crime and deviance

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Many people are likely to be the victim of a crime at some time in their life: phone theft, car theft, domestic burglary, or, in extreme cases, a rape or murder. Much crime appears to be the result of a long-term profession of crime. Much crime seems to have been motivated by drug use and the need to purchase illegal drugs. At the same time, growing numbers of people, including many young people, are likely to be involved in fairly regular drug use even if they do not become involved in committing other types of offence.

How are we to understand this growth of criminality and deviance, and how are we to explain how some people come to identify with their deviant acts and come to see themselves and to be seen by others as criminals, drug users, and so on? These are the questions that we examine in this chapter. We look at various forms of deviant behaviour and the ways in which they are shaped by the criminal law and informal social relations. We ask how reliable the evidence on deviance can be when it is produced by these very forces of social control: to what extent, for example, can we put our trust in the apparent facts about mobile phone theft that we have reported above?

Deviance is nonconformity to social norms or expectations. For many people, the word ‘deviance’ is used only in relation to moral, religious, or political norms. The ‘deviant’ is seen as someone whose behaviour departs from normal moral standards (for example, those concerned with sexual behaviour), or who deviates from a political or religious orthodoxy. The sociological concept of deviance, however, takes a broader point of view and recognizes that there can be deviation from social norms of all kinds.
Along with sexual deviants, political deviants, and religious deviants must be counted those whose behaviour runs counter to legal or customary norms more generally —criminals, the mentally ill, alcoholics, and many others. What makes these people deviant is the fact that their behaviour seems to run counter to the norms of a social group. It is this that the homosexual, the prostitute, the child molester, the schizophrenic, the suicide, the radical, the heretic, the Ecstasy user, and the burglar all have in common. All of them seem to engage in behaviour that is not seen as normal in their society.

A no form of behaviour is deviant in and of itself. To judge behaviour as deviant is to judge it from the standpoint of the norms of a particular social group. The defining statement for the sociological study of deviance is Becker’s justly famous claim that:

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infractions constitute deviance, and by applying these rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label. (Becker 1953: 9)

Even where there is a consensus over standards of behaviour within a society, these standards may change over time. What was formerly considered as normal, conformist behaviour may come to be seen as deviant. High levels of consensus are uncommon, and it is more typical for there to be rival definitions of normality and deviance within a society. In these circumstances, conformity to the expectations of one group may mean deviating from the expectations of another. Revolutionary terrorists, for example, may be regarded as deviants from the standpoint of established social groups, but they are seen very differently by members of their own political movement.

In all these contested situations, it is the views of the powerful that prevail, as they have the ability to make their views count. This insight is particularly associated with a so-called labelling theory of deviance that is closely linked to symbolic interactionism. According to this point of view, it is the fact of being labelled as a deviant by the members of a powerful or dominant social group that makes an action deviant. This is why ethnic minorities are in many societies treated as deviant groups if they are seen as violating the normal customs and practices of the majority ethnic group. Similarly, those women who depart from what is seen as normal female behaviour by, say, entering what are regarded as male occupations, might be regarded as deviant by many men and by some other women.

Whether the behaviour of a person is deviant depends upon whose values are taken as being the basis for determining what is to count as normal or conformist behaviour.

In this section we will look at a number of forms of deviance. We will look at the formation of deviant identities through interaction between deviants and the agents of social control. We will show that what is deviant in one context may be conformist in another, and that the critical element is the social reaction that labels behaviour one way or another. Having discussed some of the features that are common to all forms of deviance, we will look in more detail at criminality, drug use and abuse, and sexual difference.

**Biology and deviance**

In the past, but also in some more recent discussions, the social dimension of deviance has often been ignored. Deviant behaviour has been seen in purely individual terms and as something to be explained by biology. From this point of view, all ‘normal’ individuals conform to social expectations, and so those who differ must have something wrong with them. A deviant body is seen as explaining a deviant mind and deviant behaviour. Such a claim ignores the fact that no behaviour—except, perhaps, purely automatic reflexes such as blinking in bright sunlight—can be seen independently of the meanings that it carries and the social contexts in which it occurs.

**Evolution, race, and deviance**

For many writers on difference and deviance in the nineteenth century, and still for some today, biology provides the key to explaining human behaviour. Nineteenth-century evolutionary theory led to the widespread acceptance of the idea that there was a ‘great chain of being’, an evolutionary hierarchy of species that connected humans to apes and to the lower animals. The supposed racial divisions of the human species that we discuss in Chapter 6, pp. XXX–XXX, were all accorded their place in this evolutionary hierarchy.

It was widely believed that individuals ‘recapitulate’ the evolution of their species in their own biological development. They go through various animal-like stages in their foetal development and during their later development outside the womb. Particular races, it was held, had developed only to the particular level that was allowed by their biology: the white races had developed the furthest, while the black races showed an inferior development. White children, for example, were seen as having reached the same stage of evolution as black adults, who had not developed beyond these more ‘childlike’ characteristics and forms of behaviour.

These assumptions underpinned contemporary views of deviance. The nineteenth-century English doctor John
Down, for example, classified various forms of mental disability in terms of the ‘lower’ races to which their characteristics corresponded. He argued that some ‘idiots’ were of the ‘Ethiopian’ variety, some of the ‘Malay’ or ‘American’ type, and others of the ‘Mongolian’ type. His special study of the genetics of the latter group meant that those with Down’s syndrome were, for many years, known as ‘Mongols’—a derogatory label that continued to be very widely used until the 1970s. Each society tends to see its own members as being the highest, most-evolved exemplar of the human species. The Japanese, for example, saw themselves as being at the pinnacle of evolution and civilization, and their term for Down’s syndrome was ‘Englishism’.

The most notorious of these evolutionary approaches to deviant behaviour was the theory of crime set out by Cesare Lombroso, who held that many criminals had been born with ‘atavistic’ features. Criminals had definite biological failings that prevented them from developing to a fully human level. They showed, perhaps, certain ape-like characteristics, or sometimes merely ‘savage’ features that gave them the distinct anatomical characteristics from which they could easily be identified: large jaws, long arms, thick skulls, and so on. These atavistic features, Lombroso argued, also led them to prefer forms of behaviour that are normal among apes and savages, but are criminal in human societies. These criminal tendencies were apparent, Lombroso claimed, in their other ‘degenerate’ personal characteristics: the criminal, he believed, is idle, has a love of tattooing, and engages in orgies. Lombroso claimed that about 40 per cent of all criminals were ‘born criminals’ of this kind. They were driven into criminality by their biology. Other law-breakers were simply occasional, circumstantial offenders and did not have the ‘atavistic’ characteristics of the born criminal.

The excesses of Lombroso’s theory and the racial assumptions that underpinned it have long been discarded. However, many people still see criminality as resulting from innate characteristics. Violence and aggression, for example, are often seen not only as specifically male characteristics, but in their extreme forms as being due to genetic peculiarities. It has been proposed, for example, that many violent criminals have an extra Y chromosome in their cells. Some have suggested that rape can be explained as a consequence of normal, genetically determined male behaviour (Thornhill and Palmer 2000). In the 1990s, the success of the Human Genome Project led to many strong claims about the genetic basis of crime. The idea of the born criminal was supported in a report that ‘Pimping and petty theft appear to be genetically conditioned but a person’s genes have little influence on their propensity for committing crimes of violence’ (Independent, 15 February 1994). Violence was reported to be due to a ‘mild brain dysfunction in early life’, and it was claimed that improved standards of health care for pregnant women could reduce violent crime by over 20 per cent (Independent, 8 March 1994). The link between biology and social behaviour is not this straightforward. While there may, indeed, be a biological basis to violent behaviour—and the matter is still hotly debated—the ways in which this is expressed and the consequences that flow from it depend upon the meanings that are attached to it and the particular social situations in which it occurs.

The behaviour of a soldier in time of war involves violence that is channelled into disciplined action against a national enemy. This violence is condoned and encouraged, and it may even be rewarded as heroism or bravery. The behaviour of someone at a football match who attacks a member of the opposing team’s supporters involves far less violence, but it is likely to be condemned and denounced as hooliganism that must be stamped out. No biological explanation of violence can explain why one act is that of a hero and the other is that of a villain. Of course, this is not to make the absurd claim that it is only the social reaction that differs between the two cases. The point is that, while some people may have a disposition towards violent behaviour, a biological explanation can, at best, explain the disposition. It cannot explain when and how that disposition is expressed in social action, or is inhibited from expression. Nor can it explain the reactions of others to violence.

An explanation of deviance must refer to the processes of socialization through which people learn to give meaning to their behaviour and to the processes of discipline and regulation through which some people come to be identified as deviants and to be processed in particular ways by a system of social control.
Social reaction and deviance

There are three levels of explanation in the study of deviant behaviour. A first level of explanation is concerned with the existence of the many different forms of human behaviour that occur in any society. Biology may contribute towards an explanation of this diversity, but it can never provide the whole explanation. It is always necessary to take account of processes of socialization. A second level of explanation is concerned with the variation in norms between social groups, as manifested particularly in cultural and subcultural differences. Socialization takes place within particular social groups, and it is the norms of these groups that provide the standards for the identification of particular kinds of behaviour as deviant. The third, and final, level of explanation is concerned with the ways in which particular individuals are identified as deviants by others and so come to develop a deviant identity. This is a matter of social reaction and control.

In the rest of this section we will outline some of the general processes that are involved in deviance and control and the processes that are common to a range of deviant and conformist identities. You may like to read this through fairly quickly, not worrying about all the details, and then go on to the discussion of specific forms of deviance in the following sections. When you have read one or two of these sections, return to this general discussion of deviance and control and try to work through its details.

Primary and secondary deviation

Two key concepts in the study of deviance are primary deviation and secondary deviation, which were first systematized by Lemert (1967). Primary deviation is the object of the first two levels of explanation that we identified above. It is behaviour that runs counter to the normative expectations of a group, and is recognized as deviant behaviour by its members, but which is ‘normalized’ by them. That is to say, it is tolerated or indulged as an allowable or permissible departure from what is normally expected. It is ignored or treated in a low-key way that defines it as an exceptional, atypical, or insignificant deviation and is, instead, stigmatized or punished in some way. The social reaction and its consequences become central elements in the deviator’s day-to-day experiences and it shapes future actions. When public opinion, law-enforcement agencies (police, courts, and tribunals), or administrative controls exercised by the welfare and other official agencies react in an overt and punitive way, their reaction labels the person as a deviant of some kind (a thief, a welfare fraudster, a junkie, and so on). This labelling stigmatizes the behaviour and the person, who must now try to cope with the consequences of the stigma.

Stigmatization may involve the rejection, degradation, exclusion, incarceration, or coercion of the deviant, who becomes the object of treatment, punishment, or conversion (Schur 1971). Those who are stigmatized find that their lives and identities come to be organized around their deviance. They may even come to see themselves as a deviant—as a ‘thief’, as ‘mentally ill’, and so on—taking on many of the stigmatizing attributes of the popular and official images. Even if the deviator rejects this identity, the fact that he or she is identified in this way by others becomes an important factor in determining future behaviour.

The development of secondary deviation may, initially, involve an acceptance of the negative, stigmatizing stereotypes that others hold of the deviant. Deviants may often, however, be able to construct a more positive image of their deviance and build an identity around a rejection of the stigma. They accept the label, but, instead of merely reflecting back the public stereotype, they construct an alternative view that reflects their own experiences and those of people like them. They construct accounts—narratives—of their coming to be the kind of people that they are, and these narratives become central features of the construction and reconstruction of their identity (Plummer 1995: chapter 2). In much the same way that the Black Power movement constructed more positive images of black identity, so such movements as Gay Pride have led to the construction of positive images of homosexuality.
Not all deviance results from the conversion of primary deviation into secondary deviation through an external social reaction. Deviators may, for example, escape the attention of those who would label them, remaining 'secret deviants'. Such people may, nevertheless, move into secondary deviation precisely because of their attempts to keep their deviant behaviour secret. By anticipating the reactions of others, they begin to act towards themselves in terms of the stigmatized deviant identity, even if they do not embrace this identity themselves. The man who engages in homosexual acts in private, for example, may become drawn into association with other gay people because of the risks of his inadvertent exposure as gay in other social situations are too great.

There is also the possibility of false accusation. Someone who has not violated expectations may, nevertheless, be labelled as a deviant and processed accordingly. Such people will experience many of the same consequences as those who have been correctly labelled. Although they may feel a sense of injustice about their wrongful accusation, they may, as a result of their experience of stigmatization, come to act in ways that are quite indistinguishable from other deviants. Such highly publicized cases of wrongful imprisonment for terrorist bombings as those of the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four highlight the more general situation of false accusation that is apparent in, for example, the child who is wrongly punished by a teacher for cheating or the political dissidents in the Soviet Union who were officially designated as mentally ill.

Primary deviation that is not normalized does not always result in secondary deviation or commitment to a deviant identity. Many people drift in and out of deviant behaviour without being committed to it at all (Matza 1964). Because they are not committed to their deviant acts—they do not see them as a fundamental expression of their identity—they are able to abandon them whenever they choose, or when the circumstances are not right. Conversely, of course, they may feel able—though not required—to deviate whenever the opportunity and the inclination are present. Drift, then, is an important aspect of the structuring of deviant behaviour. Matza suggests, for example, that juvenile delinquency rarely becomes a matter of secondary deviation, precisely because juveniles drift back and forth between deviant and conformist behaviour without ever becoming committed to delinquency as a way of life.

Many of those who become involved in crime do not embrace a deviant identity—they do not see themselves as criminals, burglars, or housebreakers. Rather, they see their involvement in criminal activities as an aspect of the larger social situation in which they find themselves. They may, for example, be long-term unemployed, in serious financial hardship, and faced with the opportunity of illegal gain. Such people drift into crime for situational reasons, and become secondary deviants only if they are unable to drift out again. Certain opportunities may be denied to them, while other courses of action become easier. They become secondary deviants if the whole structure of interests within which they act—the advantages and disadvantages, rewards and punishments—tend to force them into continued deviance. Those who have been imprisoned for theft or burglary, for example, may experience restricted employment and promotion opportunities in the outside world that make it difficult for them to abandon their criminal life and to enter or re-enter conventional occupations.

