The Measurement and Patterning of Criminal Behavior

Chapter Three
Objectives of Measuring Criminal Behavior

- Understand the **nature** of the criminal offender
- Evaluate the **effectiveness** of criminal justice programs
- Aides in **decision making** in the legal system
Acquiring Data

- Survey Research
- Survey
  - ...a method for systematically obtaining standardized information about a population.
- Cross-sectional
  - ...the simultaneous measurement of subjects who come from different background and groups.
Acquiring Data

- Survey Research Cont’d:
  - Population-
    - …the total group of people to be studied.

- Sample-
  - …a limited number of people who represent the entire population. (e.g. self report studies, victimization studies)
Acquiring Data

- Longitudinal Research-
- ...involves the observation of a group of people who share a like characteristic over a period of time. (Wolfgang’s study of Delinquency in a Birth Cohort)
Acquiring Data

- Aggregate Data Research-
- Research existing data sources-
- Primary Data Source-
  - looking into actual files of police, courts, prisons, schools.
- Secondary Data Source-
  - looking into statistical reports already generated, e.g. census, state agencies
Sources of Information

- Uniform Crime Report – UCR
- Published- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- How is the UCR compiled?
- Record of crimes reported to the local PD’s, SO, CHP, etc. forwarded to the FBI.
- Content of Uniform Crime Report
Uniform Crime Report

- Content —
- Type 1 Crimes – Called Index Crimes
  - Murder
  - Manslaughter
  - Forcible Rape
  - Robbery
  - Aggravated Assault
Uniform Crime Report

- Content: Cont’d
- Burglary
- Larceny
- Auto Theft
- Arson
- Hate Crimes
Criticisms –

Reporting Practices – Many crimes are not reported.

Focuses primarily on index crimes – not white collar crimes (diverts attention).

Indicates behavior of Police – Reflects those who got arrested, not the ones who got away. (Selective enforcement)
Uniform Crime Report

- Criticisms- Cont’d
- Law Enforcement Practices – Discrepancy in reporting – LAPD vs Boston
- Methodological Problems – No Federal crimes are reported, not all police departments report multiple crimes.
Social Relationships and Reporting Crime

- As the *seriousness* of the crime is increased, so does the reporting – (use of weapon)
- As the *value* of the loss increases, so does the reporting
- Victims over 35 years of *age* are more likely to report crimes than those under 35
- As *income* increases, so does reporting
Sources of Information

National Crime Victimization Survey

- A National Survey – Sampling of housing units by means of a complex, multistage sampling technique.
- 55,000 households
- 110,000 individuals
- Respondent over 12 years of age
- Sub-groups interviewed twice each year
National Crime Victimization Survey

- Components – Cont’d
- Victimization suffered in the preceding six months.
National Crime Victimization Survey

- Criticisms –
- Victims misinterpretation of the events
- Embarrassment of reporting crimes to interviewer
- Inability to report drug use, gambling, murder
- Solicits information only on street crimes, not on white-collar crimes
National Crime Victimization Survey

- NCVS Data indicates that only:
  - 45% of violent crimes
  - 31% of forcible rape
  - 57% of aggravated assault
  - 35% of property crimes (theft)
  - …are reported to the police (UCR)

(Table 3.3 page 57 of text)
Sources of Information

- Self Report Studies –
  - ...are designed to allow participants to reveal information about their own violations of the law.
  - Appropriate for administering surveys to large groups – Prisons, jails, school populations (Focused on juvenile delinquency and youth crime)
Self Report Studies

- Self Reports make it possible to:
- Assess the number of population who have committed crimes
- Their frequency
- Measures attitudes, values, personal characteristics and behaviors
Self Report Studies

- Why is Self Report Data thought to be significant? (Reliable, valid)
- The subjects remain anonymous
- Doesn’t rely on the offenders being arrested
- Eliminates the (class bias) of the police
- (Includes selective enforcement)
Self Report Studies

- Criticisms –
- Some people may exaggerate their criminal acts
- Some people may forget about them
- Some people may be confused about what is being asked
Trends in U.S. Crime Rates

- Review of Objectives of Measuring Criminal Behavior –
- Comparison of Figure 3.1 and 3.2, page 62, reflect that both data sources showed declining crime through most of the 1990’s, which demonstrates the effectiveness of criminal justice programs – (Decision making)
Patterning of Criminal Behavior

- International Comparison –
- Western Industrial Nations-
- Highest homicide rate
- Highest rate of other violent crimes
- Property crime rate is consistent with other nations
- Why?
Patterning of Criminal Behavior

- Geographical Patterns within the U.S.-
- UCR – The South and West have the highest rates of violent crime, the Mid-west has the lowest.
- UCR – The West has the highest rate of property crime.
Patterning of Criminal Behavior

- Community Size-
- UCR – Figure 3.3, page 65 –
- Both Violent and property crime rates in our largest cities are much higher than the rates in rural communities.
Patterning of Criminal Behavior

- Seasonal and Climatological Variations –
  - Summer – Higher rates of assaults, rapes, homicides, and (Property crimes) burglary and larceny.
  - Winter – Robbery
  - Why?
Social Patterns of Crime

- Gender and Crime –
- UCR –
- Men account for 83% of violent crime arrest, (Female 17%)
- Men account for 71% of property crime arrest, (Female 29%)
- NCVS- Victims report men account for 86% of all violent offenders (Figure 3.4)
Gender and Crime

- Explaining Women’s Low Crime Rate –
- Difference in socialization of sexes
- Differential opportunities – (double standard)
- Social attachments – Families, schools, other social institutions
- Peer influence – Girls less vulnerable to peer influences
Social Patterns of Crime

- Race and Crime - UCR and NCVS
- African-Americans and street crime –
- Blacks comprise 12-13% of U.S. population - However, they represent…
- 34% of all Index crime arrest
- 40% of all Index violent crime arrest
- Black arrest for **homicide** is (8) times greater than the white arrest rate
Social Patterns of Crime

- Class and Crime –
- Education –
- Two-thirds, (66%) of prisoners lack high school diploma – (70%) of U.S. prison population considered illiterate.
- “Status Attainment” – Relationship between education/occupation - $$
- Types of Status -
Class and Crime

- “Underclass” – Definition of Poverty
- Families living in poverty, unemployed and health/mental conditions of population.
- Relationship – Youths living longest in poverty (underclass), were more likely to be delinquent.
Social Patterns of Crime

- Age and Crime –
- Age Cohort – 10 to 25 years
- Represents 21% of U.S. population –
- Represents 55% of all arrests
- Criminal behavior peaks at ages 17/18 and then declines.
Age and Crime

- Aging Out Process – (Page 74)
- Consequences of socialization and changing social roles.
- Maturity – Demands of job and family.
- Job and family replaces peers and gangs as reference groups.
- Substitute conventional for illegitimate opportunity structures.