

Deviance, Crime, and Social Control



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In this chapter, you will learn that:

- Deviance and crime vary among cultures, across history, and from one social context to another.
- Rather than being inherent in the characteristics of individuals or actions, deviance and crime are socially defined and constructed. The distribution of power is especially important in the social construction of deviance and crime.
- Many theories exist regarding deviance and crime. Each theory illuminates a different aspect of the process by which people break rules and are defined as deviants and criminals.
- As in deviance and crime, conceptions of appropriate punishment vary culturally and historically.
- Many forms of deviance that used to be considered voluntary forms of evil are now regarded as involuntary types of sickness that need to be treated by medical and psychiatric professionals.
- Imprisonment is one of the main forms of punishment in industrial societies; in the United States the prison system has grown quickly in the past 30 years, and punishment has become harsher.
- Fear of crime is increasing, but it is based less on rising crime rates than on manipulation by commercial and political groups that benefit from it.
- There are cost-effective and workable alternatives to the regimen of punishment currently in place in the United States.

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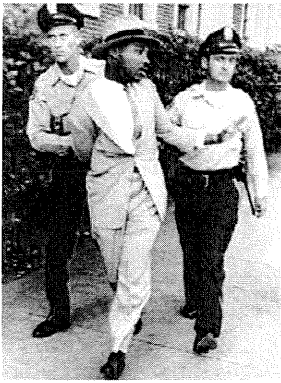
The Social Definition and Social Construction of Deviance

If you happen to come across members of the Tukano tribe in northern Brazil, don't be surprised if they greet you with a cheery "Have you bathed today?" You would probably find the question insulting, but think how you would feel if you were greeted by the Yanomamö people in Brazil's central highlands. A French anthropologist reports that when he first encountered the Yanomamö they rubbed mucus and tobacco juice into their palms, then inspected him by running their filthy hands over his body (Chagnon, 1977). He must have been relieved to return to urban Brazil and be greeted with a simple kiss on the cheek.

Rules for greeting people vary widely from one country to the next and among different cultural groups within one country. That is why a Boston marketing company recently found it useful to create an animated website showing business travelers how to greet their hosts in the fifteen countries where the firm does business ("The Business of Touch," 2006). After all, violating local norms can cause great offense and result in the loss of a contract, a fact that one visitor to South Korea found out too late. He beckoned his host with an index finger, after which the host grew quiet. He discovered after he lost the deal that Koreans beckon only cats and dogs with an index finger. If you want to beckon someone politely in South Korea, you should do so with all four fingers facing down, much like Americans wave good-bye.

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▲ Police arrest Martin Luther King, Jr. on September 4, 1958, in Montgomery, Alabama.

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Learn more about the Difference between Deviance and Crime by going through the Difference between Deviance and Crime Animation.

Deviance: Occurs when someone departs from a norm.

Crime: Deviance that is against the law.

Law: A norm stipulated and enforced by government bodies.

Sanctions: Disapprovals of deviance.

Informal punishment: Involves a mild sanction that is imposed during face-to-face interaction, not by the judicial system.

Stigmatized: People who are negatively evaluated because of a marker that distinguishes them from others.

Formal punishment: Takes place when the judicial system penalizes someone for breaking a law.

Because norms vary widely, deviance is relative. What some people consider normal, others consider deviant, and vice versa. No act is deviant in and of itself. People commit deviant acts only when they break a norm and cause others to react negatively. From a sociological point of view, *everyone* is a deviant in one social context or another.

The Difference between Deviance and Crime

Deviance involves breaking a norm and evoking a negative reaction from others. Societies establish some norms as laws. **Crime** is deviance that breaks a **law**, which is a norm stipulated and enforced by government bodies.

Just as deviance is relative, so is crime. Thus, in 1872, Susan B. Anthony—whose image graced the original dollar coin—was arrested and fined because she “knowingly, wrongfully and unlawfully voted for a representative to the Congress of the United States.” That’s right. She was arrested and fined because she voted. At trial, Justice Ward Hunt advised the jury, “There is no question for the jury, and the jury should be directed to find a verdict of guilty” (quoted in Flexner, 1975: 170). Or consider the opposite case. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we now celebrate as a federal holiday, was repeatedly arrested for marching in the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, and other Southern cities for African Americans’ civil rights, including their right to vote. Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King, Jr., were considered criminal in their lifetimes. In the 1870s, American law restricted voting to men. Anthony disagreed with the law and in acting on her deviant belief, she committed a crime. Similarly, in the 1950s most people in the American South believed in white superiority. They expressed that belief in many ways, including so-called Jim Crow laws that prevented many African Americans from voting. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other Civil Rights movement participants challenged existing laws and were therefore arrested.

