Chapter 2

II. Primary Sources of Crime Data
   A. Official Record Research
      1. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR)
         a. Includes crimes reported to local police departments and
            number of arrests made by police agencies
         b. Index or Part I crimes: murder and non-negligent
            manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault,
            burglary, larceny, arson, and motor vehicle theft
      2. Compiling the Uniform Crime Report
         a. Monthly reports of known crime from law enforcement
            agencies
         b. Monthly reports of crimes cleared
         c. Also reported
            i. Data on the number of clearances involving the
               arrest of juvenile offenders
            ii. Data on the value of property stolen and recovered
                in connection with Part I crimes
            iii. Detailed information on homicides
         d. Three methods to express crime data
            i. Number of crimes reported and arrests made
            ii. Crime rates per 100,000
            iii. Changes in the number and rate of crime over time
      3. Validity of the Uniform Crime Report
         a. Reporting practices
            i. Not all crimes are reported.
            ii. Victim surveys indicate less than 40 percent are
                reported.
         b. Law enforcement practices
            i. Changes in how reporting is done.
            ii. Law enforcement interpretation of the definitions of
                index crimes
            iii. Systematic errors
            iv. Some may deliberately alter their reports to improve
                image.
            v. Boosting efficiency may increase crime rates.
            vi. Higher crime may result from improved technology
                or better-qualified personnel.
c. Methodological problems
   i. No federal crimes are reported.
   ii. Reports are voluntary and vary in accuracy and completeness.
   iii. Not all police departments submit reports.
   iv. The FBI uses estimates in its total crime projections.
   v. If an offender commits multiple crimes, only the most serious is recorded.
   vi. Each act is listed as a single offense for some crimes but not for others.
   vii. Incomplete acts are lumped together with completed ones.
   viii. Important differences exist between the FBI’s definition of certain crimes and those used in a number of states.

4. NIBRS: the future of the Uniform Crime Report
   a. National Incident-Based Reporting System – a program that collects data on each reported crime incident
   b. Includes a brief account of each incident and arrest
   c. Information provided on 46 specific offenses
   d. Hate and bias crime information provided
   e. Over twenty states have implemented NIBRS

B. Survey Research
   1. Used to measure attitudes, beliefs, values, characteristics, and behavior
      a. Sampling: a representative group
      b. Population: the entire group from which a representative sample is taken
      c. Cross-sectional survey: representative of all members of society
   
   2. Self-report surveys
      a. Participants asked to describe their recent and lifetime participation in criminal activity; asked about attitudes, values, and behaviors
      b. Most focus on juvenile delinquency and youth crime
      c. Also used with prison inmates and drug users
3. Self-report patterns
   a. Monitoring the Future study – University of Michigan Institute for Social Research
      i. Annually since 1978; asks 2,500 high school seniors about their substance abuse
      ii. Data indicate the number of people who break the law is far greater than the number projected by official statistics.

4. Validity of self-reports
   a. Responses accurately reflect respondents’ true life experiences.
   b. Critics disagree
      i. Cannot expect respondents to candidly admit illegal acts
      ii. May exaggerate criminal acts, forget, or be confused
      iii. Many trivial offenses in self-reports
   c. “Missing cases,” phenomenon is a problem.
   d. Reporting accuracy differs among racial, ethnic, and gender groups.
   e. The “known group method” used to verify self-report data

C. The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
   1. Designed to address non-reporting issue
      a. Large nationally representative sample – 84,000 households, 149,000 people age 12 or older
      b. People report victimization experiences.
      c. High completion rate
      d. Considered relatively unbiased, valid estimation of victimizations
      e. Finds many crimes go unreported to police

   2. Validity of the NCVS
      a. Overreporting due to misinterpretation of events
      b. Underreporting due to embarrassment, fear, or forgetfulness
      c. Inability to record the personal criminal activity of those interviewed
      d. Sampling errors
      e. Inadequate question format that invalidates responses
D. Evaluating Primary Crime Data Sources

1. UCR
   a. Strengths
      i. Contains data on number and characteristics of people arrested
      ii. Arrest data can provide a measure of criminal activity.
      iii. Sole source of data on homicide
      iv. Standard upon which most criminological research is based
   b. Weaknesses
      i. Omits those crimes not reported to the police

2. NCVS
   a. Strengths
      i. Includes unreported crimes
      ii. Includes important information on the personal characteristics of victims
   b. Weaknesses
      i. Limited sample
      ii. Relies on personal recollections
      iii. Does not include data on crime patterns, including murder and drug abuse

3. Self-report surveys
   a. Strength: can provide information on personal characteristics of offenders
   b. Weakness: relies on honesty of criminal offenders and drug abusers, a population not generally known for accuracy and integrity

4. Overall
   a. Crime patterns and trends often quite similar
   b. Agreement re: personal characteristics of serious criminals
   c. Reliable indicators of changes and fluctuations in yearly crime rates
III. Secondary Sources of Crime Data

A. Cohort Research
   1. Difficult, expensive, and time consuming to follow a cohort over time
   2. Sometimes researchers do retrospective studies.

