

# Chapter Goals



## **General Context of Nature and Extent of Delinquency**

- Be familiar with ways to gather data on delinquency
- Know problems with collecting data on delinquency
- Know how age and gender influence juvenile crime rate
- List and discuss social correlates of delinquency
- Discuss concept of the chronic offender
- Be familiar with factors that predict teen victimization

# Case Profile: Jamesetta's Story



JAMESETTA WAS BORN IN A POOR, URBAN  
NEIGHBORHOOD

- Parents struggled with substance abuse, poverty and unemployment
- Jamesetta suffered physical and sexual abuse
- Was placed in foster care at age 5
- At age 13, assaulted her foster mother and was placed in the juvenile justice system
- Foster home placement was terminated and she was forced to live with her aunt and uncle
- Became pregnant at 14

# Measuring Delinquency with the Uniform Crime Reports



- FBI compiles information on the number of criminal acts reported, this information is published in the Uniform Crime Report
  - The UCR is compiled of statistics from more than 17,000 police departments
- Part I offenses include homicide, rape, burglary etc.
- Part II offenses include vandalism, liquor law violations, and drug trafficking

# VALIDITY OF THE UCR



- Victim surveys show that less than half of all victims report the crime to the police
  - i.e. teens are unlikely to report crimes to the police in which they are vulnerable
- The arrest data count only adolescents who have been *caught*
- Victimless crimes are significantly undercounted
- UCR arrest statistics are disaggregated by age

# Measuring Delinquency with Survey Research



- Sampling- selecting a limited number of people for study as a representative of a population
- It is important to not make selection too broad in terms of accuracy

# The NCVS Survey



- National Crime Victimization Survey
  - A comprehensive nationwide survey of victimization in the U.S.

## **Validity of the NCVS**

- Findings must be interpreted with caution
  - Over-reporting due to victims' misinterpretation
  - Inability to record the personal criminal activity of those interviewed
  - Inadequate question format

# Self-Report Surveys



- Asks adolescents to describe, in detail, their recent and lifetime participation in criminal activity
- Contains questions about attitudes, values, and behaviors
- Self-reports can be used to examine the offense histories of the criminal population

## Validity of Self-Reports

- Comparisons between groups can be highly misleading
- Can skew data and provide misleading results

# Evaluating Primary Data Sources



- UCR remains the standard unit of analysis
- NCVS includes unreported crime and important information on the personal characteristics of victims
- Self-Report surveys can provide information on the personal characteristics of offenders



# Crime Trends in the U.S



- Crime rates increased gradually following the 1930s until the 1960s
- UCR finds about 14 million arrests are now being made each year, or about 4,700 per 100,000 population

## Official Delinquency Trends

- In 2008, juveniles were responsible for 16% of Part I violent crime arrests and 26% of property crime arrests
- Number of offenses and offenders have been in a decade long decline

# Crime Trends in the U.S cont.



- Self Reported Patterns and Trends
  - Dark figures of crime are the incidents of crime and delinquency that go undetected by police
- Monitoring the future (MTF) is the nation's most important ongoing self-report survey
  - If the MTF are accurate, the juvenile crime problem is **much** greater than the official statistics would lead us to believe

# What the Future Holds...



Some experts predict a significant increase in teen violence if current population trends persist

- Approximately 50 million school-age children in the U.S.
- “Crack babies” turn out to be extremely prone to delinquency activity
- Serious social and economic conditions can alter the trajectory of delinquency

# Correlates of Delinquency



- Time and Place of Delinquency
  - Most acts occur in the Summer
  - Large urban areas have the highest juvenile violence rates; rural areas have the lowest
- Gender and Delinquency
  - Generally, males are more delinquent than females
  - Generally, there are more similarities than differences between male and female delinquents

# Correlates of Delinquency, cont.



- Race and Delinquency
  - Racial minorities are disproportionately represented in the arrest statistics
  - American youth are more likely to be formally arrested
- Bias Effects
  - Racial Profiling
  - Caucasians are more likely to receive lenient sentences

# Social Class and Delinquency



- Kids in all classes and levels of society commit crime
  - Serious crime is more prevalent in socially disorganized lower class areas
- Law-violating youth groups thrive in a climate that undermines and neutralizes adult supervision

African American youths who develop a police record are more likely to be severely punished if picked up again and sent back to juvenile court

# Age and Delinquency



Statistics tell us young people are arrested at a disproportionate rate to their population numbers

- Adults age 50+ account for only 6% of arrests
- Almost all people commit less crime as they age because:
  - Growing older means having to face the future
  - With maturity comes ability to resist “quick fix”
  - Personalities can change with age
  - Changes in human biology

# Chronic Offending



- Although most age out of crime, a small number of youths began to violate the law early and continue at a high rate well into adulthood

## Chronic Recidivist

- Someone who has been arrested 5 times or more before the age of 18...



# Delinquency in a Birth Cohort



- The chronic career offender is most likely associated with the research efforts of Marvin Wolfgang
  - 54% of the sample's delinquent youth were repeat offenders

# Stability in Crime: From Delinquent to Criminal



- Studies indicate chronic juvenile offenders continue their law-violating careers as adults
  - “continuity of crime”
- Kids who are disruptive as early as age 5 or 6 are most likely to exhibit a disruptive behavior as they age

# Juvenile Victimization



- Juveniles are also victims of crime, and data from victim surveys can help us understand the nature of juvenile victimization
- NCVS data indicate that young people are more likely to be victims of crime than adults
- Male teenagers have a significantly higher chance than females of becoming victims

# The Victims and Their Criminals



- Teens tend to be victimized by their peers (i.e. other teens)
- Victimization is mostly intraracial
  - i.e. “white against white”, “black against black”, “Latino against Latino”, etc...
- Most teens are victimized by people with whom they are acquainted

# Conclusion



- Problems associated with collecting data on delinquency
- Recent trends in the delinquency rate
- Ability to recognize how age and gender influence crime rate
- List and discuss the social correlates of delinquency
- The concept of the chronic offender

# Key Terms



- ☐ FBI
- ☐ Uniform Crime Report
- ☐ Part I/II Offenses
- ☐ Disaggregated
- ☐ Self-report Survey
- ☐ Sampling
- ☐ Population
- ☐ Aging out process
- ☐ Victimization
- ☐ Chronic Recidivist
- ☐ Age of Onset
- ☐ Racial Threat Theory
- ☐ Chronic Juvenile Offenders
- ☐ Dark Figures of Crime



The End

*Chapter 2*

The Nature and Extent of Delinquency