Most of you would consider the sexist and racist society of the past, rather than Anthony and King, deviant or criminal. That is because norms and laws have changed dramatically. The 19th Amendment guaranteed woman suffrage in 1920. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteed voting rights for African Americans. Today, anyone arguing that women or African Americans should not be allowed to vote is considered deviant. Preventing them from voting is a crime. Crime is a special type of deviance because laws define certain deviant acts as criminal, but crime is just as relative as deviance. What is considered criminal in some times and places is considered perfectly normal in other times and places.

Sanctions

Many deviant acts go unnoticed or are considered too trivial to warrant negative **sanctions**, or disapproval of deviance. People who are observed committing more serious acts of deviance are typically punished, either informally or formally. **Informal punishment** is mild. It may involve raised eyebrows, a harsh stare, an ironic smile, gossip, ostracism, “shaming,” or stigmatization (Braithwaite, 1989). When people are **stigmatized**, they are negatively evaluated because of a marker that distinguishes them from others (Goffman, 1963b). For example, until recently people with physical or mental disabilities were often treated with scorn or as a source of amusement. Pope Leo X (1475–1521) is said to have retained several mentally retarded dwarves as a form of entertainment. **Formal punishment** results from people breaking laws. For example, criminals may be formally punished by having to serve time in prison or perform community service.



Until the early part of the 20th century, people considered cocaine a medicine.

National Library of Medicine, Washington, D.C.

Types of Deviance and Crime

Sociologist John Hagan (1994) usefully classifies various types of deviance and crime along three dimensions. The first dimension is the *severity of the social response*. At one extreme, homicide and other very serious forms of deviance result in the most severe negative reactions, such as life imprisonment or capital punishment. At the other end of the spectrum, slight deviations from a norm, such as wearing a nose ring, will cause some people to do little more than express mild disapproval.

The second dimension of deviance and crime is the *perceived harmfulness* of the deviant or criminal act. Some deviant acts, such as rape, are generally seen as very harmful, whereas others, such as tattooing, are commonly regarded as being of little consequence. Note that actual harmfulness is not the only issue here. *Perceived* harmfulness is. Coca-Cola got its name because, in the early part of the 20th century, it contained a derivative of cocaine. Now cocaine is an illegal drug because people's perceptions of its harmfulness changed.

The third characteristic of deviance is the *degree of public agreement* about whether an act should be considered deviant. For example, people disagree about whether smoking marijuana should be considered a crime, especially because it may have therapeutic value in treating pain associated with cancer. In contrast, virtually everyone agrees that murder is seriously deviant. Note, however, that even the social definition of murder varies over time and across cultures and societies. Whether we classify the death of a miner as an accident or murder depends on the kind of worker-safety legislation in existence. Some societies have more stringent worker-safety rules than others, and deaths considered accidental in some societies are classified as criminal offenses in others. So we see that even when it comes to consensus crimes, social definitions are variable.

Hagan's analysis allows us to classify four types of deviance and crime:

1. **Social diversions** are minor acts of deviance such as participating in fads and fashions. People usually perceive such acts as harmless. At most they evoke a mild societal reaction such as amusement or disdain, because many people are apathetic or unclear about whether social diversions are in fact deviant.

Social diversion: A minor act of deviance that is generally perceived as relatively harmless and that evokes, at most, a mild societal reaction such as amusement or disdain.

Is transvestism a social diversion, a social deviation, a conflict crime, or a consensus crime? Why?



WesGEE/ICP/Getty Images

2. **Social deviations** are more serious acts. Large proportions of people agree that these acts are deviant and somewhat harmful, and they usually are subject to institutional sanction.
3. **Conflict crimes** are deviant acts that the state defines as illegal, but the definition is controversial in the wider society.
4. Finally, **consensus crimes** are widely recognized to be bad in themselves. There is little controversy over their seriousness. The great majority of people agree that such crimes should be met with severe punishment.