B. Experimental Research
   1. True experiments have three elements
      a. Random selection of subjects
      b. Control or comparison group
      c. An experimental condition
   2. Quasi-experimental design if it is impossible to randomly select subjects or manipulate conditions
   3. Criminological experiments
      a. Relatively rare because they are difficult and expensive to conduct
      b. Ethical and legal roadblocks to manipulating subjects’ lives
      c. Require long follow-up to verify results

C. Observational and Interview Research
   1. Sometimes researches focus on a relatively few subjects.
   2. Sometimes they observe criminals firsthand to gather insight into their motives and activities.
   3. Sometimes they bring subjects into a laboratory setting to observe how they react to a predetermined condition or stimulus.

D. Meta-Analysis and Systematic Review
   1. Meta-analysis
      a. Gathers data from a number of previous studies
      b. Compatible information and data are extracted and pooled together.
      c. When analyzed, more powerful and valid indicator of results than a single study
   2. Systematic review
      a. Collect findings from previous studies addressing a particular problem
      b. Appraise and synthesize the evidence
      c. Use collective evidence to address a particular scientific question
E. Data Mining
   1. Using computers to analyze large data sets from one or more sources
      a. Goal: identify significant and recognizable patterns, trends, and relationships not otherwise detected
      b. Used to predict future events or behaviors

F. Crime Mapping
   1. Creating graphic representations of the spatial geography of crime
      a. Simple maps indicating crime locations or concentrations
      b. Used to predict future events or behaviors
IV. Crime Trends

A. Changes in Crime Trends Over Time

1. 1830-1860: gradual increase in violent crime
2. 1880 - World War I: reported crimes decreased
3. WWI – 1930: crime rates declined until 1930
4. 1930 – 1960: crimes rates increased gradually; homicide rate declined
5. 1960 – 1981: crime rate growth had a greater rate of increase
7. 1984 – 1991: crime rate increased
8. 1991 – 2004: declines in crime, including teenage criminality
9. Reasons for crime trends:
   a. Age
      i. Graying of America
      ii. Declining birthrate
   b. Economy – strong economy helps lower crime rates
   c. Social malaise
      i. Increase in social problems related to rising crime rates
      ii. Racial conflict may increase crime rates
   d. Abortion
      i. Availability of abortion related to reduced crime rates
      ii. Selective abortion by women most at risk to have children
      iii. Better maternal, familial, or fetal care due to having fewer children
   e. Guns
      i. Availability of guns
      ii. More teens with guns
   f. Gangs
      i. Gang members more likely to possess guns
      ii. Crime associated with gangs
      iii. “Younger brother syndrome” – younger brothers avoid gangs after seeing what happened to older brothers.
   g. Drug use
      i. Relationship between violent crime rate and crack epidemic
      ii. Decrease in crack and a decrease in violence
h. Media
   i. Violent themed media
   ii. Violence on TV correlated to aggressive behaviors

i. Medical technology
   i. Quality of healthcare significantly reduces murder rates.
   ii. Fluctuations in murder rates linked to availability of emergency medical services

j. Justice Policy
   i. Increase in the number of police on the streets
   ii. Aggressive police tactics
   iii. Tough laws and lengthy prison terms

k. Crime opportunities
   i. Market conditions and the low price of pilferable items
   ii. Improved home and commercial security devices

B. Trends in Violent Crime
   1. Decrease in the numbers of murder, rape, assault, robbery
   2. Violence in the United States has decreased 24% during the past decade.
   3. Between 1991 and 2004, murder rates dropped more than 40%.

C. Trends in Property Crime
   1. Drop in the property crime rate – larceny, motor vehicle theft, arson
   2. Not as dramatic as for violent crime rate

D. Trends in Victimization Data (NCVS Findings) – confirms UCR’s view of declining rates is accurate

E. Trends in Self-Reporting
   1. More stable than result indicated in UCR
   2. Drugs and alcohol marked increase in the 1970s, leveled off in the 1980s, increased in mid-1990s, then declined
V. What the Future Holds
   A. Fox predicts a significant increase in teen violence; not all criminologists agree.
   B. Steffensmeier and Harer predict a moderate increase in crime.
   C. The Internet and e-commerce have created new classes of crime.
VI. Crime Patterns

A. The Ecology of Crime
   1. Day, season, and climate
      a. Most crimes occur during the warm summer months of July and August.
      b. Murders and robberies occur frequently during December and January.
      c. Crime rates are higher on the first day of the month.
   2. Temperature
      a. Association between temperature and crime resembles an inverted U-curve.
      b. Crime rates rise with rising temperatures.
      c. Crime rates decline around 85 degrees.
   3. Regional differences
      a. Large urban areas have the highest violence rates.
      b. Exceptions to this trend are large transient or seasonal populations.
      c. Some criminologists believe regional cultural values may influence crime; others believe regional differences are explained by economic disparities.