Where people do take on a deviant identity, however, their behaviour will be shaped by commitment as well as constraint. Those who have become committed to a deviant identity will be committed to a whole range of behaviours that are associated with that identity. These ways of behaving will seem more ‘natural’ to them than any others, and they will identify with the behaviours as much as with the label itself. Commitment and constraint generally operate together: a firmly committed deviant is more likely to face disadvantaged opportunities, and a tightly constrained deviant is more likely to feel a sense of difference from others. If their circumstances change, and these constraints alter, they may find it possible to drift out of crime once more.

**Deviant roles and careers**

Where deviance has become a central feature of a person’s identity and way of life, it can take the form of role deviance. In this situation, a person’s activities become organized into a distinct and recognizable social role to which particular normative expectations are attached. The deviant is expected to act in deviant ways: conformity to these particular role expectations confirms the person’s deviant identity! Until recently, male homosexuals, for example, were widely expected to exhibit their deviance by behaving in ‘effeminate’ ways, and one who conformed to these expectations had adopted the public, stereotyped homosexual role.

Deviant roles, like conformist roles, often have a career structure. This is particularly likely where the role is defined within a group of deviants, rather than by public stereotypes alone. Where the deviant role involves a particular sequence of events and experiences that are common for all its occupants, role deviance becomes what has been called **career deviance**. This may be highly formalized, paralleling the kinds of career structures that are found in conventional occupations. Full-time thieves, for example, may be members of teams who make their living from their deviance and that have their own internal structures of leadership, reward, and ‘promotion’ (Sutherland 1937).

When organized as career deviance, the deviant role is likely also to involve what Goffman (1961b) has called a
moral career. This term describes the internal or personal aspects of a career, the specific sequence of learning experiences and changes in conceptions of self and identity that occur as people follow their deviant career. It is a process through which people come to terms with their stigma and their commitment to a deviant identity. With each phase of the public career associated with the role, its occupants must reconsider their past in an attempt to make sense of their new experiences. They single out and elaborate, with the benefit of hindsight, those experiences that they believe can account for and legitimate their present situation. This is a continuous process in which their personal biography—their life story—is constantly constructed and reconstructed in the light of their changing circumstances.

Deviant groups and communities

Career deviants are especially likely to become involved with groups that support and sustain their identities and that help them to come to terms with the constrained opportunities that they face. Gangs and cliques are formed, clubs and pubs are colonized as meeting places, and organizations and agencies are set up to promote shared interests or political goals. With advances in technology, new forms of support and communication become possible. The spread of the telephone allowed people to maintain distant communication far more effectively than was possible through writing letters, and computer technology now allows global communication through the Internet and e-mail. Those who are involved in two or more of these groups will tie them into larger social networks that bond the groups into cohesive and solidaristic communities with a shared sense of identity.

Criminal gangs, for example, may be involved in localized networks of recruitment and mutual support, to which individual criminals and juvenile gangs may also be attached. These networks form those subcultures of crime that comprise an underworld. The subcultures are means through which skills and techniques can be learned and in which criminals can obtain a degree of acceptance and recognition that is denied to them by conventional groups.

Goffman (1963b) has argued that the groups of ‘sympathetic others’ that form the supportive subcultures of deviance comprise two distinct types of people: the own and the wise. The own are those who share the deviant identity. They have a common understanding of stigmatization from their personal experiences, and they may be able to help in acquiring the tricks of the trade that allow a deviant to operate more effectively, as well as by providing emotional support and company in which a deviant can feel at home. The own help people to organize a life around their deviance and to cope with many of the disadvantages that they experience.

The wise, on the other hand, are ‘normals’ who have a particular reason for being in the know about the secret life of the deviants and for being sympathetic towards it. They are accepted by the deviants and are allowed a kind of associate membership in their activities. They are those for whom the deviants do not feel the need to put on a show of normality or deviance disavowal: they can safely engage in back-region activities with them. The wise can include family members and friends, employees, and even some control agents (such as nurses or police) who have day-to-day contact with them. The own and the wise together form a network of contacts and connections that support deviants in the construction of their narratives of identity.

Some of the wise may actively support deviants in sustaining their deviance, though there are limits to the willingness of people to become too closely involved in activities where the stigma of deviance is likely to ‘rub off’ on to them. Active support, then, is most likely to come from the own, and this is particularly true where there is a need for representatives to speak or act for their interests and concerns in public. Such representatives may sometimes become very active and make a living—and a new identity—out of their role as spokespersons for particular deviant groups. They make a ‘profession’ of their deviance in quite a novel way, perhaps appearing in the press and on radio and television whenever issues of concern are discussed. There are, of course, limits to this. Only certain forms of deviance are allowed to have the legitimacy of their stigmatization debated in public. Gays and the mentally ill, for example, have active and important organizations that can lobby for their interests, while thieves and burglars do not. Pressure groups on behalf of those involved in serious crime are, for the most part, limited to campaigns for prison reform and are led by the wise and by reformed offenders.

The general account of deviance and control that we have presented (summarized in Figure 7.1) must be treated with caution, as all of its elements will not apply equally to every case of deviance and stigmatized identity. It is a general framework that provides the concepts that can sensitize researchers to the specific issues that occur in particular cases. We will illustrate this by considering a number of forms of criminal behaviour. In the following chapter we will show that certain aspects of illness can also be understood as forms of deviance.
Understanding deviance and control

Embracing alternative identities at Gay Pride.

© Getty Images/Joe Raedle

Figure 7.1  The deviant career

- Primary deviation
- Normalization → Normal behaviour
- Secret deviance
- Stigmatization
- Deviant identity
- Deviant collectivities
- Secondary deviation
In this section we have looked at the relationship between biological and social factors in the explanation of deviance and the formation of deviant identities. In reviewing our discussion of biology and deviance, you may like to look back to our discussion of the biology of race in Chapter 6, pp. XXX–XXX.

The main points we made in this section were:

- Early approaches to deviance drew on now-discredited evolutionary ideas. Lombroso, for example, saw ‘born criminals’ as ‘atavistic’ evolutionary forms.
- Deviance is never a purely biological fact. It depends on an act of social definition, of labelling.
- Does the labelling argument imply that biological conditions—such as genetic inheritance—are never relevant to criminality?

In considering the nature of the social reaction to deviance and its consequences, we showed that:

- It is important to distinguish between primary and secondary deviation.
- Many people drift in and out of deviance without becoming committed to it.
- Much deviation is normalized, but some is stigmatized. Stigmatized secondary deviation may involve role deviance and a deviant career.
- How useful is it to think of deviance as a ‘career’?
- Deviant groups and communities are important in supporting and sustaining role deviance.

## Crime and legal control

**Crime** is that form of deviance that involves an infraction of the criminal law. Not all laws are ‘criminal’. Lawyers recognize civil law, constitutional law, and various other categories of legal norm.

Civil law, for example, concerns relations among private individuals, such as the contractual relations involved in such areas as employment relations and consumer purchasing. A person who breaks a contract by, say, unfairly dismissing someone from her or his job or failing to supply goods that are ‘fit for their purpose’ has infringed the civil law, and action can be taken only by the particular individual affected (the dismissed person or the unhappy consumer). The police have no right to become involved, and a completely separate system of courts is involved in hearing any civil case. The outcome of a successful civil case is some kind of ‘restitution’, such as financial compensation or ‘damages’.

The criminal law, by contrast, consists of those legal norms that have been established by the state as a public responsibility, and which the police and the criminal courts have been designated to enforce. Someone who infringes the criminal law can be arrested, charged, and tried at public expense and, if found guilty, will be subject to repressive or punitive penalties such as a fine or imprisonment.

The criminal law of a society can cover a wide range of actions. In Britain, for example, it covers such acts as driving above the legal speed limit, stealing a car, breaking into a house, possessing certain drugs, forging a signature on a cheque, murdering someone, and arson. Penalties attached to these offences range from small fines for speeding to life imprisonment for murder, and, until 1998, execution for treason. The crimes that are most visible or that are perceived to be the most threatening are not necessarily those that have the greatest impact in real terms. In practice, many minor crimes are normalized; few people report cases of speeding or dropping litter, and the police may often choose to disregard such offences. Figure 7.2 shows the main types of serious offence (officially termed ‘notifiable offences’) recorded in the criminal statistics for England and Wales.

The statistics in Figure 7.2 show a large increase in the level of crime. A different picture emerges, however, from the British Crime Survey, which draws its evidence from a sample survey of the general public. This survey of victims and potential victims showed a fall in the amount of crime between 1995 and 2005. The figures reached a peak in 1995, but crime had fallen by 44 per cent by 2005. Both vehicle crime and burglary fell by over a half, while violent crime fell by 43 per cent. The chances of being a victim of crime fell from 40 per cent in 1995 to 24 per cent in 2005. This is the lowest level since 1981. Young men, however, are far more likely to be a victim of crime, while relatively few of those aged over 65 have been victims. People’s attitudes, however, reflected the official statistics and their reporting in the media, with 61 per cent of people believing that crime had risen in the country as a whole.
Crime and legal control

Government policy on minor crime and delinquency in Britain has recently centred around the issue of ‘anti-social behaviour’ and the ‘respect’ agenda that emerged during the 2005 general election campaign. The ‘respect’ agenda is based on the idea that the low-level criminality and nuisance behaviour that upsets people on a day-to-day basis—petty vandalism, rudeness, drunkenness—should be dealt with through local communities themselves, by inculcating a climate of respect towards other people’s property. Improving discipline in schools, for example, is seen as a way of establishing such control. This is seen as an extension of an earlier policy of controlling more serious petty criminality through the issuing of Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). These are orders issued by a civil court, rather than a criminal court, prohibiting a person from specific acts of concern to complainants. Although these are civil court orders, a breach of an ASBO is a criminal offence and can bring the offender under legal control.

Public concern over crime relates mainly to theft and violence, which are regarded as being serious enough to warrant sustained attention from the police. This concern, reflected in periodic moral panics, tends to ensure that many of those who are involved in theft and criminal violence do so as a form of secondary deviation. As a result, many of them develop a criminal identity. In this section we will look at forms of professional and career crime and at those normalized forms of crime commonly called white-collar crime. We will also look at the gendered nature of criminal activity, in relation both to the undertaking of criminal acts and to becoming the victim of crime.

Professional and career crime

Theft—stealing property belonging to another person—is one of the few forms of crime to have a highly organized character and to offer the chance of a career or profession to those engaged in it. Theft includes burglary (theft from houses), robbery (theft with violence), forgery, confidence tricks, pickpocketing, and numerous other fraudulent activities. Not all of these are organized as career crime, of course, and not all of those who drift into theft even make the transition from primary deviation to secondary deviation. School children who steal from shops, for example, rarely continue into a career of thieving. Nevertheless, theft is, indeed, one of the most organized forms of crime.

Career crime is nothing new. Mary McIntosh (1975) traces it back to the actions of pirates, bandits, brigands, and moral outlaws who often combined criminal with political aims. If the Robin Hood image of the rural outlaw is a rather idealized fiction, it nevertheless grasps an important element in pre-modern theft (Hobsbawm 1969). With the growth of towns in the early modern period, opportunities for street and house crime became much greater, and there was a growth in the amount of what McIntosh calls craft crime. This is the small-scale, skilled theft engaged in by pickpockets, cutpurses, and confidence tricksters. These forms of career crime proliferated through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and remain an important part of everyday crime. McIntosh traces the origins of what

### Figure 7.2 Recorded crime in England and Wales, 1981 and 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence</th>
<th>1981 (thousands)</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft and handling stolen goods</td>
<td>1,603</td>
<td>2,145</td>
<td>2,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal damage</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against the person</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>1,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud and forgery</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual offences</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug trafficking</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notifiable offences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,964</td>
<td>5,169</td>
<td>5,563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These are ‘notifiable offences’, those which are regarded as most serious by the legal system.

Source: Social Trends (2002: fig. 9.4); Crime in England and Wales, 2004/5 (Figure 2b), available at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0405.html.
The kinds of crime that typically hit the newspaper headlines are burglary, robbery, and murder, which are almost universally seen as ‘serious’. Other, less visible forms of crime may, however, be equally serious when all their implications are considered. This is particularly true of crime in rural areas, which can have a major financial impact on farming.

It has been shown that sheep rustling costs moorland farmers millions of pounds a year. In Dartmoor and the surrounding parts of the south-west around 10,000 sheep, valued at over £1 million, are stolen each year. The total cost of rustling is more than £7 million a year. When the theft of farm machinery, tools and equipment is added to this, farm crime amounts to more than £85 million in a year.

One growing element in farm crime is the stealing of Christmas trees. Organized groups drive to isolated plantations and, within minutes, cut down Christmas trees and load them into their truck. A full lorry load of stolen trees could be worth £20,000. Growers have estimated that up to 10 per cent of their trees are stolen each year—perhaps around 70,000 of the seven million trees sold each year in shops and markets across the country. Big supermarket chains such as Tesco are now the major growers of trees and they now employ ex-soldiers to act as private security staff to protect their investment.


Consider why it is that rural, farm crime is not usually highlighted in mass media discussions of the crime problem.

Look at the Scottish Farm Crime Survey (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cts/readfiles/rad01-00b.htm) for a general discussion of these issues.

she calls project crime to a later period. This is large-scale robbery and fraud, and became fully established only in the early years of the twentieth century. It has become the predominant form of theft only since the 1950s.

Crime and the underworld

Where rural bandits and outlaws were enmeshed in the surrounding social life of the rural communities from which they were drawn, urban craft crime tended to be based in a distinct criminal underworld. The growth of such criminal areas was first reported in the sixteenth century, but it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that they achieved their fullest development. The criminal underworld of a city such as London comprised various ‘rookeries’ that formed the dwelling places and meeting places of craft criminals of all kinds. Segregated from the rest of society, the underworlds provided for the security, safety, shared interests, and concerns of the craft thieves. The underworlds were rooted in the surrounding slum districts of the poor working class. Poverty, unemployment, overcrowding in poor physical conditions, and a lack of leisure opportunities other than the pub, were the conditions under which many people drifted into crime and some became confirmed in a criminal career (T. Morris 1957; John Mack 1964; see also M. Kerr 1958).

An urban underworld formed an occupational community with a subculture that established norms of criminal behaviour, a slang and argot, and an esprit de corps that sustained the shared identity of the thieves. Central to the underworld code was the injunction not to ‘squawk’, ‘grass’, or inform on others. Association with other thieves, and a lack of association with the targets of their theft, inhibited any concern for the feelings of the victims of crime. It also meant that thieves could learn from other thieves the techniques and skills that would help them in their own crimes. In addition, their leisure-time associates formed a pool of partners in crime. They were able to find markets for their stolen goods, and they could attain a degree of protection and insulation from detection and law enforcement (Chesney 1968; McIntosh 1975: 24).