Social deviations: Noncriminal departures from norms that are nonetheless subject to official control. Some members of the public regard them as somewhat harmful, whereas other members of the public don't.

Conflict crimes: Illegal acts that many people consider harmful to society. However, many people think they are not very harmful. They are punishable by the state.

Consensus crimes: Illegal acts that nearly all people agree are bad and harm society greatly. The state inflicts severe punishment for consensus crimes.

Power and the Social Construction of Deviance

To truly understand deviance and crime, you have to study how people socially construct norms and laws. The school of sociological thought known as *social constructionism* emphasizes that various social problems, including deviance and crime, are *not* inherent in certain actions themselves. Instead, some people are in a position to create norms and pass laws that stigmatize other people. Therefore, one must study how norms and laws are created (or “constructed”) to understand why particular actions get defined as deviant or criminal in the first place. Relatively powerful groups are generally able to create norms and laws that suit their interests. Relatively powerless social groups are usually unable to do so. The powerless, however, often struggle against stigmatization. If their power increases, they may succeed in their struggle. We now illustrate the importance of power in the social construction of deviance and crime by analyzing crimes against women and white-collar crime.

Crimes against Women

Until recently, many types of crimes against women—including rape—were largely ignored in the United States and most other parts of the world. Admittedly, so-called aggravated rape involving strangers was sometimes severely punished. But so-called simple rape, which involved a friend or an acquaintance, was rarely prosecuted. Marital rape was viewed as a contradiction in terms, as if it were logically impossible for a married woman to be raped by her spouse. In her research, Susan Estrich (1987) found that rape law was not taught at American law schools in the 1970s. Law professors, judges, police officers, rapists, and even victims did not think that simple rape was “real rape.” Similarly, judges, lawyers, and social scientists rarely discussed physical violence against women and sexual harassment until the 1970s. Governments did not collect data on the topic, and few social scientists showed any interest in what has now become a large and important area of study.

Today, the situation has improved. To be sure, rape is still associated with a low rate of prosecution (Scully, 1990). Rapists often hold women in contempt and do not regard rape as a real crime. Yet efforts by Estrich and others to have all forced sex defined as rape have raised people’s awareness of date, acquaintance, and marital rape. Rape is prosecuted more often now than it used to be. The same is true for violence against women and sexual harassment.

Why the change?—in part because women’s position in the economy, the family, and other social institutions has improved over the past 30 years. Women now have more autonomy in the family, earn more, and enjoy more political influence. They also created a movement for women’s rights that heightened concern about crimes disproportionately affecting them. For instance, until recently male sexual harassment of female workers was considered normal. Following Catharine MacKinnon’s pathbreaking work on the subject, however, feminists succeeded in having the social definition of sexual harassment transformed (MacKinnon, 1979). Sexual harassment is now considered a social deviation and, in some circumstances, a crime. Increased public awareness of the extent of sexual harassment has probably made it less common. We thus see how social definitions of crimes against women have changed with a shift in the distribution of power.¹

White-Collar Crime

White-collar crime refers to illegal acts “committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his [or her] occupation” (Sutherland, 1949: 9). Such crimes include embezzlement, false advertising, tax evasion, insider stock trading, fraud, unfair labor practices, copyright infringement, and conspiracy to fix prices and restrain trade. Sociologists often contrast white-collar crimes with **street crimes**. The latter crimes include arson, burglary, robbery, assault, and other illegal acts. Street crimes are committed disproportionately by people from lower classes, whereas white-collar crime is committed disproportionately by people from middle and upper classes.

White-collar crime is underreported. A recent Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) study notes that local law enforcement agencies are responsible for reporting white-collar



The 1873 Comstock Law was meant to stop trade in “obscene literature” (including information on sexually transmitted diseases) and “immoral articles” (including birth control devices). This 1915 cartoon satirizes the law. The caption reads: “Your honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!”

White-collar crime: Refers to an illegal act committed by a respectable, high-status person in the course of work.

Street crimes: Crimes that include arson, burglary, assault, and other illegal acts disproportionately committed by people from lower classes.