B. Use of Firearms
   1. Play a dominant role in criminal activity
   2. Zimring and Hawkins believe that the proliferation of handguns and the high rate of lethal violence they cause separate the crime problem in the United States from the rest of the world.
   3. Kleck and Gertz maintain personal gun use may be a deterrent to crime.

C. Social Class, Socioeconomic Conditions, and Crime
   1. Crime is a lower-class phenomenon.
      a. Instrumental crimes
      b. Expressive crimes
   2. UCR data indicate higher crime rates in inner-city, high-poverty areas.
   3. Prisoners were members of the lower class, unemployed, or underemployed before incarceration.
4. **Alternative explanation – relationship between social class and crime may be a function of law enforcement practices.**
   a. Police devote more resources to poor areas and apprehension rates are higher there.
   b. Police more likely to arrest and prosecute lower class citizens.

5. **Class and self-reports**
   a. 1950s – no relationship between social class and youth crime
   b. Little support for the idea that crime is primarily a lower-class phenomenon
   c. Many self-report instruments include trivial offenses.
   d. If only serious offenses are considered, a significant association can be observed.

6. **Class-crime controversy**
   a. If crime is related to social class, then economic and social factors cause crime.
   b. Why the uncertainty? – methods to measure social class vary widely
   c. Possible that the association between social class and crime is more complex than a simple linear relationship

7. **Does class matter:**
   a. Official crime is more prevalent among the lower class.
   b. Less serious crime is spread more evenly throughout the social structure.
   c. Lower class more likely to suffer psychological abnormalities that may promote crime – anxiety and conduct disorders.
   d. Communities lacking in economic and social opportunities produce high levels of frustration.
D. Age and Crime

1. Age is inversely related to criminality.
2. Younger people commit crime more often than do their older peers.
3. Relationship has been stable since 1935.
4. Aging out of crime
   a. Crime peaks in adolescence then declines rapidly thereafter.
   b. Agnew – the peak in criminal activity can be linked to essential features of adolescence in modern, industrial societies.
      i. A reduction in supervision
      ii. An increase in social and academic demands
      iii. Participation in a larger, more diverse, peer-oriented world
      iv. An increased desire for adult privileges
      v. A reduced ability to cope in a legitimate manner and increased incentive to solve problems in a criminal manner
   c. Aging out is a function of the natural history of the human life cycle.

E. Gender and Crime

1. All three types of crime data confirm male crime rates are much higher than those of females.
2. In self-reports, males report criminal behavior more than females but not to the degree suggested by official data.
3. Explaining gender differences: traits and temperament
   a. Early criminologists pointed to emotional, physical, and psychological differences to explain crime rate differences.
   b. Masculinity hypothesis
   c. Chivalry hypothesis
4. Explaining gender differences: socialization and development
   a. Girls socialized to avoid being violent and aggressive
   b. Girls supervised more closely
   c. Research shows most girls develop moral values that strongly discourage antisocial behavior.
   d. Gender-based differences in human development that help shape behavior choices
      i. Cognitive differences
      ii. Socialization differences

5. Explaining gender differences: cognitive differences
   a. Girls superior to boys in verbal ability
   b. Girls, even at an early age, more empathic than boys

6. Explaining gender differences: feminist views
   a. Liberal feminist theory – traditionally lower crime rates for women could be explained by their “second-class” economic and social position.
   b. As women’s social roles changed and their lifestyles became more like men’s, it was believed that their crime rates would converge.
   c. Self-report studies seem to indicate that the pattern of female criminality is similar to that of male criminality.

7. Is convergence likely?
   a. Female arrest rates seem to be increasing at a faster pace than males.
   b. The “emancipation of women” may have had relatively little influence on female crime rates.
   c. Changes in police activity may explain differences in arrest trends.
F. Race and Crime
1. Minorities involved in a disproportionate share of criminal activity.
2. Responsible for a disproportionate number of Part I and II arrests
3. Possible reasons
   a. Data reflect racial differences in the crime rate.
   b. May reflect police bias in the arrest process
4. Research – no relationship between race and self-reported delinquency
5. Racism and discrimination
   a. Economic deprivation
   b. Legacy of racism and discrimination
   c. Black crime may be a function of the socialization process.
6. Institutional racism
7. Economic and social disparity
8. Family dissolution
9. Convergence possible if economic and social obstacles can be removed.

G. Chronic Offenders/Criminal Careers
1. Most offenders commit a single criminal act and discontinue antisocial activity after arrest.
2. Small group of persistent offenders account for a majority of all criminal offenses.
3. Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin
   a. “Chronic 6 percent” of total sample were arrested five or more times
   b. Responsible for 51.9% of all offenses
   c. Arrests and court experience did little to deter the chronic offender.
4. What causes chronicity?
   a. Kids exposed to a variety of personal and social problems at an early age are the most at risk to repeat offending; “early onset”
5. Persistence – the continuity of crime
   a. Children who are disruptive at age five or six the most likely to persist in crime
   b. Apprehension and punishment have little effect.
   c. Best predictor of future behavior is past behavior.
6. Implications of the chronic offender concept
   a. Chronic offender is the central focus of crime policy.
   b. Three strikes policies