital punishment is the imposition of the death sentence for a capital offense. Since 1622, 18,000 to 20,000 people have lost their lives in America through capital punishment (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004). Capital offenses vary by state and have included murder, kidnapping, rape, drug trafficking, and treason (Snell and Maruschak, 2002). Legal

execution methods also vary by state and include lethal injection, electrocution, lethal gas, hanging, or firing squad. In 2001, all executions were carried out by lethal injection.

Is capital punishment widely used in the United States? In 2002, 68 inmates were executed in 13 states, with three states (Texas, Missouri, and Oklahoma) accounting for two-thirds of the executions (Snell and Maruschak, 2002). One inmate was electrocuted; the others were executed by lethal injection. In 2001, 66 prisoners were executed; in 2000, the number was 85. The number of executions is dwarfed by the list of those waiting for execution; in 2001, 3,581 inmates were on death row.

What purpose does capital punishment serve? One argument in favor of applying the death penalty is *deterrence*, the idea that punishing offenders deters others from committing similar crimes. Research has shown, however, that capital punishment is not superior to long prison sentences in deterring crime (Radelet and Borg, 2000). Another use of capital punishment is *incapacitation*; an executed offender cannot be a repeat offender. Supporters of capital punishment also have argued that it is less costly than long-term imprisonment, although recent analyses show that the cost of trials and lengthy appeals far outruns the cost of imprisonment, changing cost to an argument against capital punishment in contemporary times. Nevertheless, the death penalty has gained in popularity over the years, and the majority of U.S. adults currently support capital punishment (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Forty years ago, only 38 percent said they believed in the death penalty, but in 2001 that proportion had risen to 67 percent. When asked why they favor it, nearly half of those surveyed respond with retribution—supporters of capital punishment say the punishment fits the crime.

In 2003, Republican Governor of Illinois George Ryan made headlines by commuting the death sentences of 167 people to life imprisonment (Pierre and Lydersen, 2003). Calling his state’s death penalty system “arbitrary and capricious,” Ryan made his decision after a

study that found 13 wrongly convicted inmates and four that had been tortured into false confessions. In the past 35 years, 80 people have been released from their death sentences when it was discovered that they were in fact innocent of the crime of which they had been convicted (Radelet and Borg, 2000). Americans know there are problems with the system; although 67 percent of respondents support capital punishment, only 53 percent say they think the death penalty is applied fairly, and that number drops to 18 percent for black respondents (Pastore and Maguire, 2003). Box 5.3 (p. 166) presents data that may help explain why race affects people's attitudes toward capital punishment.

▲ Other Penalties and Approaches

For all of those who are incarcerated, many more criminal offenders do not serve time in jails and prisons. Probably the most widely used response to criminal behavior is *proba-*

tion, the integration of offenders into law-abiding society under the supervision of a trustworthy person (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer, 2004). Probationers are bound by specific conditions but are able to work, care for their families, and pay taxes. Currently, nearly 4 million people are on probation in the United States. *Parole* is somewhat similar to probation, but it involves releasing a prisoner, again under supervision, before the end of his or her sentence. In *home confinement programs*, offenders serve time at home, usually monitored by electronic devices. Offenders may also pay fines, be required to perform community service, or pay restitution to victims. About 40 percent of convicted felons are required to serve time in prison or jail or on probation *and* comply with other penalties, including paying fines, paying victim restitution, receiving treatment, or performing community service (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003).

The Chapter in Brief: *Deviance and Crime*

The Nature of Deviance

In all societies the behavior of some people at times goes beyond that permitted by the norms. Social life is characterized not only by conformity but by **deviance**, behavior that a considerable number of people view as reprehensible and beyond the limits of tolerance.

■ *Social Properties of Deviance*

Deviance is not a property inherent in certain forms of behavior; it is a property conferred upon particular behaviors by social definitions. Definitions as to which acts are deviant vary greatly from time to time, place to place, and group to group. We typically find that norms are

not so much a point or a line but a zone. Deviant acts also can be redefined, as has happened in recent years in the United States. Most societies can absorb a good deal of deviance without serious consequences, but persistent and widespread deviance can be dysfunctional. But deviance may also be functional by promoting social solidarity, clarifying norms, strengthening group allegiances, and providing a catalyst for change.

■ *Social Control and Deviance*

Societies seek to ensure that their members conform with basic norms by means of **social control**. Three main types of social control

processes operate within social life: (1) those that lead us to internalize our society's normative expectations (**internalization**), (2) those that structure our world of social experience, and (3) those that employ various formal and informal social sanctions.

Theories of Deviance

Other disciplines are concerned with deviance, particularly biology and psychology. Sociologists focus on five main theories.

■ **Anomie Theory** Émile Durkheim contributed to our understanding of deviance with his idea of **anomie**. Robert K. Merton built on Durkheim's ideas of anomie and social cohesion. According to his theory of structural strain, deviance derives from societal stresses.