¹Significantly, black rapists of white women receive much more severe punishments than white rapists of white women (LaFree, 1980). This pattern suggests that race is still an important power factor in the treatment of crime, a subject we have much to say about in the following.

crime but only on a voluntary basis (Barnett, n.d.). Because they receive no funding for compiling the data, few law enforcement agencies do. The FBI rarely bothers to analyze the data and publish results. Thus, for 1997–99, the most recent period for which data seem to be available, local agencies covering a mere 12 percent of the U.S. population reported white-collar crime data.

Despite underreporting, many sociologists think that white-collar crime is costlier to society than street crime. Consider that armed robbers netted perhaps \$400 million in the 1980s, but the savings and loan scandal, in which bankers mismanaged funds and committed fraud, cost the American public \$500 to \$600 *billion* during that decade (Brouwer, 1998). Nonetheless, white-collar criminals, including corporations, are prosecuted relatively infrequently, and they are convicted even less often. This is true even in extreme cases, when white-collar crimes result in environmental degradation or death due, for example, to the illegal relaxation of safety standards. The police and the FBI routinely pursue burglars, but, typically, many of the guilty parties in the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s were not even charged with a misdemeanor.

White-collar crime results in few prosecutions and still fewer convictions for two main reasons. First, much white-collar crime takes place in private and is therefore difficult to detect. For example, corporations may illegally decide to fix prices and divide markets, but executives make these decisions in boardrooms and private clubs that are not generally subject to police surveillance. Second, corporations can afford legal experts, public relations firms, and advertising agencies that advise their clients on how to bend laws, build up their corporate image in the public mind, and influence lawmakers to pass laws “without teeth” (Sherrill, 1997; Sutherland, 1949).

Governments also commit serious crimes. However, punishing political leaders is difficult (Chambliss, 1989). Authoritarian governments often call their critics “terrorists” and even torture people who are fighting for democracy, but such governments rarely have to account for their deeds (Herman and O’Sullivan, 1989). Some analysts argue that even the U.S. government, in spite of its democratic ideals, sometimes behaves in a manner that may be regarded as criminal. For example, while the United States was engaged in a war on drugs in the late 1980s, the CIA participated in the drug trade to help arm the right-wing Contra military forces in Nicaragua (Scott and Marshall, 1991).

In sum, white-collar crime is underreported, underdetected, underprosecuted, and underconvicted because it is the crime of the powerful and the well-to-do. The social construction of crimes against women has changed over the past 30 years, partly because women have become more powerful. In contrast, the social construction of white-collar crime has changed little since 1970 because upper classes are no less powerful now than they were then.

Let us now turn to how sociologists explain the origins of deviance and crime.

Measuring Crime

Some crimes are more common than others, and rates of crime vary over place, over time, and among different social categories. We now describe some of these variations. Then we review the main sociological explanations of crime and deviance.

First, a word about crime statistics. Since 1929, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) has been the major source of crime statistics. Every law enforcement agency in the United States submits records of offenses and arrests to the FBI, usually through a state department of public safety or a state police organization. The results of UCR are available, for example, in the comprehensive annual publication *Crime in the United States*. More recently, the FBI’s National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) has provided more detailed records and statistics.

The UCR and NIBRS are far from perfect. First, much crime is not reported to the police. For example, many common assaults go unreported because the assailant is a friend or a relative of the victim. Similarly, many rape victims are reluctant to report the crime because they are afraid they will be humiliated and stigmatized by making it public. Second, authorities and the wider public decide which criminal acts to report and which to ignore. For instance, if the authorities decide to crack down on drugs, more drug-related crimes will be counted, not because more drug-related crimes occur but because more drug criminals are apprehended. Third, many crimes are not incorporated in major crime indexes published by the FBI. Excluded are many so-called **victimless crimes**, such as prostitution and illegal drug use, which involve violations of the law but arguably do not harm or violate the rights of anyone except perhaps the consensual participants themselves. Also excluded from the indexes are most white-collar crimes.

Recognizing these difficulties, students of criminology often supplement official crime statistics with other sources of information. **Self-report surveys** are especially useful. In such surveys respondents are asked to report their involvement in criminal activities, either as perpetrators or as victims. In the United States, the main source of data on victimization is the National Crime Victimization Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice twice annually since 1973 and involving a nationwide sample of about 80,000 people in 43,000 households (Rennison, 2002). Among other things, such surveys show about the same rate of serious crime (e.g., murder and non-negligent manslaughter) as official statistics but two to three times the rate of less serious crime, such as assault.