Underworld life, however, has been fundamentally altered by the urban redevelopment of the inner-city areas and the dispersal of population to the suburbs. One of the principal roots of the London underworld had been in the Spitalfields and Cable Street districts of the East End, where there had been much redevelopment. While certain central pubs and clubs remain important venues for career criminals, much activity is now more dispersed through the city, and the underworld forms an extended social network rather than being confined to a particular physical locale. Even in the 1960s, however, a tradition of craft crime still survived in Spitalfields, and the surrounding district had high levels of crime: there were especially high levels of burglary, violence against the person, gambling, and prostitution. Much crime, however, was ‘petty, unsophisticated, unorganized and largely unprofitable—if often squalid and brutal’ (Downes 1966: 150).

A subculture of crime continues to sustain career crime, which has, however, changed its character. Alongside older forms of craft crime, project crime has become more significant, and this has also helped to transform the structure of the underworld. Where craft theft involved the stealing of small amounts of money from large numbers
of people, project crime involves a much smaller number of large thefts. Growing affluence and, in particular, the increasing scale of business activity have meant that the potential targets of theft have become much bigger. As a result, criminals have had to organize themselves more effectively and on a larger scale if they are to be successful against these targets. Improved safes, alarm systems, and security vans can be handled only by organized teams of specialists: safe-breakers, drivers, gunmen, and so on. Such crimes, organized as one-off projects, require advanced planning and a much higher level of cooperation than is typical for craft crime.

Teams for particular projects are recruited through the cliques and connections that comprise the underworld, and these may sometimes be organized on a semi-permanent basis. The criminal underworld that existed in the East End of London from the Second World War until the 1960s, for example, contained numerous competing gangs that were held together largely by the violent hegemony of the Kray twins and their associates. The east London gangs engaged in violent feuds with their counterparts (the Richardson) from the south London underworld, and the leading members of the East End and south London gangs occasionally met on the neutral ground of the West End (Morton 1992; Hobbs 1994).

It is through the subculture of crime that people can be socialized into criminal identities, whether as a craft thief or a project thief. The professional thief, like the professional doctor, lawyer, or bricklayer, must develop many technical abilities and skills. He (the thief is generally male) must know how to plan and execute crimes, how to dispose of stolen goods, how to ‘fix’ the police and the courts, and so on. These skills must be acquired through long education and training, and it is through his involvement in the underworld that the thief can acquire them most effectively.

Based on his detailed study of a professional thief, Sutherland (1937) has shown how the person who successfully learns and applies these techniques earns high status within the underworld. The beginning thief, if successful, is gradually admitted into closer and closer contact with other thieves. It is they who can offer him ‘better’ work.

Gangsters participate in a subculture of crime.

© Getty Images/Ron Gerelli
and from whom he can learn more advanced skills. Once successful, the thief dresses and behaves in distinct ways and proudly adopts the label ‘thief’ in order to distinguish himself from a mere ‘amateur’, small-time criminal. As well as gaining respect within the underworld, he may also gain a degree of recognition and respect from police, lawyers, and newspaper crime writers. These people are aware of his activities and have often accommodated themselves to professional crime: apart from the corruption that sometimes occurs, there may also be shared interests in not reacting immediately and punitively towards all crime.

**Burglary as a way of life**

One of the few contemporary investigations of career theft in Britain is an investigation of domestic burglaries (Maguire and Bennett 1982). Burglary is illegal entry into a building with the intent to steal. Domestic burglary was, for a long time, subject to the death penalty, and from 1861 to 1968 it carried a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Following the Theft Act of 1968, the maximum penalty has been fourteen years’ imprisonment. In practice, only just under a half of convicted burglars have been given custodial sentences.

Recognizing the problems involved in assessing rates of crime, Maguire and Bennett concluded that about 60 per cent of all burglaries were committed by a relatively small number of persistent, career criminals. The remaining 40 per cent were committed by juveniles who had drifted into delinquency and would, for the most part, drift out of it again.

Maguire and Bennett interviewed a number of persistent burglars, most of whom were committed to their criminal careers. They had, typically, carried out between 100 and 500 break-ins during their careers. They combined this with involvement in car theft, burglary from commercial premises, and cheque forgery. They were mainly young, single, and with no dependants. The men described themselves as ‘thieves’, or simply as ‘villains’, and they described their crimes as ‘work’ from which they could earn a living and from which they would eventually retire. Maguire and Bennett are, however, more critical of this self-image than Sutherland had been. In particular, they highlight a number of ways in which the thieves sought to neutralize the moral implications of their actions through self-serving rationalizations.

Thieves claimed, for example, that any distress suffered by the victims was no concern of theirs. They were simply doing a job, carrying on their trade, and this distress was an unavoidable consequence of their routine, professional activities. This claim was further bolstered by the claim that, in any case, they stole only from the well-to-do, who could easily afford it and who were well insured (Maguire and Bennett 1982: 61). In fact, many of their victims were relatively poor council house residents who could ill afford to be burgled.

Similarly, the thieves sought to boost their own status by disparaging the amateurism of the majority of ‘losers’, ‘wankers’, ‘idiots’, and ‘cowboys’ who carried out unsuccessful thefts. However, Maguire and Bennett argue, it is more accurate to see the persistent career thieves as divided into low-level, middle-level, and high-level categories on the basis of the scale of their crimes. Thieves move up and down this hierarchy a great deal over the course of their careers.

High-level burglaries are undertaken by thieves who are members of small networks of committed criminals who
such casual and temporary work. They may be able to continue or to re-enter such legitimate employment—typically short-term jobs in the building and construction industry or in other casual work. Walsh (1986: 58–9) has shown that some burglars are able to combine career crime with a continuing involvement in their criminal connections and their choice of crimes.

It is at the lower level that people first enter burglary, as the loose social networks are closely embedded in the surrounding structure of the local community. In most cases, this is a process of drift by some of those who have previously been involved in juvenile delinquencies. When describing their careers, however, the thieves minimized the element of drift and presented a self-image of themselves as people who had chosen to enter careers of crime. Those who drift into lower-level burglary and become at all successful may graduate, in due course, to middle-level or high-level burglary through the contacts and connections that they make.

Those in the networks carrying out the high-level burglaries were, in a sense, at the pinnacle of the career hierarchy, though Maguire and Bennett show that they are unlikely to be at all involved in large-scale project crimes undertaken by the London gangs. Their activities are confined to housebreaking, shop-breaking, car theft, shoplifting, and cheque forgery. They have little or no involvement in such specialist crimes as hijacking lorries, bank raids, or embezzlement.

Very few burglars—even those at the high level—make a major financial success of their chosen careers, and most spent at least one period in prison. Imprisonment is not, however, a purely negative experience, as it gives the burglar an opportunity to ‘widen his circle of criminal acquaintances, learn new techniques and be encouraged to try his hand at more lucrative offences’ (Maguire and Bennett 1982: 67). Nevertheless, few burglars continued with burglary beyond their thirties or forties. Most drifted into what they hoped would be safer forms of work. Entry into legal employment is difficult for someone with a criminal record, and few make the transition successfully. Walsh (1986: 58–9) has shown that some burglars are able to combine career crime with a continuing involvement in legitimate employment—typically short-term jobs in the building and construction industry or in other casual work such as catering and cleaning. It seems likely that some who retire from burglary may be able to continue or to re-enter such casual and temporary work.

Career crime has probably never been a completely self-contained, full-time activity. Even in the heyday of the Victorian underworld of the East End, criminal activities were combined with casual labour and street trading, one type of work supplementing the earnings from the other (Mayhew 1861b). Hobbs (1988) has shown how the East End has long been organized around an entrepreneurial culture of wheeling and dealing, trading and fixing, that makes no sharp distinction between legal and illegal activities.

Theft may, indeed, be career crime, a way of life, but it does not take up all of a thief’s time and cannot usually provide him with a regular or substantial income. Those involved in thieving, then, must combine it with other ways of gaining an income. Casual labour is combined with their own thieving and the performance of the occasional criminal task for other, more successful thieves. Those who are themselves more successful may be involved as much in trading and dealing as in thieving, and their entrepreneurial activities are likely to range from the legitimate, through various ‘shady’ deals, to the criminal. The full-time criminal is not a full-time thief, even if he stresses this aspect of his life in constructing his own identity. Much thieving is undertaken by those who are in low-paid or semi-legitimate work or who are unemployed (see Figure 7.3).

There is considerable evidence that the growth of the drugs market in the 1980s has sharpened a distinction between the full-time criminal and the mass of ordinary thieves. The establishment of a large and extensive market in drugs has connected together the criminal networks of London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other large cities. This has allowed a greater degree of organization to be achieved in the project crimes that sustain drug trafficking. Those who are involved in this organized crime, however, have highly specialized skills—for example, in relation to VAT fraud—and are very different from those who steal hi-fis and videos from domestic premises. The significance of the drug market for ordinary thieves, as we show later in this chapter, is that it offers possibilities for casual and occasional trading in small quantities of drugs that supplement their more established sources of income (Hobbs 1994: 449, 453–4).

Gender, ethnicity, class, and crime

The public perception of crime concentrates on robbery, burglary, theft, mugging, rape, and other crimes of theft and violence. The popular view sees this crime as male, working-class activity. Professional crime is seen as the work of certain adult males and as expressing conventional notions of masculinity.
This point of view does get some support from the criminal statistics, which seem to show the very small number of women who are convicted of criminal offences (see Figure 7.4); 5.9 per cent of all men in 2000 were found guilty or were cautioned for a notifiable offence, compared with 1.2 per cent of women. It also appears that the kinds of crimes committed by women are less ‘serious’ than those committed by men. Figures for all parts of Britain show that women have very little involvement as offenders in domestic or commercial theft, vehicle theft, or street violence, though they are often, of course, involved in these as victims. They are, however, more heavily involved in shoplifting than are men, prostitution is an almost exclusively female crime, and only women can be convicted of infanticide. There is some evidence, however, that the number and types of crime committed by women may have altered since the 1960s (Heidensohn 1985).

In a similar way to the crimes of women, many middle-class crimes are not generally regarded as ‘real’ crimes. While there is a great public fear of street violence and domestic burglary, there is relatively little concern about fraudulent business practices, violations of safety legislation, or tax evasion. While such offences, arguably, have much greater impact on people’s lives than does the relatively small risk of theft or violence, they are either invisible to public opinion or are not seen as proper ‘crimes’.

In this section we will assess the adequacy of these views of crime, exploring aspects of the crimes of women, ethnic minorities, and the affluent.

**Distribution by gender, ethnicity, and class**

The kinds of crimes that are committed by women, like those committed by men, reflect the gender-defined social roles that are available to them. Both men and women are...
Involvement in shoplifting, for example, but women are more likely to steal clothes, food, or low-value items. Men are more likely to steal books, electrical goods, or high-value items. This reflects the conventional domestic expectations that tie women to shopping for basic household goods in supermarkets, while men are able to shop for luxuries and extras. Put simply, both men and women tend to steal the same kinds of items that they buy (Smart 1977: 9–10).

Similarly, men (especially young men) are heavily involved in vehicle crimes, including car theft, while women are heavily involved in prostitution. This involvement in prostitution can be seen as an extension of a normal feminine role that allows implicit or explicit bargaining over sex.

This connection between crime and conventional gender-roles is particularly clear in the patterns of involvement that women have in offences related to children. Those who are most responsible for childcare are, other things being equal, more likely to be involved in cruelty to children, abandoning children, kidnapping, procuring illegal abortions, and social-security frauds. Theft by women generally involves theft from an employer by those involved in domestic work or shop work. Even when involved in large-scale theft, women are likely to be acting in association with male family members and to be involved as receivers of stolen goods rather than as thieves.

There are, of course, problems in estimating the actual number of offences from the official statistics (as we show in Chapter 3, pp. XXX–XX), but the overall pattern is clear. Because women are less likely to be arrested and convicted for certain offences—something that we look at below—the difference between male and female involvement in crime is exaggerated by the official figures. The differing patterns of offence do, however, exist. Only in the case of sexual offences is the pattern for male and female involvement more equal, the apparent predominance of women resulting from the fact that their sexual behaviour is more likely to be treated in ways that result in conviction. The sexual double standard means that the authorities normalize much male sexual delinquency, but express moral outrage at female sexual delinquency. As Smart argues:

None of these types of offences requires particularly ‘masculine’ attributes. Strength and force are unnecessary and there is only a low level of skill or expertise required. The women involved have not required training in violence, weapons or tools, or in specialised tasks like safe breaking. On the contrary the skills required can be learnt in everyday experience, and socialization into a delinquent subculture or a sophisticated criminal organisation is entirely unnecessary. (Smart 1977: 15–16)

There is growing evidence that members of ethnic minorities in Britain have become more heavily involved with the legal system since the 1960s. They are now especially likely to appear as offenders and, more particularly, as victims of crime and as police suspects. Housebreakings and other household offences show little variation among the various ethnic groups, about one-third of all households being victims of such crime.

African Caribbeans, however, are almost twice as likely as whites to be the victims of personal attacks. This is, in part, a consequence of the fact that African Caribbeans live, disproportionately, in inner-city areas where such crimes are particularly likely to take place. However, their experiences also have a racially motivated character. The growing victimization of black and Asian people reflects a real growth in racial violence and racist attacks by members of the white population. While criminal acts carried out during the urban riots of the 1980s (see Chapter 13, pp. XXX–X) often had a racial aspect to them, blacks and Asians are far more likely to be the targets of racial crimes than they are to commit them. There has, nevertheless,
been a growing involvement of young African Caribbeans in many kinds of street crime. The police hold to a widely shared prejudice that African Caribbeans, in particular, are heavily involved in crime and that special efforts need to be taken to control them. Many studies have shown the racism inherent in police actions that stop black people in the street and subject them to closer scrutiny than other members of the population (Hall et al. 1978; Gelsthorpe 1993). African Caribbeans are more likely than whites, and members of other ethnic minorities, to be approached by the police on suspicion, to be processed, and to be sentenced. This cost of a growing hostility of ethnic minorities towards the police, who are often seen as racists rather than as neutral defenders of law and order.