■ **Cultural Transmission Theory** A number of sociologists have emphasized the similarities between the way deviant behavior is acquired and the way in which other behavior is acquired—the cultural transmission theory. Edwin H. Sutherland elaborated on this notion in his theory of **differential association**. He said that individuals become deviant to the extent to which they participate in settings where deviant ideas, motivations, and techniques are viewed favorably.

■ **Conflict Theory** Conflict theorists ask, “Which group will be able to translate its values into the rules of a society and make these rules stick?” and “Who reaps the lion's share of benefits from particular social arrangements?” Marxist sociologists see crime as a product of capitalist laws.

■ **Labeling Theory** Labeling theorists study the processes whereby some individuals come to be tagged as deviants, begin to think of themselves as deviants, and enter deviant careers. Labeling theorists differentiate between **primary deviance** and **secondary deviance**.

■ **Control Theory** Control theory attempts to explain not why people deviate but why people do *not* deviate. Travis Hirschi argued that young people are more likely to conform if their bond to society is strong. This bond has four parts: attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief.

Crime and the Criminal Justice System

Crime is an act of deviance that is prohibited by law. The distinguishing property of crime is that people who violate the law are liable to be arrested, tried, pronounced guilty, and deprived of their lives, liberty, or property. It is the state that defines crime by the laws it promulgates, administers, and enforces.

■ **Forms of Crime** An infinite variety of acts can be crimes. Federal agencies keep records on **index crimes**—violent crimes against people and crimes against property. Juvenile crime is crime committed by youth under the age of 18. **Organized crime** is carried out by large-scale bureaucratic organizations that provide illegal goods and services in public demand. **White-collar crime** is crime committed by relatively affluent persons, often in the course of business activities. Crime can be committed by corporations and by governments. In **victimless crime** no one involved is considered a victim.

■ **Measuring Crime** Statistics on crime are among the most unsatisfactory of all social data. A large proportion of the crimes that are committed go undetected; others are detected but not reported; and still others are reported but not officially recorded.

■ **Drugs and Crime** Drugs and crime are related both directly—selling, using, and possessing illegal drugs all are crimes—and indirectly—drug involvement often leads to other sorts of crimes. Drug problems can be

dealt with by recognizing that addiction is a brain disease. Other approaches include continued prohibition, depenalization, or legalization.

■ ***Women and Crime*** A growing percentage of youth and adults in the criminal population is female. One-quarter of the youth arrested in the United States are girls; overall, one in five arrests are female. Girls are more likely than boys to be arrested for such offenses as running away from home.

■ ***The Criminal Justice System*** The **criminal justice system** is made up of the

reactive agencies of the state that include the police, the courts, and prisons. Despite the declining crime rate in the United States, the prison population has been steadily climbing.

There have been four traditional purposes of imprisonment: punishment, rehabilitation, deterrence, and selective confinement. **Capital punishment** is the application of the death penalty for a capital offense. Criminal offenders also may be subjected to probation, parole, fines, victim restitution, community service, or in-house arrest.

Glossary

anomie A social condition in which people find it difficult to guide their behavior by norms they experience as weak, unclear, or conflicting.

capital punishment The application of the death penalty for a capital crime.

crime An act prohibited by law.

criminal justice system The reactive agencies of the state that include the police, courts, and prisons.

deviance Behavior that a considerable number of people in a society view as

reprehensible and beyond the limits of tolerance.

differential association The notion that the earlier, the more frequent, the more intense, and the longer the duration of the contacts people have in deviant settings, the greater the probability that they, too, will become deviant.

high-technology crime crime committed through the use of advanced electronic media.

index crimes Crimes reported by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in its Uniform Crime Reports. These offenses consist of four

categories of violent crime against people—murder, rape, robbery, and assault—and four categories of crime against property—burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

internalization The process by which individuals incorporate within their personalities the standards of behavior prevalent within the larger society.

organized crime Large-scale bureaucratic organizations that provide illegal goods and services in public demand.

primary deviance Behavior that violates social norms but

usually goes unnoticed by the agents of social control.

recidivism Relapse into criminal behavior.

secondary deviance Deviance that individuals adopt in response to the reactions of other individuals.

social control Methods and strategies that regulate behavior within society.

victimless crime An offense in which no one involved is considered a victim.

white-collar crime Crime committed by relatively affluent persons, often in the course of business activities.

Review Questions

1. Define deviant behavior and give two examples.
2. What functions does deviant behavior have?
3. What are the three main types of social control?
4. List and briefly describe the five main theories of deviance.
5. Define crime and list at least six types of crime.
6. Why are so many crimes not reported to the police?
7. Why is the prison population increasing in the United States?
8. Do you think capital punishment should be legal in the United States? Support your answer.

Internet Connection

www.mhhe.com/hughes7

Use your browser to open the website for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), **http://www.fbi.gov/**. Explore this site, particularly through the “press room” button and the “Uniform Crime Reports” button, and look for infor-

mation on how much crime was committed in the United States in the most recent time period and how crime has changed over the recent past. Write a short report on what you find.