A definitive international self-report survey was conducted in 2000 in 17 countries, including the United States (van Kesteren, Mayhew, and Nieuwbeerta, 2001). It found that 38 percent of the approximately 34,000 respondents had been victims of crime in the year preceding the survey. The victimization rate ranged from a high of 58 percent in Australia to a low of 22 percent in Japan, with the United States somewhat above average at 42 percent. Examining the percentage distribution of victims within countries, the researchers found that the United States was just above average with respect to burglary and theft, just below average with respect to contact crime (robberies, sexual incidents, and assaults and threats), and considerably below average with respect to vehicular crime (Figure 6.1).

Survey data are influenced by people's willingness and ability to discuss criminal experiences frankly. Therefore, indirect measures of crime are sometimes used as well. For instance, sales of syringes are a good index of the use of illegal intravenous drugs. Indirect measures are unavailable for many types of crime, however.

Crime Rates

Bearing these caveats in mind, what does the official record show? *Every hour* during 2003, law enforcement agencies in the United States received verifiable reports on an average of 2 murders, 11 rapes, 47 robberies, 98 aggravated assaults, 144 motor vehicle thefts, 246 burglaries, and 802 larceny-thefts (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2003).

Between 1960 and 1992, the United States experienced a roughly 500 percent increase in the rate of violent crime, including murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. (Remember, the *rate* refers to the number of cases per 100,000 people.) Over the same period, the rate of major property crimes—motor vehicle theft, burglary, and larceny-theft—increased about 150 percent.

Although these statistics are alarming, we can take comfort from the fact that the long crime wave that began in the early 1960s and continued to surge in the 1970s

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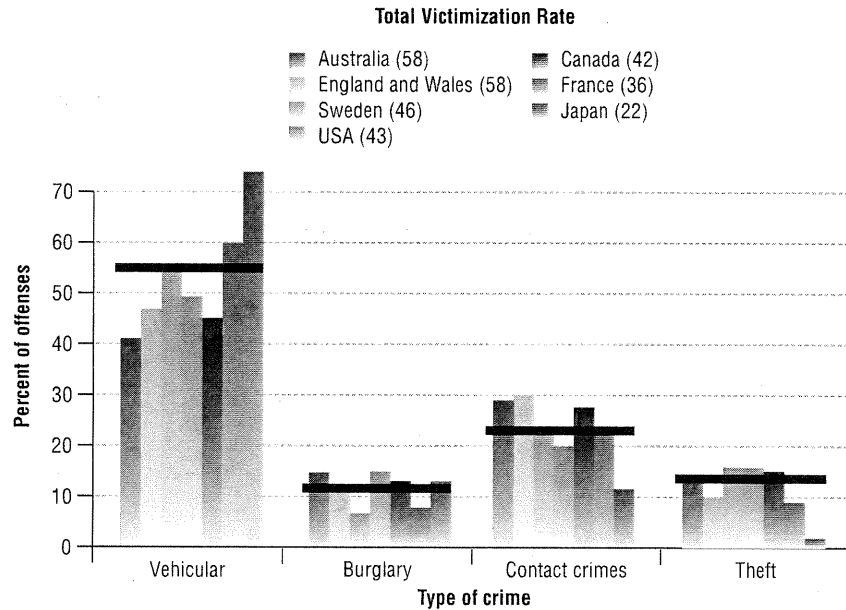
Learn more about **Crime Rates** by going through the **Measuring Crime Rates Data Experiment**.

Victimless crimes: Crimes that involve violations of the law in which no victim has stepped forward and been identified.

Self-report surveys: In such surveys, respondents are asked to report their involvement in criminal activities, either as perpetrators or as victims.

FIGURE 6.1
Victimization: Percent of Offenses by Type of Crime, Seven Countries, 2000
 (percent of population victimized by all crimes).

Note: Contact crimes include robberies, sexual incidents, and assaults and threats. Horizontal lines indicate international average for each type of crime for all 17 countries in the survey. Thirty-eight percent of the population of all 17 countries were victimized in the year preceding the survey.
 Source: van Kesteren, John, Pat Mayhew, Paul Nieuwebeerta (2001: 38, 401).