Offences carried out by men (and women) from the middle classes are generally described as white-collar crime (Sutherland 1949; Croal 1992). This term originally referred to crimes and civil-law infractions committed by those in non-manual employment as part of their work. It is now used a little more broadly to refer to three categories of offence:

- **Occupational crimes** of the affluent: offences committed by the relatively affluent and prosperous in the course of their legitimate business or profession. Examples are theft from an employer, financial frauds, and insider dealing in investment companies.
- **Organizational crimes**: offences committed by organizations and businesses themselves—that is, by employees acting in their official capacities on behalf of the organization. Examples are non-payment or under-payment of VAT or Corporation Tax, and infringements of health and safety legislation leading to accidents or pollution.
- **Any other crimes** committed by the relatively affluent that tend to be treated differently from those of the less affluent. An example is tax evasion, which is treated differently from social-security fraud (Nelken 1994: 362–3).

The concept of white-collar crime, then, is far from clear-cut. It does, however, help to highlight the class basis of much crime. The number of people involved in white-collar crimes is barely apparent from the official statistics, as many go unrecorded. Its status as hidden crime, however, is paradoxical in view of its financial significance. It was estimated that the total cost of reported fraud alone in 1985 was £2.113 million, twice the amount accounted for by reported theft, burglary, and robbery (Levi 1987; see also M. Clarke 1990). Official estimates suggest that the actual cost of all fraud in Britain in 2003 was £13,800 million.

The relatively low representation of women in recorded crime is the main reason why female criminality has been so little researched. Lombroso and Ferrero (1895) set out a deterministic theory, based on the claimed peculiarities of female biology, which still has some influence in the late 1990s. They held that women were less highly evolved than men and so were relatively ‘primitive’ in character. They were less involved in crime, however, because their biology predisposed them to a passive and more conservative way of life. They were, however, weak willed, and Lombroso and Ferrero saw the involvement of many women in crime as resulting from their having been led on by others. The female drift into crime was a consequence of their weak and fickle character.

The extreme position set out by Lombroso and Ferrero has long been abandoned, but many criminologists do still resort to biological assumptions when trying to explain female criminality. Pollak (1950), for example, held that women are naturally manipulative and deceitful, instigating crimes that men undertake. What such theories fail to consider is that, if women do indeed have lower rates of criminality, this may more usefully and accurately be explained in terms of the cultural influences that shape sex–gender roles and the differing opportunities available to men and to women.

Like the crimes of women, the crimes of the affluent have been little researched. Early discussions of white-collar crime were intended as criticisms of the orthodox assumption that criminality was caused by poverty or deprivation. Those who carried out thefts as part of a successful business career, Sutherland (1949) argued, could not be seen as acting out of economic necessity. Sutherland’s own account stressed that white-collar crime was learned behaviour and that, in this respect, it was no different from other forms of criminality. All crime, he held, resulted from the effects of ‘differential association’ on learning: those who interact more frequently with others whose attitudes are favourable to criminal actions are themselves more likely to engage in criminal acts.

This implies that patterns of conformity among the affluent and the deprived, among men and among women, are to be understood in the context of their wider role commitments and the interactions in which they are involved with their role partners. Those who are predisposed to see criminal actions as appropriate will, if the structure of opportunities allows it, drift into crime. There is no need to assume that women are fundamentally different from men, or that the working classes are fundamentally different from the middle classes.

**Women and crime**

It appears, then, that women, like men, drift into criminal actions whenever the structure of opportunities is such that...
it seems a reasonable response to their situation. The particular situations in which they find themselves are determined by the ways in which sex–gender identities are institutionalized in their society, and so their patterns of criminality are gendered. Cultural stereotypes about men and women, as we will show, are also a major influence on the nature of the social reaction to female criminality. The absence of strong punitive responses to most forms of female crime means that the progression from primary to secondary deviation is less likely to occur. Women may drift into crime, but they only rarely pursue criminal careers.

A form of female crime that seems to be the principal exception to this rule is prostitution. In law, a prostitute is someone who sells sex, and this is almost invariably seen as a female offence. Men involved in prostitution, other than as clients, tend to be seen as engaged in acts of ‘indecency’ rather than of ‘soliciting’ for prostitution. Under British law, a woman who has been arrested and convicted for soliciting is officially termed a ‘common prostitute’ and is liable to re-arrest simply for loitering in a public place. As most prostitution is arranged in public, on the streets, it is difficult for women so labelled to avoid the occasional spell in custody. They may also find it difficult to live a normal life off the streets:

> It is virtually impossible for them to live with a man or even another woman as it is immediately assumed that such people are living off immoral earnings, thereby making themselves vulnerable to a criminal charge. Also, the legal definition of a brothel, as a dwelling containing two or more prostitutes, has made it difficult for two women to live together even where only one is a prostitute. (Smart 1977: 114)

In 2006 the government in Britain announced its intention to change the law to allow up to three prostitutes to work together without their place of work being defined as a brothel.

Prostitutes, for example, are seen as flouting the domesticity of the conventional female role and have been subject to harassment and entrapment. Nevertheless, prostitutes are often able to establish a mutual accommodation with the police, an arrangement in which each can get on with their job with the minimum of interference from the other. When there is pressure on the police to take action, however, such arrangements break down. In these circumstances, prostitutes are highly vulnerable and can be quite susceptible to police persuasion and suggestion. On the other hand, women who conform to conventional role expectations are seen as in need of protection, and cautioning is more widely used for female offenders than it is for males (S. Edwards 1984: 16–19).

There is some evidence that this differential treatment of male and female offenders also occurs in the courts. Sexist assumptions in court practices have led some to suggest that women experience greater leniency than men (Mannheim 1940: 343). Others, however, have suggested that greater harshness is more likely (A. Campbell 1981). Heidensohn (1985) correctly points out that this may simply reflect the well-known lack of consistency in sentencing, though she reports evidence that supports the view that women are treated more harshly (Farrington and Morris 1983).

Indeed, Edwards (1984) has suggested that women are subjected to much closer scrutiny in courts precisely because the female offender is seen as unusual or unnatural. Women are on trial not only for their offence but for their deviation from conventional femininity. Their punishment or treatment is intended to ensure that they adjust themselves back to what is seen as a natural feminine role.

Very few convicted women are given custodial sentences. Men are two or three times more likely to be imprisoned for an offence than are women, and their sentences tend to be longer. The women who are imprisoned are mainly those who have been convicted of such things as theft, fraud, forgery, or violence. Prisons do make some attempt to recognize that women’s domestic commitments are different from those of men, and a number of mother-and-baby units have been set up. Some well-publicized cases have been reported, however, of pregnant prison inmates who have been forced to give birth while manacled to a prison officer. Studies of female prisons in the United States have shown how these prisons are important sources of emotional and practical support for their inmates (Giallombardo 1966), often involving the establishment of lesbian family relationships. This appears to be less marked in Britain.

**Connections**

You might like to consider street prostitution in relation to our discussion of the gendering of space in Chapter 13, pp. XXX–X. A good discussion can be found in McKeganey and Barnard (1996). While you are looking at the gendering of space in the city, you might also think about the way in which urban space is used by various ethnic groups (see p. XXX in the same chapter).

*The reaction of the police is critical in determining whether a woman who breaks the law is defined as a criminal. Police work is structured around the cop culture (Reiner 1992), a culture that strongly emphasizes masculinity and that underpins the harassment and abuse of female police officers and the derogation of many female offenders.*
other criminal act. They differ from ‘ordinary’ theft and burglary only in terms of their social organization and the social reaction to them. The character and motivation of those involved are no more, and no less, pathological than those of any others who drift into crime. White-collar crimes, however, are much less likely to result in full-time criminal careers. The nature of the social reaction makes the development into secondary deviation much less likely.

Much corporate and occupational crime takes place in the financial services industry, where changing patterns of regulation have created greater opportunities for illicit activities. The British financial system was, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, regulated in a highly informal way. Recruitment to banks, insurance companies, and other financial enterprises took place through an old-boy network centred on the public schools and the Oxford and Cambridge colleges. The Stock Exchange, as the central institution in the financial system, was at the heart of this system of informal regulation. The system rested on trust and loyalty: those who had been to school together and shared a similar social background felt that they could trust one another in their business dealings. The motto of the Stock Exchange was ‘My word is my bond’, and many deals were sealed on the shake of hands rather than with a written contract (Lisle-Williams 1984; M. Clarke 1986).

Connections
Recruitment to the boards of the financial enterprises that make up the City of London financial system is one aspect of the recruitment to elites and top positions in British society. You might like to look at our discussion of elites and the ruling class in Chapter 20, pp. XXX–X, where we look in more detail at the part played by schooling and informal social networks.

During the 1970s the government introduced a number of changes to this system of regulation in response to the growing internationalization of the money markets. This culminated in the so-called Big Bang of October 1986, when the Stock Exchange was finally opened up to foreign competition. New codes of practice were introduced to reflect the more diverse social backgrounds of those involved in the buying and selling of currency, shares, and commodities. The old system of trust could no longer be
The financial centres of the world economy offer great opportunities for people to make money from illegal financial activity.

During the 1990s, Baring’s Bank experienced massive losses and was forced into bankruptcy when one of its employees, Nick Leeson, defrauded the Singapore branch of the bank to the sum of £830 million. Leeson was sentenced to six years in prison, but his story attracted so much attention that he was able to negotiate a book and film deal (for *Rogue Trader*) valued at more than £3 million. Early in 2002, Allied Irish Bank suspended one of its New York traders, John Rusnack, following the discovery of losses of £485 million. It was suspected that a number of currency traders had cooperated in a long-term fraud.

The big growth area for financial fraud in recent years has been online fraud, involving fraudulent access to bank accounts and credit cards, and often involving “identity fraud”. E-mail scams and illegal card readers have enabled people to make withdrawals from bank accounts and purchase goods without the permission or knowledge of the account holder. It is estimated that bank and credit card fraud now amounts to £505 million a year. In an attempt to reduce the amount of credit card fraud, banks have introduced new “chip and pin” cards that are claimed to be more secure. It has been suggested, however, that this has helped to increase the amount of Internet-based credit card fraud. While card fraud losses fell by 13 per cent in the first half of 2005, online card fraud has increased by 29 per cent over the same period.


Carry out some searches in local and national newspapers to discover evidence on the penalties attached to different kinds of crime. (Don’t forget to check the business pages as well as the general news pages). Can you find any association between the size of any financial loss and the severity of the penalty? Which kinds of serious offence receive the lowest penalties, and which receive the highest?
In this section we have looked at professional and career crimes and at the relationships between gender, class, and crime. We started out by showing that not all deviation from legal norms is criminal activity. Criminal actions involve deviation from the criminal law. In considering theft and career crime, we showed that:

- Theft has undergone a series of transformations as the wider society has changed.
- Much theft has been organized in relation to an extensive underworld, a subculture of crime that supports and sustains criminal activities.
- Is there still a criminal underworld in the major cities today?
- Career thieves adopt an identity as professional thieves, though their involvement in theft is quite variable.
- Much burglary is combined with low-paid, semi-legal, and casual work, or is carried out by those who are unemployed.

We explored the popular viewpoint that crime is a male, working-class phenomenon. Looking at gender, ethnicity, class, and crime, we showed that:

- Patterns of male and female crime differ, and they reflect differences in conventional sex–gender roles. Female criminality, for example, reflects cultural conceptions of femininity and the structure of opportunities open to women.
- There are significant variations in the attitudes of police and the courts to men and to women.
- Why does so much popular discussion explain female criminality in terms of female biology?
- African Caribbeans are twice as likely as whites to experience personal attacks. Many of these crimes are racially motivated.
- Members of ethnic minorities are more likely than whites to be stopped by the police and prosecuted in court.
- White-collar crime includes a diverse range of crimes of the affluent. Its economic impact is far more extensive than is often assumed.
- Trends in white-collar crime are related to changes in the structure of the financial system and the wider economy.
- Why are crimes of the affluent more likely to be normalized or to be regulated by bodies other than the police and the criminal courts?

Drugs and drug abuse

The use of drugs is now one of the most widely discussed forms of deviance. In its most general meaning, a drug is any chemical that can have an effect on the human body and, perhaps, a physical effect on the mind. Some drugs occur quite naturally in many widely used drinks and foods. Caffeine, for example, is found in both coffee and tea, alcohol is the basis of beer, wine, and spirits, and vitamins are found in fresh fruit and vegetables. Many drugs are used as medicines, usually under the control of doctors. Morphine, penicillin, and steroids, for example, are used very widely and under a variety of commercial trade names in hospitals, clinics, and surgeries. Many other medical drugs are freely available for purchase without prescription: aspirin, codeine, ibuprofen, and numerous other analgesic (pain-killing) drugs can be bought in any high-street pharmacy and in many supermarkets.

This broad, dictionary definition of ‘drugs’, however, is not what newspaper columnists, politicians, and social commentators mean when they use the word. These people generally use the word in a much narrower sense to refer to the non-medical use of drugs. This is the deliberate use of chemical substances to achieve particular physiological changes, simply for the pleasure or the other non-medical effects that they produce. It is in this sense, for example, that many parents and teachers rail against the use of drugs by children and young people. The non-medical use of drugs in the twentieth century has, indeed, been largely an activity of the young. Drug use, then, is seen as a deviant activity, as non-medical drug abuse. It becomes, therefore, a matter for social control. For this reason, the non-medical use or possession of many drugs has been made illegal.

There is a great deal of ambiguity over how widely this meaning of the word ‘drug’ is to be taken, and whether all non-medical drug use is to be regarded as a deviant activity. Many freely available products have the same characteristics as illicit drugs. Tobacco, for example, can be freely bought in shops and it is a major source of tax revenue for the government. At the same time, however, it contains nicotine, an addictive stimulant to the nervous
system that is a major health hazard both to those who smoke and to those around them. Similarly, alcoholic drinks, which can have serious physiological and psychological effects if taken in large quantities, are an accepted and even encouraged part of a normal social life for most people. Like tobacco, alcohol is available in shops and supermarkets, it is a multi-million pound industry, in which many people find legitimate employment, and—unlike cigarettes—it can be advertised freely on television.