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eased in the 1980s and decreased in the 1990s. The good news is evident in Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3, which show trends in violent and property crime between 1978 and 2003. Except for aggravated assault, the major crime rates for 1990 were about the same as or lower than the major crime rates for 1980. After about 1990, the rates for all forms of major crime began to fall significantly. The rate of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, for instance, fell 33 percent between 1991 and 2003, and the burglary rate fell 32 percent. The results of the ongoing National Victimization Survey mirror these trends (Rennison, 2002). The 2001 criminal victimization rate is the lowest since the survey began in 1973. It fell about 50 percent between 1993 and 2001. This decrease means that there were only about half the number of crime victims per 1,000 people in the United States in 2001 as in 1993.

Why the Decline?

Sociologists usually mention four factors in explaining the decline. First, in the 1990s, governments put more police on the streets and many communities established their own systems of surveillance and patrol. This trend inhibited street crime. Second, young men are most prone to street crime, but America is aging and the proportion of young men in the population has declined. Third, the economy boomed in the 1990s. Usually, crime rates fluctuate with unemployment rates. When fewer people have jobs, more crime occurs. With an unemployment rate below 5 percent for much of the decade, economic conditions in the United States favored less crime. Finally, and more controversially, some researchers have recently noted that the decline in crime started 19 years after abortion was legalized in the United States. Beginning in 1992 the population included proportionately fewer unwanted children, and unwanted children are more crime prone than wanted children because they tend to receive less parental supervision and guidance (Donahue and Levitt, 2001; Skolnick, 1997; Figure 6.4).

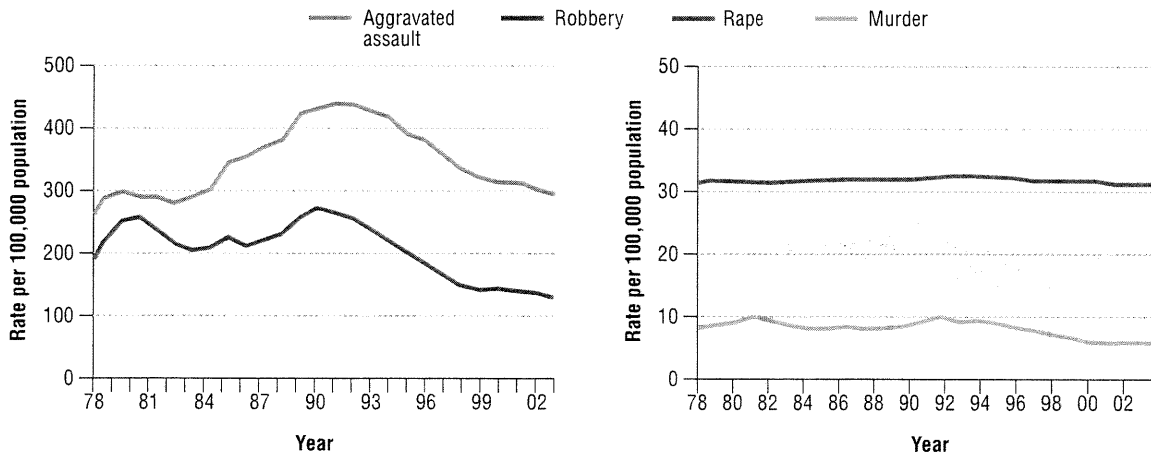


FIGURE 6.2 Violent Crime, United States, 1978-2003. Rate per 100,000 Population

Source: U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999, 2002, 2003.