Some chemicals with domestic or industrial uses, but which can also be used to produce ‘high’ feelings, can be purchased quite legitimately and with even fewer restrictions. Recent research has suggested that chocolate may operate in the same way as heroin, nicotine, and cannabis, by its effect on the limbic system in the brain. Eating chocolate can produce a ‘rush’ or high feeling because it affects the brain in the same way as the active ingredient in cannabis. Glues and solvents, which are used as stimulants and hallucinogens (mood-changers) by many young people, can be purchased in hardware and do-it-yourself shops. The use of heroin (a morphine derivative), cocaine, or Ecstasy (MDMA), on the other hand, is widely disapproved of and their use is surrounded by numerous legal restrictions over their acquisition and sale. Many such drugs are the objects of advertising campaigns that are aimed at discouraging their use by encouraging people to ‘say no’ if offered them. They can usually be obtained only from illegal sources. Medical trials have been set up in Britain, however, to investigate the part that might be played by cannabis, on prescription, in the treatment of multiple sclerosis and as a pain-killer. Morphine has long been available in pharmacies in Codeine and similar analgesic tablets, and both cocaine and morphine could be bought over the counter in British high streets until 1916. In 2002 it was announced that heroin would be made available to addicts on prescription.

The different social reaction to alcohol, chocolate, glue, and heroin cannot be explained simply in terms of the medical dangers involved in using any specific stimulant. If the potential danger was the principal determinant of the social reaction, alcohol and tobacco would have been criminalized many years ago.

Learning drug use

The idea of addiction to drugs is central to discussions of their non-medical uses. Addiction is seen as occurring where people have become physiologically dependent on the use of a particular drug and suffer serious and persistent withdrawal symptoms when its use is stopped. However, dependence is as much a psychological as a physiological fact and, as such, it is shaped by social factors. People must learn how to use particular drugs, and they become committed to their use only through complex social processes from which physiological dependence cannot be isolated. ‘Addiction’ is a medically constructed label and a social role that combines elements of the sick role and, in some cases, the criminal role.
Drugs do, of course, have specific physiological effects: alcohol and barbiturates depress mental activity, cocaine and caffeine stimulate it, and LSD distorts experiences and perception. Their full effects, however, depend upon the social context in which they are used. Individuals who use drugs learn from one another not only the techniques that are necessary for their use but also the ways to shape and experience the kinds of effects that they produce. The non-medical use of drugs, then, is a deviant activity that, like all forms of deviance, is surrounded by normative frameworks that structure the lives of users and lead them to experience particular deviant careers and associated moral careers. ‘Drug addiction’ is a deviant identity that reflects a specific deviant career.

**Becoming a cannabis user**

In an influential study of deviant activity, Becker (1953) documented the career stages that are involved in becoming a marijuana (cannabis) user. He showed that people drift into cannabis use for a variety of reasons. Once they begin its use, however, they will—if they persist—follow a particular sequence of stages. Becker called these stages the ‘beginner’, the ‘occasional user’, and the ‘regular user’. As users follow this career sequence, cannabis-smoking becomes an even more important part of their identity. Becker shows, however, that cannabis use rarely involves full-blown secondary deviation, despite the fact that its use is illegal. Cannabis use is a low-visibility activity that rarely comes to the attention of those who might publicly stigmatize users, and so these users are less likely to progress to secondary deviation.

Becker’s research was undertaken in the early 1950s, and public attitudes have altered somewhat since then. There was an increase in cannabis use in both the United States and in Britain during the 1960s. It has, since then, become accepted or tolerated in many situations. In California in 1996, for example, legal restrictions were relaxed in order to allow for its medical use in the treatment of certain cancer patients. Indeed, it has been suggested that cannabis use has become normalized for many people. Research shows that about a quarter of 16–24 year olds in Britain in 2000 had tried cannabis during the previous year. Most of these users regard their use in the same way that most adults regard alcohol and tobacco use.

In 2004, legislation came into effect in Britain that partly decriminalizes the possession of cannabis by altering its classification to that of a ‘Class C’ drug (the same legal status as anabolic steroids and growth hormone). This meant that possession of cannabis will no longer result in automatic prosecution but could be dealt with through an official warning. It was anticipated that the police would, in most situations, pay little attention to those who merely possess cannabis for their own use (http://www.urban75.com/Drugs/cannabis.html).

When Becker undertook his research, cannabis use was both illegal and surrounded by social meanings that associated it with irresponsibility, immorality, and addiction. Becker showed that, while the drug is not physically addictive, its image and its illegality led to specific patterns of use. Unlike cigarettes, cannabis cannot be bought at the local newsagent or the supermarket—though it can be obtained in this way in the Netherlands. Most people, therefore, had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to smoke it. Those who were most likely to begin to use the drug, Becker argued, were those who were involved in social groups where there was already a degree of cannabis use. It was here that there were likely to be opportunities for new users.

Becker saw the typical locales for exploratory drug use as organized around values and activities that oppose or run counter to the mainstream values of the larger society. When he undertook his research, these had their focus in social groups around jazz and popular music, students, and ‘bohemians’. These groups tended to have a more critical and oppositional stance towards conventional social standards. Participants were likely to see many other people using the drug, and their own first use was likely to become a real possibility if an opportunity presented itself. Today, when marijuana use has become more generalized among young people, exposure to its use in peer groups is likely to be the initial introduction for many young people. Someone enters the ‘beginner’ stage in the use of cannabis when he or she is offered the opportunity to smoke it in a social situation where others are smoking, where there is a degree of social pressure to conform to group norms, and where the group itself provides a relatively safe and secluded locale away from the immediate possibility of public censure.

Becker shows that people who move from the stage of the beginner to that of the occasional user must learn a number of skills and abilities associated with the use of the drug. Someone willing to use the drug may know that it causes a ‘high’ feeling, but they are unlikely to know exactly how to produce this. The principal skill that must be learned, then, is the actual technique for smoking cannabis. This is different from that used in tobacco smoking. Only if the smoke is inhaled in the correct way, with an appropriate amount of air, can cannabis have any significant effect on a person’s body and mind. Group membership is essential for the easy learning of this skill, as the new user is surrounded by those who can demonstrate it in their
THEORY AND METHODS

Howard Becker

Howard Becker was born in 1928 and was trained at the University of Chicago. His work draws heavily on symbolic interactionism, but he places this in the larger context of the power struggles among social groups. His early work on drug use was followed by work on student doctors (Becker et al. 1961), education (Becker et al. 1968), and artistic production (Becker 1982). He has also published a number of important methodological essays (Becker 1970). His work on drug use was republished in the early 1960s (Becker 1963), when it made a major contribution to the labelling theory of deviance.

Drugs and drug abuse

People learn how to use drugs in particular social contexts. Becker’s work explored cannabis use in the specific context of post-war America, though his conclusions have a much wider application. In this section we will look at the changing context of drug use in Britain. We look first at an account of deviant drug use in the 1970s, and then we turn to the contemporary, normalized use of drugs by young people.

Deviant drug use

Although it was developed in the 1950s, Becker’s argument retains much of its relevance for contemporary patterns of cannabis use, and it has much to say about the use of other drugs. This was first confirmed in a study undertaken by Jock Young (1971) in London. Young’s primary concern, however, is the origins of the negative social reaction to cannabis use. Why is it, he asks, that there is no similar social reaction to the use of tobacco? He holds that the reason is to be found not in the drug, but in the motivations that people are seen as having for using it. Drugs that are seen as being used to aid productivity are likely to be tolerated, while those that have a purely hedonistic (pleasure-seeking) purpose are seen as ‘drug abuse’.

European and North American societies tolerate or even encourage the drinking of coffee and tea, and the smoking of tobacco when working under pressure or as a ‘release’ from the pressure of a heavy work schedule. The worker ‘earns’ the right to ‘relax with a smoke and a drink’ after work, and people may be allowed to smoke at work if it ‘helps them to concentrate’. Alcohol is widely used, and it is tolerated as a way in which people may, periodically, ease the transition from work to leisure. It is culturally normalized. It is only when alcohol is used to excess and interferes with normal, everyday activities that its use is defined as deviant. No such tolerance is allowed for the

own smoking. Those who fail to learn the proper technique will never experience the physical effects of cannabis and so are unlikely to persist in using the drug.

A user must also acquire the ability to perceive the effects of the drug and, therefore, must learn what it is to be high or stoned. This is not as strange as it may seem. Users may have experiences that they fail to recognize as effects of the drug, but that others recognize as central features of their high state. Through interaction with others, new users begin to learn what signs and symptoms to look out for and what, therefore, can be taken as indicating that they have successfully learned the smoking technique. Last, but not least, they must learn to enjoy the effects of cannabis. They must learn to treat dizziness, tingling, and distortions of time and space as pleasurable experiences, rather than as unpleasant and undesirable disturbances to their normal physical and mental state. Only those who successfully acquire these skills and abilities—the smoking technique, the ability to perceive the effects, and enjoyment of the effects—will persist as cannabis users.

As occasional users, cannabis smokers acquire further justifications and rationalizations for its use, and these reinforce their continued use of the drug. The subculture of the group provides ready-made answers to many of the conventional objections to cannabis use that may be raised in their minds. Users may claim, for example, that cannabis is less dangerous than the alcohol that is tolerated and encouraged by conventional opinion. They are also likely to hold that cannabis smokers are in complete control of when and where they choose to use the drug; that the drug is in control of them.

The regular user of cannabis can neutralize any conventional or official labels that may be applied to them by non-users. People who lack the support of other users are less likely to become regular users if they accept the stereotype of addiction or the idea that they are likely to escalate towards the use of hard drugs. If ideas of addiction, escalation, and mental weakness cannot be neutralized, smokers may revert to occasional use, rather than becoming committed, regular users.

To protect themselves from stigmatization, regular users try to learn how to control the effects of the drug, inhibiting its effects at will, so that they are able to pass as normal in front of non-users or the police. They must, nevertheless, run certain risks of detection, as regular use requires access to illegal dealers whose criminal activities may bring the user to the attention of the police. In order to minimize their chances of discovery as users, they are likely to spend more and more of their time in the company of their own, the other regular users who can provide a supportive and relatively safe environment in which to smoke.
user of cannabis, which is not seen as linked in any way to work productivity. Young also points out that there can be cultural variations in response to the same drug. Andean peasants use cocaine (in the form of coca leaves) as an aid to work, and it is a normalized feature of their society. In Britain and the United States, however, cocaine is regarded very differently.

Young has shown that these variations in response to drugs can be explained in terms of the relationship between a dominant set of social values and a secondary subterranean set of values (Matza 1964). The dominant values of contemporary societies stress work, penetration, and everyday routines, but they coexist with other values that stress the need for excitement, leisure, and pleasure. These hedonistic, or pleasure-oriented, values are subterranean because they concern experiences that can be pursued only when the demands of employment and family life have been met. It is through their work—paid employment and unpaid work in the household—that people acquire the 'right' to freely enjoy their leisure activities and to pursue the subterranean values. Young sees this as involving a socialized conflict between the desire for pleasure and the repression of this desire as people engage in their everyday activities (Marcuse 1956). Through their socialization, he argues, adults acquire a feeling of guilt about any expression of these hedonistic values that has not been earned through hard work. Subterranean values can be exercised only with restraint and only so long as they do not undermine the normal everyday realities of work and family life.

The drugs that have come to be seen as problematic in contemporary societies are those that are used to induce an escape from everyday realities into an alternative world where hedonistic values alone prevail. They are seen to be associated with subcultures that disdain the work ethic and enjoy pleasures that have not been earned through work: 'It is drug use of this kind that is most actively repressed by the forces of social order. For it is not drugtaking per se but the culture of drugtakers which is reacted against: not the notion of changing consciousness but the type of consciousness that is socially generated' (J. Young 1971: 137).

In contemporary societies, Young argues, this kind of drug use is to be found in the inner-city subcultures and many youth subcultures.

Young found an overwhelming emphasis on drug use in the 'Bohemian youth culture' of the hippies of the 1960s. The use of mind-altering drugs was raised to a paramount position as one of the fundamental organizing principles for the identities of its members. This subculture—primarily a subculture of middle-class, student youth—was organized around spontaneity and expressivity and a rejection of work. It was in hippie culture that the main structural supports for cannabis use were found, and in the late 1960s Young documented its increasing emphasis also on the strong hallucinogenic drug LSD. What he called the delinquent youth culture, on the other hand, was more characteristic of some working-class areas. Young saw this as generating an ambivalent attitude towards drug use. While the delinquent subculture was organized around its strong emphasis on subterranean values, drug use was merely tolerated or allowed—it was not required.

Normalized drug use

Young's work was undertaken in a period of full employment and relative affluence. The period since he wrote has seen the emergence of mass unemployment and economic insecurity, exacerbated by a global recession. Despite some improvement, employment remains insecure or uncertain for many young people. Illegal drug use today is not so much focused on hippie youth who reject the work ethic. It is now more strongly emphasized by the inner-city unemployed who have little experience of or prospect for secure and regular paid employment. Some glimpses of this were apparent in Young's references to the subculture of inner-city black Americans, as it had developed from the 1920s. He saw this as strongly supportive of cannabis use and as a principal source of heroin use. Their poverty and inferior status forced them into a rejection of conventional values and an embrace of subterranean values (Finestone 1964). Indeed, this was one of the principal contexts of drug use studied by Becker. This group has recently been identified as the core of a so-called underclass—an idea that we examine in Chapters 18 and 19.

In the 1970s, 'conformist youth culture' could still be seen as fully embracing conventional culture and its conditional commitment to hedonistic values. Its members were committed to work and to family, and their leisure-time activities posed no challenge to the dominance of the conventional values. Young saw this culture as having little significance for deviant drug-taking, holding that conformist youth simply made illicit use of alcohol (which they were not supposed to buy until aged 18) for the same purposes as their parents. It is clear today, however, that cannabis use has become common within this culture since the 1980s and that there was a growth in the use of Ecstasy in the 1990s. Declining employment opportunities in a period of recession broke the link between conventional work values and hedonistic values for many young people. Where there was little or no employment, the question of 'earning' pleasure simply did not arise.