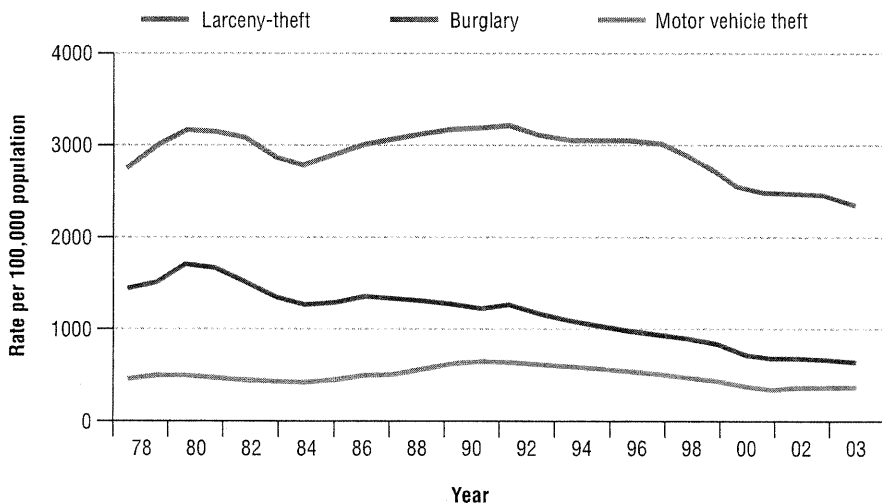


FIGURE 6.3 Property Crime, United States, 1978-2003. Rate per 100,000 Population

U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999, 2002, 2003.

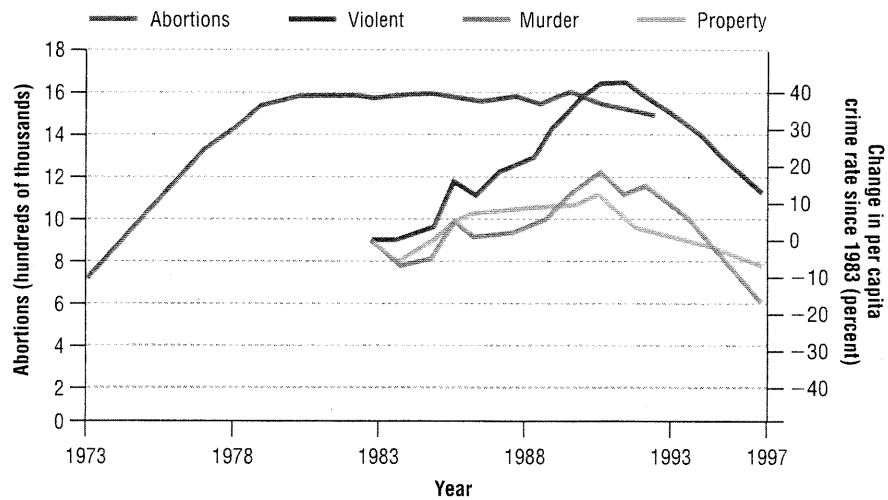
Criminal Profiles

Gender and Age

According to FBI statistics, 77 percent of all people arrested in the United States in 2003 were men. In the violent crime category, men accounted for 82 percent of arrests (FBI, 2003). As in most things, women, and especially teenage women, are catching up, albeit slowly. Men are still six times more likely than women to be arrested. However, with every passing decade women compose a slightly higher percentage of arrests. This change is partly because, in the course of socialization, traditional social controls and definitions

FIGURE 6.4
Abortions and Crime,
1973–1997

Marguerite Holloway from "The Aborted Crime Wave?" *Scientific American*, 281 (6): 23–24. Copyright 1999 Sarah Donelson.



of femininity are less often being imposed on women (see Chapter 10, "Sexuality and Gender").

Most crime is committed by people who have not reached middle age. As Table 6.1 shows, in 2003 Americans between the ages of 15 and 39 accounted for 74 percent of arrests. The 15- to 19-year-old age cohort is the most crime prone.

Race

Table 6.1 shows that crime also has a distinct racial distribution. Although the U.S. Census Bureau classified 75.1 percent of the U.S. population as white in 2000, whites accounted for only 70.7 percent of arrests in 2003. For African Americans, the story is reversed. They accounted for 27.0 percent of arrests but composed only 12.3 percent of the population.

Most sociologists agree that the disproportionately high arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates of African Americans are a result of three main factors: bias in the way crime statistics are collected, the low class position of blacks in American society, and racial discrimination in the criminal justice system (Hagan, 1994).

The statistical bias is largely because of the absence of data on white-collar crimes in the official crime indexes. Because white-collar crimes are committed disproportionately by whites, official crime indexes make it seem as if blacks commit a higher proportion of all crimes than they actually do.

The low class standing of African Americans means that they experience twice the unemployment rate of whites, three times the rate of child poverty, and more than three times the rate of single motherhood. All these factors are associated with higher crime rates. The great majority of poor people are law abiding, but poverty and its associated disabilities are associated with elevated crime rates. The effect of poverty on crime rates is much the same for blacks and whites, but the problem worsened for the African American community in the last quarter of the 20th century. During this period, the U.S. economy was massively restructured and budgets for welfare and inner-city schools were drastically cut. Many manufacturing plants in or near U.S. inner cities were shut down in the 1970s and 1980s, causing high unemployment among local residents, a large number of whom

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were African Americans. Many young African Americans, with little prospect of getting a decent education and finding meaningful work, turned to crime as a livelihood and a source of prestige and self-esteem (Sampson and Wilson, 1995).

Finally, as Jerome Miller has convincingly shown, the criminal justice system efficiently searches out African American males for arrest and conviction (Miller, 1996: 48–88). Many white citizens are more zealous in reporting African American than white offenders. Many police officers are more eager to arrest African Americans than whites. Court officials are less likely to allow African Americans than whites to engage in plea bargaining. Fewer African Americans than whites can afford to pay fines that would prevent them from being jailed. Especially since the onset of the “war against drugs” in the 1980s, African Americans have been targeted, arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned in disproportionate numbers (Box 6.1). The fact that some 40 percent of the U.S. prison population consists of African American men is not just the result of their criminal activity. In the mid-1990s the crime rate of African American men was not much different from their crime rate in 1980, but their imprisonment rate rose more than 300 percent during that period (Tonry, 1995).

Explaining Deviance and Crime

Lep: I remember your li'l ass used to ride dirt bikes and skateboards, actin' crazy an' shit. Now you want to be a gangster, huh? You wanna hang with real muthaf _____ and tear shit up, huh? . . . Stand up, get your l'il ass up. How old is you now anyway?

Kody: Eleven, but I'll be twelve in November.

—SANYIKA SHAKUR (1993: 8)

“Monster” Scott Kody eagerly joined the notorious gang the Crips in South Central Los Angeles in 1975 when he was in grade 6. He was released from Folsom Prison on parole in 1988, at the age of 24. Until about 3 years before his release, he was one of the most ruthless gang leaders in Los Angeles and the California prison system. In 1985, however, he decided to reform. He adopted the name of Sanyika Shakur, became a black nationalist, and began a crusade against gangs. Few people in his position have chosen that path. In Kody’s heyday, about 30,000 gang members roamed Los Angeles County. Today there are more than 150,000. It is estimated that in 2002 there were 21,500 youth gangs in the United States with 731,500 members (“Gangs . . .,” 2005).

What makes the criminal life so attractive to so many young men and women? In general, why do deviance and crime occur at all? Sociologists have proposed dozens of explanations. However, we can group them into two basic types. **Motivational theories** identify the social factors that *drive* people to deviance and crime. Many

TABLE 6.1
Arrests by Sex, Age Cohort, and Race, United States, 2003

Sex	Percent of Population*	Percent of Arrests
Male	49.1	76.8
Female	50.9	23.2
Total	100.0	100.0
Age Cohort	Percent of Population*	Percent of Arrests
Under 10	14.0	0.2
10–14	7.3	5.0
15–19	7.1	21.0
20–24	6.8	20.0
25–29	6.8	12.5
30–34	7.2	10.7
35–39	8.2	10.0
40–44	8.1	9.0
45–49	7.2	5.8
50–54	6.1	3.0
55–59	4.8	1.4
60+	16.4	1.3
Total	100.0	100.1**
Racial Group	Percent of Population*	Percent of Arrests
White	75.1	70.6
Black	12.3	27.0
American Indian and Alaskan Native	0.9	1.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	3.7	1.2
Other***	8.0	—
Total	100.0	100.1

*According to the 2000 census.
 **Does not equal 100.0 because of rounding.
 ***“Other” includes people who declare two or more races. The race classification used by the U.S. Census Bureau (left column) differs from that used by the FBI in its *Uniform Crime Report* (right column). Therefore, the two columns are only approximately comparable.
 Sources: Calculated from U.S. Census Bureau (2003); FBI (2003).

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Motivational theory: This type of theory identifies the social factors that drive people to commit deviant and criminal acts.