As a result, drug use has increased among all sections of youth. Almost half (47 per cent) of 16 year olds in Manchester in 1992 were reported to have used an illegal drug, generally cannabis, and just under three-quarters (71 per cent) had been in situations where drugs were available and on offer. In a national survey of 15–16 year olds in 1996, 42 per cent had used an illegal drug (Parker and Measham 1994). The British Crime Survey for 2000 found that a quarter of those aged 16–19 and over a quarter of
those aged 20–24 had used cannabis during the previous twelve months. A survey in 2004 of 16–24 year olds found that 39 per cent reported that they had used illegal drugs. Cannabis was the most commonly used drug, with 30 per cent of the young adults having used it. Use of Ecstasy, cocaine, or amphetamines was much lower, at about 4–7 per cent of 16–24 year olds (Social Trends 2005: table 7.11). Heroin use, however, has been increasing in Britain, and the average age at which heroin users had first begun to experiment with the drug is 15. Three-quarters of the young people in inner-city areas are reported to have tried crack cocaine (a mixture of cocaine and baking soda). Class and gender show little association with drug availability and take-up, but ethnicity does. Black youths are rather more likely to come into contact with drugs than are white youths, as suggested in an earlier study by Pryce (1986), and Asians are far less likely to do so: only 32 per cent of young Asians in Manchester in 1992 reported having been offered drugs.

The ease of access to drugs such as cannabis—44 per cent of boys and 38 per cent of girls in 1996 had used it—shows that Becker’s view of the importance of subcultures to occasional users must now be qualified. Changes in the urban and class conditions that sustained ‘delinquent’ subcultures in the past, combined with a more commercialized structure of illegal drug-trading, have resulted in a wider availability of drugs. Drug use is now an integral, normalized part of a generalized youth culture, and not of specific class-based or deviant subcultures. Even the police are tolerant towards its use and generally caution those cannabis users who come their way. Along with music, clothes, magazines, and a love of fast cars, drugs and alcohol are a part of the everyday, pleasure-seeking experience of virtually all young people. The counter-cultural Bohemian and hippie orientations that Young identified in the 1960s are no longer an important part of this youth subculture, which is now a consumerist and leisure-oriented subculture organized around the pursuit of pleasure that is disconnected from the requirement to ‘earn’ it through productive work.

Despite its high profile in the news media, Ecstasy (MDMA) is far less widely used than cannabis. In a national survey in 1996, 9 per cent of boys and 7 per cent of girls reported having taken Ecstasy. Amphetamines (such as speed and whizz), LSD (‘acid’), and solvents are all more widely used than Ecstasy: 20 per cent of boys and 21 per cent of girls had used solvents. Ecstasy, amphetamines, and LSD were all associated with regular involvement in dance clubs and raves, but in these venues, cannabis remains the most widely used illegal drug. Indeed, alcohol—consumed under age—was even more widespread: 94 per cent of 15–16 year olds in a national survey reported that they had consumed alcohol, generally on a regular basis. Over one-third were tobacco smokers, the rate of use and the rate of growth in use being higher among girls than among boys (Ettorre 1992; Oakley et al. 1992). These findings support the claim that there is now a ‘poly-drug’ culture in which users are not confined to the use of any one drug. Cannabis remains the drug of preference, but it is taken alongside other drugs (see Figure 7.5).

**Figure 7.5 Drug use, England and Wales 2003–4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Estimated no. of users</th>
<th>Users (% of population)</th>
<th>Average price</th>
<th>Deaths (2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>755,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>£40 per gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crack</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>55,000*</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>£15–25 per rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>614,000</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>£2–7 per pill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>43,000*</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>£40–90 per gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSD</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>£1–5 per tab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic mushrooms</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>260,000</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>483,000</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>£8–15 per gram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>3,364,000</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>£40–140 per ounce, depending on type and quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Class A</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,091,000</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any drug</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,854,000</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/drugs_uk/drugs_grid/html/default.stm, drawing on British Crime Survey 2003–4; Drugscope survey 2005. Death figures show the total number of deaths in which the specified drug was noted on a death certificate. The figures for any drug include anti-depressants and painkillers. Comparable Scottish figures can be found in Scottish Crime Survey 2003.
Not all drugs used by young people are normalized features of the conformist youth culture. Heroin use, for example, is found among less than 2 per cent of young people, and these generally have little involvement in consumerism and conventional family life. Indeed, ‘conformist’ drug users tend to regard heroin as a drug that would undermine their lifestyle. It is something to be avoided in favour of the more ‘pleasure-oriented’ drugs (M. Collison 1994). Auld et al. (1986) show that there is a characteristic episodic user of heroin: neither the occasional nor the regular user, but someone who has periods of sustained heroin use, followed by periods ‘coming off’ (see also Dorn and South 1987).

Retreatism and withdrawal from what is perceived as a hostile world are principal motives for those who have experienced a lifetime of emotional and physical abuse in broken families and poor districts (Ruggiero and South 1993: 116 ff.). Such users find it difficult to band together for mutual support in the deprived city areas where the homeless congregate, and their lifestyle forces them into close association with a vast criminal underworld of dealers and organized crime (Dorn et al. 1992). In these circumstances, heroin users are very likely to make the transition from primary to secondary deviation.

In the inner-city areas, the growth of an informal economy has been associated with the expansion of an extensive fringe of irregular activities—street-level thieving, dealing and exchange of stolen and illicit goods of all kinds (Auld et al. 1986). The unemployed residents of these areas seek to make more than the bare public assistance
level of income through involvement in these activities. Cannabis has, since the 1960s, become more closely tied to professional drug-dealing and, along with hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine, is traded on the streets. It has been estimated that, by 1997, the number of drug deals in London alone had reached an annual total of 30 million, with a total value of £600 million. Only around one in 4,000 street deals results in an arrest.

Through their involvement in this irregular economy, the unemployed can easily become involved in drug-dealing, and the opportunities for use are great. Small-scale users and others become drawn into large networks of organized drug crime. There is a hierarchical division of labour in the supply of drugs, and the largest rewards tend to go to those who are furthest removed from street-level dealing.

Stop and reflect

In this section we have looked at how people learn to obtain and to use drugs for pleasure, and we traced the growing normalization of certain types of drug use.

- How useful is it to see drug use as the result of a learning process of the kind described by Becker?
- The use of drugs is closely involved with ideas of work, leisure, and pleasure. The use of certain drugs has been normalized in youth culture and rates of use are now very high.
- The use of drugs and trading in them on the streets and in clubs is closely tied into large international networks of drug-trafficking and organized crime.

Organized crime, international crime, and terrorism

Crime is often seen in highly individual and informal terms, though we have tried to emphasize the ways in which it is generated in and through cultural and subcultural forms of social organization related to class, gender, and ethnic differences. It is important, however, to recognize that much criminality is professionally organized, and we have, again, tried to indicate some of the ways in which this is socially organized. In the next section, we turn to an examination of these issues of the formal social organization of crime in much greater detail. We look, in particular, at crime as a business, organized nationally and internationally in ways that challenge conventional businesses in the scale of their activities. We trace how processes of globalization have produced extensive transnational criminal organizations. We look also at the growing significance of international terrorism—the use of criminal acts for political purposes—and trace some of the parallels and connections between terrorism and organized crime.

Organized crime

We have looked at certain forms of professional, career crime in earlier parts of this chapter, but we have not discussed what is commonly referred to as ‘organized crime’. This can be defined as that form of criminal activity that is organized as a business enterprise through the systematic use of administrative mechanisms, formal coordination, alliances, and joint ventures, and do so in relation to a range of markets for goods and services. Organized crime is criminal activity that goes beyond the relatively small-scale professional and gang activity considered so far. Like these, it has its roots in the specific subcultures of criminality that comprise the underworld, but it also has quite distinctive causes and conditions. Where organized crime exists, it affects the whole pattern of crime within a society. In this section we will look at the common characteristics of organized crime in the United States, Russia, Japan, and Hong Kong, commonly seen as the foci of ‘Mafia’ style criminality in the world today.
Mafia and Cosa Nostra

Public recognition of something called the Mafia or Cosa Nostra in the United States dates largely from the 1920s and 1930s, when a series of Senate hearings brought the activities of a number of leading Italian-American criminals to public attention. The most influential model of 'Mafia' organization is that depicted by Donald Cressey (1969), originally produced in association with a Presidential Task Force on organized crime (see also Albini 1971; Ianni and Reuss-Ianni 1972). Cressey presented a picture of a huge national confederation involved in fraud, drugs, prostitution, corruption, gambling, and violence, but also using its funds in conventional business operations such as property, finance, clubs, and restaurants. Its methods had come to parallel those of other business enterprises and it was impossible to disentangle illegal from legal activities and profits. This type of organized crime may never have been quite as tight and centralized as they seemed to the public and as they were portrayed in such films as *The Godfather*, but it was, in many ways, a distinctive form of criminal activity.

Such organized crime became a prominent feature of major American cities in the 1920s and 1930s. It is often seen as a direct outgrowth of the rural networks of support and control that proliferated in Sicily and other isolated parts of Italian society in the nineteenth century and that were transplanted to the United States by migrants from these areas. These were loose networks of friends and relations, rather than secret societies, and were organized around the 'honour' of family and locality and were involved in a wide range of neighbourhood and regional activities (Blok 1974; Boissevain 1974; Gambetta 1993).

The true origins of organized crime are more recent and more complex. It arose in its contemporary form after the great waves of European migration to New York, Chicago, and other American cities and was an outgrowth of the very specific conditions of the 1920s and 1930s. The urban slums gave rise to many loosely organized groups that were rooted in their distinctive subcultures. We have already shown how similar gangs also emerged in districts of London. The emergence of such gangs can be explained by the distinctive subcultures found in lower-class areas of large cities and the corresponding differential association in which this results (Sutherland 1939). It depends also, however, on the attractiveness of an 'innovative' response to the anomie found in such areas (Merton 1938d).

The gangs of the major US cities became especially involved in the production and sale of 'bootleg' alcohol, made profitable by the 'Prohibition' legislation of the American state. The central participants in the bootlegging of whiskey were European immigrants and the descendents of immigrants, and both Italians and Sicilians were prominent. They were actively involved in a range of criminal activities within their neighbourhoods and became drawn into intensive conflict for customers. An alliance of Sicilian and Italian gangs was forged in 1930–31 and came to be known by outsiders as the Mafia. Far from being a direct descendent of the rural neighbourhoods, then, the gang grouping of the 1930s was a new phenomenon and a distinctive product of American society. It is true, nevertheless, that many of the leading figures in the emerging criminal gangs were recent migrants who had fled the clampdown on the Italian mafia by Mussolini’s Fascist regime in the late 1920s. For all these reasons, Cressey rejected the 'mafia' label, holding that it is inaccurate and was not used by the participants themselves. Participants themselves preferred such impersonal terms as the 'organization', 'business', or 'firm', and sometimes 'Cosa Nostra' ('our thing').

The organization existed, Cressey argued, as a federation of separate and autonomous family-based gangs, each of which defended its particular territory and held that it had a legitimate claim on the support of its local population. In acting 'honourably' towards 'their' people, providing them with the political influence and personal welfare they were denied by the city and national authorities, they earned the respect of people living in their neighbourhoods. This was reinforced by a structure of coercion that ensured that no one in the locality would challenge the right of the gang to monopolize its profitable ventures. Typical of such territorial groups was the Capone Mob of 1930s Chicago.

By the 1960s, Cressey argued, there were over thirty such family mobs. Each family boss—or 'Don'—had absolute authority in his territory. Through a series of cross-cutting alliances designed to protect the territorial claims of each of the gangs, a vast national organization had been built. The Organization itself had no single leader, but was run by a committee of major mobsters known as the 'Commission'. Cressey held that, by the late 1960s, the organization existed, Cressey argued, as a federation of separate and autonomous family-based gangs, each of which defended its particular territory and held that it had a legitimate claim on the support of its local population. In acting 'honourably' towards 'their' people, providing them with the political influence and personal welfare they were denied by the city and national authorities, they earned the respect of people living in their neighbourhoods. This was reinforced by a structure of coercion that ensured that no one in the locality would challenge the right of the gang to monopolize its profitable ventures. Typical of such territorial groups was the Capone Mob of 1930s Chicago.
‘Buffer’, who acts as the interface or intermediary between the senior family members and the lower-level operatives. The Buffer had various ‘Lieutenants’ responsible for particular operating units, each of which had its Section Chief to liaise with the ‘Soldiers’ who actually operate particular activities—money lending, lotteries, vending machine rackets, protection, and so on. Beyond the level of the Soldiers, numerous non-Italians were employed or contracted for specific purposes at street level to take bets, answer telephones, sell narcotics, collect protection money, and so on.

Cressey further claimed that the Organization and its families operated according to a strict code of behaviour that governs all their activities. This code comprises five principles:

1. **Loyalty.** This is the basic injunction to respect the interests of other families and to keep silent about family activities.
2. **Rationality.** This is the requirement to act coolly and calmly in pursuit of the family’s business: not to take drugs, not to get into fights, and to follow orders as a good team player.
3. **Honour.** This is tied to ideas of masculinity and patriarchalism, involving respect for women and for the senior members of the family.
4. **Courage.** Family members are to withstand pressure and punishment without complaint. This is, again, tied to a strong ethos of masculinity.
5. **Commitment.** Family members are to uphold their way of life without being drawn into the conventions of regular employment or social conformism.

Joseph Albini has warned that the Organization must be regarded not as a bureaucratic enterprise but as a loose-knit system of patron–client or network relationships (Albini 1988). As such, its structure is constantly in flux and no rigid model can describe its shape at any particular time. It is clear, nevertheless, that Cressey highlighted the way in which a loose-knit structure can coordinate resources from which they could benefit.

**Russian organized crime**

Russian organized crime, like its American counterpart, is organized through loose ‘syndicates’ that operate on the basis of patron–client relationships. In these relationships, a person of power or wealth helps or protects specific others (the clients), who, in return, perform services for their patron. The relationship is not a contractual, employment relationship but rests on informal patterns of trust and obligation. Hierarchies of patron–client relationships form networks of reciprocity and obligation centred on the most powerful individuals. Those involved in these networks are engaged in a range of illegal activities. Although Russia has virtually no bank robberies, bank fraud is rife and banks pay high levels of protection money to avoid becoming the targets of robberies. Forging of documents

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**THEORY AND METHODS**

**Official sources on crime**

Much of Cressey’s evidence comes from official investigations and the testimony of informers. Albini questioned the validity of this evidence, suggesting that Cressey may have been led to overstate his case.

What other sources of evidence might there be on organized crime? How could a satisfactory research project be set up?
is widespread, as is illegal arms trading, including dealing in nuclear materials, prostitution, drug smuggling, money laundering, and illegal imports. Crime is so closely integrated with conventional business that it has been argued that there is a ‘shadow economy’ of marginal and unregulated business with its ‘black market’ for distributing goods. There are high levels of political corruption, giving the criminal syndicates considerable influence over the state (Albini et al. 1997; Varese 2001).

Organized crime in Hong Kong and mainland China originated in the ‘triad’ secret societies, though it now extends beyond them. These are a long-standing feature of traditional Chinese society and prospered in Hong Kong during its separation from the rest of China. A triad is a family- and neighbourhood-based grouping that provides support and services for its members and organizes its activities on the basis of secrecy, discipline, and the supply of labour for public works construction. By the early twentieth century, they were a strongly entrenched feature of the supply of drugs, gambling, the sale of festival trinkets, and itinerant dealers who banded together for mutual protection and were given official encouragement to organize. Triad activity in Hong Kong grew after the Communist revolution in China, when many prominent leaders were expelled from the mainland. The economic success of Hong Kong since the 1960s provided many opportunities for triads to expand their involvement in prostitution, gambling, and drugs.

Thus, while there is continuity between the traditional triads and those of today, systematic involvement in organized crime is a recent and more specific phenomenon. Triads tend to be organized as loose networks of independent gangs that regard themselves as part of a larger ‘family’ or clan in which there is a decentralized structure of command. The various gangs are loosely ranked as ‘Red Pole’, ‘Blue Lantern’, and ordinary. Although they cooperate for common purposes, they are also involved in recurrent and intense conflict over the pursuit of their interests.

Organized crime in Japan originated in gambling groups and itinerant dealers who banded together for mutual protection and were given official encouragement to organize markets at shrines and temples and to regulate the supply of labour for public works construction. By the early twentieth century, they were a strongly entrenched feature of Japanese society and had come to be known as Yakuza (Hill 2003). They were used as government tools for strike-breaking and for fighting left-wing political groups and they had strong links with right-wing political leaders. The Yakuza took their present form, however, after the Second World War. Industrial reconstruction and slow political liberalization created opportunities for profitable enterprise in the black markets and in the supply of labour for construction and dock work. They moved into the growing entertainment industry of bars, prostitution, and pachinko (pin ball), and they extended their protection and extortion activities. Intense conflict among Yakuza led to the emergence of a small number of major syndicates, paralleling the structure of business groups that had developed in the conventional economy. Despite a clampdown in the 1960s, organized crime in Japan remains highly concentrated.

Hill (2003) has established that there are currently about 90,000 men involved in organized crime in Japan and that about 40 per cent are involved in gangs affiliated to one of the three big syndicates: Yamaguchi-gumi, Iwagawa-kai, and Sumiyoshi-kai. The syndicates have great similarities to Cressey’s model of the Cosa Nostra and are organized in ways that draw on the idea of the traditional family household, with its paternalistic and authoritarian patterns of control by the ‘father’ over junior members. Formal administrative mechanisms are also used, however, and the syndicates are organized into series of ranks such as ‘boss’, executive, soldier, and trainee. A Yakuza syndicate and its affiliated groupings are organized in relation to a tight discipline and obedience, embodied in a strict code of behaviour that is enforced, when necessary, through violence. Yakuza are currently involved in protection rackets, the supply of drugs, gambling, the sale of festival trinkets, prostitution, debt collection, loan sharki, rent collection, and the supply of labour through sub-contractors. In many of these areas they act under commission from conventional businesses and public authorities, which rely on the ability of the Yakuza to manage and manipulate their employees, shareholders, and voters through blackmail and coercion.

International crime

Organized crime, we have suggested, has certain similarities with conventional business activity. Like many businesses, those involved in organized crime have expanded their activities to an international level. Organized criminal gangs in the United States, China, Russia, and elsewhere have been involved in extensive international transactions and have increasingly begun to organize their activities on a global scale.

State borders have always provided opportunities for, as well as barriers to, criminal activity. Within the United States, organized crime has been able to operate under different state jurisdictions, as laws vary from one part of the country to another, and it has been only a small step
further to operate across international state borders. Providing goods and services that are legal in one state but illegal in another provides great opportunities for such operations. The smuggling of alcohol and tobacco, because of variations in tax levels, is one example of such international crime that has existed for a very long time. The growing complexity of legal regulations and of the economic and political interdependence of nation states has created the immense opportunities that organized crime groups have been able to exploit. It has been argued that the globalization of the political economy has resulted in a globalization of crime (Ruggiero, et al. 1998; Findlay 1999).

Causes and consequences

The most obvious and important criminal activity is smuggling, and this has always existed alongside and interdependently of legal international trade. The liberalization of international trade, creating global markets and encouraging business enterprises to operate freely and without regard for national borders has created a situation in which smuggling operations come to be seen, almost, as forms of ‘free trade’ activity. International smugglers can present themselves as providing commodities that market restrictions prevent from flowing freely across the world. Although smuggling is often thought of in terms of a tourist carrying a few hundred cigarettes or a bottle of whiskey, the scale of smuggling is immense and it is highly organized. It has been estimated that smuggling is a major global business, valued at more than $600 billion a year, especially through money-laundering operations that are closely tied to established banking and financial activities.

The transformation of the transport industry with the rise of large container ships and juggernaut lorries, has transformed the methods of smuggling. Previously, drugs such as marijuana and cocaine were smuggled into the United States in small planes and speedboats, but organized criminal groups are now transporting larger consignments in sealed containers alongside conventional cargos. Containers and sealed lorries are also used to smuggle migrants across national borders. These mechanisms are anonymous and impersonal, making it more difficult for states to trace those responsible. The flow of goods from Mexico to the United States, for example, combines both legal and illegal commodities. Drug traffickers have established factories and distribution centres in northern Mexico and have taken advantage of the deregulated trucking industry to transport their drugs into the United States alongside legitimate trade in fruit and vegetables. Within the European Union, the opening-up of national borders has made it easier for lorries to transport economic migrants, asylum seekers, and drugs into Germany, France, and Britain (Andreas 2002).

The liberalization of financial markets was intended to promote the transnational flow of capital, but it has also promoted a huge growth in money laundering. This is the process through which the proceeds from illegal activities can be converted into legal—and untraceable—financial assets through the use of multiple international bank accounts and investments in tax havens and other financial centres (Sikka 2003). This has been particularly important for organized criminal groups from Russia and Colombia.

The transformation of the international financial system has also created opportunities for new forms of crime. The almost exclusive reliance on credit cards for consumer purchases has made the copying of credit cards and the ‘skimming’ of credit details from them into a major criminal activity. Information from cards skimmed in a London restaurant can be used to produce cards that can, within hours, be used to make purchases in New York, Athens, or Rome. The technology required makes this an obvious area for the involvement of organized criminal groups, which have increased their level of investment in technologies for fraud in the face of the growth on international credit card trading.

New technology Internet crime

The Internet makes it very easy for organized criminal groups to steal credit details—and even whole identities—through intercepting insecure credit card transactions. Major Internet providers and dealers, such as Microsoft and e-bay, have sought to increase the security of their systems in the face of technologies of both crime and control. E-mail has also made new forms of crime possible. Criminal groups create e-mails and websites that appear to be those of legitimate businesses, such as banks. In a ‘spamming’ operation, they send e-mails to millions of Internet users in the hope that just a handful will believe the message to be genuine and will hand over their password and other account details.

Another financial scam on the Internet is the sending of ‘spam’ messages claiming to be from a deposed politician—generally in Nigeria—who is looking for a bank account in which to lodge millions of pounds. In return for allowing the use of an account, the Internet user is told that they will receive many thousands of pounds in commission. This is, of course, merely another way of persuading people to pass on details about their bank account, which can rapidly be emptied or used for illegal purposes.
Criminal organizations

The actors involved in international crime are many and diverse. Organized crime groups vary from one country to another, and even within countries. They are not organized in precisely the same way as large-scale business enterprises engaged in conventional activities, but they do have certain common characteristics as international actors and they use many of the same mechanisms as those conventional businesses.

Criminal groups from numerous countries extend their international scope and combine with other criminal groups in a number of ways. At its loosest, there may be a recognition of the respective spheres of influence and territories of each group, but these easily give way to mutual supplier relationships that may persist over time (P. Williams 2002). Colombian drug producers, for example, have established stable supply linkages with Italian organized criminal groups, and the latter are given exclusive rights to redistribute the drugs across western Europe. The Russian organized crime groups have established links with organized criminal groups in the Netherlands and Japan for supplying women from Eastern Europe for prostitution. Such supply relations may involve barter rather than money transactions: guns may be exchanged for drugs, for example.

Stronger forms of transnational organization occur when groups form what Williams (2002) has called tactical and strategic alliances. Short-term tactical cooperation may lead to longer-term strategic alliances that allow systematic and extensive cooperation. Drug trafficking into the United States, for example, has involved the establishment of strong strategic linkages between Colombian producers and dealers in the Dominican Republic, these links being built as their earlier reliance on Mexican intermediaries became less profitable. Most recently, the Colombian dealers have built strategic alliances with Russian groups to handle distribution through eastern and central Europe.

If there are no transnational bureaucratic criminal organizations, the loose networks do, nevertheless, have certain formal mechanisms of cooperation. It has been reported that summit meetings of major criminal groups have been used to regulate spheres of influence and to plan joint ventures. Although the participants are not, in any sense, representatives or leaders of whole national criminal gangs, the meetings do bring together many of the important criminal groups and bring some stability to international criminal activity. These meetings are complemented by bilateral meetings and by continued contacts through intermediaries. Some criminal groups, it has been suggested, have made such mediation and courier business their main activity.

Much discussion has focused on the idea that the Chinese triads of Hong Kong have expanded through the overseas Chinese communities to establish transnational triad organizations. Hong Kong has been seen as the directing centre for such global criminal activities, and the drive to globalization has been strengthened since the 1997 return of Hong Kong to rule—and strong political control—from Beijing. While Chinese organized criminal groups have certainly established strong links across national borders, there is no global triad structure. Chinese communities are diverse in their ethnicity and there is little basis for dominance with other criminal gangs. Chinese criminal gangs have become very active in drug smuggling and people smuggling, but they do so as parts of the larger growth in global criminal activity that has been described.

Terrorism

Terrorism is political action against a state and its citizens that pursues its goals through extreme violence, often on a spectacular or mass scale, and that is generally criminalized through legislation, proscription, and exclusion. It has become, since the 1960s, one of the most important targets for police and security service operations and it has entered the public consciousness as a major—and perhaps permanent—source of concern at work, in travel, and during leisure. X-ray and security checks at airports and other public places have become an accepted, if unwelcome, weapon in what many politicians describe as ‘the war against terrorism’.

Violent political conflict has a history as long as the human species. Its organized form as the internal opposition of political groups to state authorities has a history almost as long. Eric Hobsbawm (1969) has termed this ‘social banditry’ when it takes the form of redistributive political action pursued through violent acts that are criminalized by the state. Social bandits engage in a range of criminal activities in support of their political aims, and their overall political strategy and tactics are labelled as criminal by the state that they attack. In rural societies, social banditry is generated by a sense of grievance and wrong-doing and a desire to secure vengeance and justice. Examples of such social banditry include the idealistic robber of the Robin Hood myth, the guerrilla or resistance fighter, and the violent avengers who terrorize their opponents.

Pacification of their societies by industrializing states, especially those that established liberal and democratic structures, greatly reduced the level of social banditry and institutionalized the legitimate and non-violent opposition of political parties. Even in these societies, however, criminalized forms of political violence could still erupt. Many European governments of the nineteenth century
were concerned about the activities of ‘anarchists’, who were widely seen as motivated by the French revolution. Anarchists were seen as forming secret societies and organizations through which they could plot acts of violence, and a number of bombings and assassinations did take place in this period.

The most protracted forms of political violence, however, have been linked with separatist and nationalist claims, as in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the United Kingdom from the late nineteenth century until the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1922. The IRA attacked political or military targets and saw itself as engaged in a war against an imposed state.

From the 1960s, these forms of political violence were renewed, but they also began to be transformed as dispossessed groups generated by international conflicts began to take their struggles to the metropolitan and colonial states that they saw as responsible for their oppression. This was the beginning of that form of violent political conflict described as terrorism.

The violent political organizations of the late 1960s and 1970s—groups such as the IRA, the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigade, and ETA—were formed, like the IRA of fifty years earlier, as highly centralized and tightly coordinated organizations with a structure of command modeled on that of conventional armies. Indeed, many used militaristic terminology in their names and in their tactics. They emerged in the political upheavals of the 1960s and saw themselves pursuing radical, leftist policies through violent means because they were unable to pursue their goals through conventional political means. They often saw themselves as part of an international struggle, though their international links were limited and each group tended to operate on a national basis. Their targets were politicians and businessmen, embassies and banks, and national airlines.

**The rise of Islamist terrorism**

The first signs of a change in the nature of terrorism occurred in the wake of the Arab–Israeli War of 1967, which resulted in the dispossession of large numbers of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories. The involvement of Western states in this conflict, where support generally went to Israel, led many Palestinians to see Israel and Western governments as legitimate targets for acts of violence. Many came to see their conflict in religious terms, drawing on Islam to construct an ideology of political opposition. Groups such as Al-Fatah and Hezbollah organized themselves to pursue the goal of Palestinian liberation and autonomy through all means necessary and many of their supporters came to see this as a first step in a holy war (*jihad*) through which the boundaries of the Islamic world could be extended across the globe. This Islamist ideology—often misunderstood as ‘Islamic fundamentalism’—was strengthened by the Iranian revolution in which the regime of the Western-oriented Shah was replaced by a radical Islamic caliphate under the Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran became a major centre for fomenting and supporting Islamist terrorism, and hijack and kidnapping became the principal means through which struggles against particular states were globalized.

A continuing failure to resolve the Palestinian situation radicalized other states in the Middle East, and numerous state-sponsored terrorist organizations arose. A crucial step was taken, however, in the heart of Asia, where Russian intervention in Afghanistan led to the formation of *mujahideen* guerrilla groups who went on to build training camps across the country and to build links with radicals and terrorist groups in Pakistan and the Middle East. A variety of groups began to take their struggles to an international level and to broaden their targets from the political and the military to civilians. Bombs were set off at Western embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and at US embassies in the Middle East; hotels, restaurants, and buses became targets in Israel; and the World Trade Center in New York was bombed in 1993. This shift also involved a change in tactics, as car bombs and suicide bombs became the main weapons of attack.

The most visible sign of this shift in targets was the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. In this attack, hijacked airliners were flown directly into the towers and, simultaneously, into the Pentagon in Washington. This led directly to a...
US-led invasion of Afghanistan, which was seen as the coordinating and training centre of international terrorism. Osama bin-Laden, a Saudi Arabian millionaire, was identified as the leading figure in an organized terrorist group called Al-Qaeda, and the war in Afghanistan was supposed to destroy his power base. Continuing American involvement in Afghanistan fuelled Islamist radicalism and wider public opinion across the Middle East, and terror attacks continued. In the search for states supporting this spread of terrorism, the United States led an invasion of Iraq, incorrectly seen as the source of international terrorism. While the United States removed the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, it created yet another pretext for Islamist violence. American and British soldiers became targets of attack by Islamist groups from Iraq and the surrounding countries, and opposition to Western governments reached a higher level than before.

The direct consequences may have included further increases in political terror, most notably in night clubs in Indonesia in 2002, in the Madrid train bombs of 2004, and the London transport bombings of 2005.

This growth in Islamist terrorism is often interpreted on the model of the violent political conflict of the past. Thus, it is seen as the product of a centralized and coordinated organization, headed by Osama bin-Laden, that plans its numerous coordinated attacks in immense detail. Actions such as the events of 9/11 certainly require meticulous planning, but it would be wrong to see these and similar attacks as part of the master-plan of an army-like organization. We have shown that organized crime borrows certain elements from conventional business practice but applies these in a far looser and decentralized way. Islamist terrorism, too, has learned much from conventional military and security practices, but these are employed in novel ways through decentralized networks in which chains of command are complex and fragmentary.

Al-Qaeda does not exist as a monolithic organizational entity. The word means ‘base’ or ‘model’, and it was precisely to promote a model of how the Islamist cause could be promoted and to establish an intellectual base from which activists could draw inspiration (Jason Burke 2004). It was probably formed in 1988 in Pakistan as a way of helping to maintain the political unity of those who had fought against the Russians in Afghanistan. It had, however, a purely nominal existence until 1996, when bin-Laden and a number of other politically-religious factions began to build training camps in Afghanistan and it became an important coordinating element in a larger network of militant groups. Its influence within this network came from bin-Laden’s ability to provide finance, resources, and a safe basis for terrorist operations.

Actual operations are planned by the many local groups linked to this network and there is little or no overall coordination. The 9/11 bombings did involve a greater degree of planning and coordination than many other attacks before or since, and the bin-Laden group does seem to have retained overall control. The initial idea came from a group in Egypt, the United Arab Republic, and Lebanon, and it was through Osama bin-Laden that a number of Saudi Arabian activists in Afghanistan were drawn into support the operation without having any part in its planning. The finance for the operation—estimated at $500,000—came from bin-Laden and was laundered through the international banking system to make it untraceable. The American-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 disrupted this network and made it impossible for the country to be used as a safe base. Bin-Laden set up a more mobile base in Pakistan and continued his attempts to inspire Islamist terrorism: he and his associates issued videos in support of terrorist attacks and encouraged others to follow suit. However, Al-Qaeda has even less of a directive role in this terrorism than before.

Isamist terrorism is now planned and executed by very small groups with multifarious, but loose, links to each other. Actual terrorist operations are generally planned by small groups or clusters of individuals, linked by ethnicity and family background and, perhaps, worshipping at the same mosque. The London underground attacks of 7 July 2005 were largely planned and carried out by a small group of British Asians from Leeds, while the failed attempts of later that month were undertaken by a small group of Somalis from South London. A willingness to participate in acts of terrorism is something that individuals drift into and to which they gradually become more committed as a result of their ideological radicalization through religious events and groupings allied to, but not parts of, particular mosques in their own country and in Pakistan. Loose and informal connections with people met informally, if at all, are the means through which they acquire the necessary knowledge and materials for their attacks. Those who become involved in terrorist activities know very few other participants, making it especially difficult for security services to build up intelligence through the usual mechanisms of tracing known contacts. Their acts are not an expression of widely held subcultural beliefs in their locality—indeed, public opinion in their communities is generally strongly opposed to such acts. Nevertheless, their radical views can often be interpreted by outsiders as mere religious fervour and, embedded in their localities, they may be all but invisible to these outsiders.
Stop and reflect

In this section, we have explored a number of issues relating to organized crime and violence and its increasingly transnational character. We showed that:

- Contemporary organized crime in the United States cannot simply be traced back to rural roots in the Sicilian mafia. It is a specific adaptation to contemporary economic and political conditions.
- Organized crime takes the form of loose networks, often with a family or neighbourhood base, but connected through formal mechanisms of communication and control.
- Patterns of organized crime in the United States, Russia, Japan, and Hong Kong all show a similarity and overlap with conventional business activity.
- Is organized crime a bigger social problem than informal street crime?

Drawing on parallels between organized crime and international terrorism, we showed that:

- New forms of terrorism arose from the 1960s and have had their focus in Islamist ideologies produced in the Middle East.
- International terrorism has a loosely structured organization, with acts of terrorism largely initiated and planned by small, local groups rather than by a vast international conspiracy.
- People may drift into terrorism, their radical views sustained by their subculture, but terrorist acts are not expressions of subcultural values and are not supported by Islamic communities.
- Why has Islamist terrorism led to so much hostility towards Islamic communities?

Chapter summary

We began the chapter by considering a number of general issues in the study of crime and deviance, looking particularly at the relationship between biological and social factors and the social construction of deviant identities.

- Deviance cannot be seen as a purely biological fact or as a consequence of evolution. The crucial factor is the element of labelling through which particular acts are socially defined as deviant in one way or another.
- Drift into deviance is typical and is the means through which some primary deviation may become secondary deviation, to which people become committed and with which they identify themselves and are identified by others.
- Stigmatization is a crucial element in labelling, but much primary deviation is normalized and does not become the basis of role deviance or a deviant career.

We looked at a variety of forms of criminality, tracing their relationship to gender, ethnicity, and class, and we showed some of the distinctive features of professional or career crime:

- Conventional sex–gender roles shape male and female participation in crime. It is important to look at cultural conceptions of femininity and masculinity and at patriarchal structures of varying employment opportunities.
- Ethnic variations are also associated with criminality and with the likelihood of being the victim of a crime. Members of ethnic minorities are especially likely to experience police action against them.
- Subcultures of crime and criminal underworlds have been important in sustaining career crime.

Within these subcultures, criminality may be combined with low-paid or casual work, and it is often carried out by those who are denied employment opportunities.

White-collar crime is very extensive and is related to changes in the wider economy.

These issues were explored in greater depth for the particular case of drug use and abuse. We showed that:

- Many people drift into drug use, but few follow a career of persistent drug use. The use of some drugs has been normalized in youth culture and rates of use are high.
- Street and club trading in drugs is closely linked into international networks of drug trafficking and organized crime.

Turning to organized crime itself, we showed that:

- Many societies have strongly established patterns of organized crime. This is generally organized as loose networks with only minimal formal and administrative mechanisms of control.
- Organized crime is, nevertheless, increasingly organized at a transnational level and shows many similarities and overlaps with contemporary global business.
- International terrorism has many organizational similarities with organized crime.

Involvement in terrorism must be seen in relation to the subcultures that unintentionally sustain it, but without overtly supporting it.
Crime and deviance

Martin Gill (2000) has carried out one of the few ethnographic studies of commercial robbery—that is robbery aimed at business and commercial premises and property. He interviewed a sample of 341 people imprisoned for robberies of commercial properties such as banks and building societies, or cash-in-transit vans, aiming to uncover the motives behind their robberies and to study the ways in which they identified targets and planned their crimes. Gill reports that most of the robbers had been convicted for the first time in their teens, generally for assaults, car crimes, or burglaries. Most were in their twenties before they first committed a robbery, but few regarded themselves as exclusively robbers. The overriding motive was, unexpectedly, financial gain, but many robbers reported that their desire for money was associated with unemployment or a desire for excitement. The money gained from robberies was most typically spent on drugs, alcohol, and gambling, and on living the ‘high life’. It was generally spent in a relatively short period rather than being invested to meet long-term living expenses.

Much of Gill’s research concerns the organizational structure of robbery, and particularly the actual planning and carrying out of robberies. The planning of a robbery varied considerably. In the case of banks and cash-in-transit, planning took more than a week, while building society, post office, and off-licence robberies were generally planned only over a day or two. This reflected robbers’ perceptions of whether a particular target was a ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ one. Supermarkets and off-licences, but also building societies, were generally regarded as soft targets that required little or no planning. Robbers might, on the spur of the moment, drive into town and look for a likely place to rob with only a very minimal reconnaissance. Large-scale cash robberies directed at banks, on the other hand, required more meticulous preparation in advance and may involve periods of surveillance. It was not uncommon in such cases to rely on information received from friends or acquaintances, and this might sometimes involve the cooperation of someone on the inside of the organization targeted. Hard targets also tended to involve more robbers: a bank or bank van may typically involve a team of three or more robbers. Physical security measures such as closed-circuit television cameras were rarely deterrents to robbery, as robbers simply hid their faces or wore disguises.

Gill draws on his results and a series of case studies to reflect on attempts to construct a typology of robbers. The clearest division that he found was that between the amateurs and the professionals, who could be distinguished by the amount of planning and organization that they did and by the sizes of their targets. There was, however, much overlap between these categories. Gill sees far more uniformity among robbers of all types, with their willingness to engage in robberies depending on their rational calculation of the particular rewards and costs involved in the specific situations in which they find themselves: their assessment of the risk and the opportunities, the presence of cameras, screens, and other security measures, and so on.

Gill stresses the rationality of robbers. Refer back to our discussion of rational action theory in Chapter 2.
pp. XXX–X and see how useful you think this approach might be in explaining Gill’s findings.

How valid are Gill’s conclusions likely to be, considering that his sample consisted of those who had been caught and convicted for their robberies?

Read the case studies presented by Gill (2000 chapter 4). What evidence do they provide for the various theories of crime that we have considered in this chapter? What evidence is there for labeling processes, differential association, and drift, for example?

The problem of crime is often depicted as a problem of youth crime, so you will find it useful to consider some aspects of this. Look back at our discussion of mobile phone theft at the beginning of this chapter, p. xxx.

The British government’s youth crime adviser, Lord Warner, the Chairman of the Youth Justice Board, has seen these trends in crime as showing the growing importance of gang crime committed by young people against other young people. He claims that there are 400 ‘problem estates’ in Britain where gangs of up to sixty members operate. These gangs are said to recruit their members from those excluded from school. Gang activity on these estates, he said, encouraged a ‘culture of bullying and intimidation’ that undermined authority and order at school and on the streets. They steal mobile phones, trainers, and designer clothing, they are involved in drug use, and they coerce girls into sex. This crime is missed in the British Crime Survey, Lord Warner argued, because it interviewed only those aged over 16.

Reporting on Lord Warner’s views, the Independent newspaper identified what it held to be the five types of tactic used by these juvenile gangs:

- The Blitz. A brief attack by a group of youngsters, generally on an older person.
- The Snatch. A crime where one gang member targets the victim.
- The Confrontation. The victim is surrounded by gang members who threaten and intimidate until the targeted goods are surrendered.
- The Con. Where one gang member distracts the victim and lures him, or her, to where the other gang members are waiting.
- The Trap. A robbery that takes place when an outsider enters a gang’s territory and is surrounded by its members.

Consult the official statistics on crime (see the Home Office website listed in the ‘Explore further’ section below) and see what information you can discover about the extent of this kind of juvenile crime. Do the statistics tell you anything about whether the perpetrators of the crime are acting as members of a gang? What are the problems of drawing any firm conclusions from these data?

Lord Warner pointed out that these kinds of crime tend to lead to custodial sentences, and he advocated a greater use of community service as a penalty. Do you think such a shift in sentencing would be successful in reducing the amount of crime and the likelihood of juvenile offenders drifting into long-term criminality?

Use the Index and the Contents page of this book to find the sections in Chapter 9 ‘Education’ and Chapter 13 ‘City and community’ that might be relevant to explaining youth crime. Can you find any material that would help to assess the accuracy of Lord Warner’s depiction of schools and communities?

Go to your library and find some books on juvenile crime and delinquency. The classic sources are Cohen (1955) and Yablonsky (1967).
Review the various stop and reflect points in this chapter. You may find it useful to consider these in relation to our discussion of socialization and identity in Chapter 4. The topics that we considered can usefully be revised in three groups: the most general issues raised about deviance; general issues related to crime and criminality; and issues related to organized crime and terrorism.

**Deviance, reaction, and identity**

In ‘Understanding deviance and control’ we set out a number of general ideas that were applied to deviance in later parts of the chapter:

- How important do you think it is to distinguish between ‘difference’ and ‘deviance’?
- Make sure that you understand the meaning of primary deviation and secondary deviation, and that you understand the role of labelling and stigmatization in establishing role deviance.
- Try to think of examples of processes of ‘drift’ in and out of deviance.

Many writers and commentators on deviance still look to biology for the causes of crime. Look back at our discussion of biological and cultural determinism in Chapter 4, pp. XXX–X, and then consider the following questions:

- Lombroso and other biological theorists used terms such as ‘atavism’, ‘degenerate’, ‘lower races’, and ‘born criminal’. Can these be considered to have any scientific meaning, or are they mere value judgements?
- How much attention should sociologists give to recent developments in genetics that have claimed to identify the genes responsible for particular kinds of behaviour?

**Crime and criminal careers**

We began our discussion of crime with an account of the distinctive features of the criminal law, distinguishing it from civil law, constitutional law, and other specialist forms of law. We then looked at criminal behaviour as a specific form of deviance. A number of the issues that we looked at concern the formal and informal social organization of crime:

- Make sure that you understand the terms craft crime, project crime, underworld, and white-collar crime?
- How plausible is it to describe career crime as a job? Why are women less likely than men to engage in a career of theft?

**Drugs and pleasure**

Our sections on drugs and sexuality looked at diverse ways in which people pursue pleasure, and we paid particular attention to the ways that their actions come to be seen as conformist or deviant:

- Why is there such great diversity in the social reaction to different drugs and other mood-changing substances?
- How would you define the following terms: occasional user, regular user, addiction, hedonism, retreatism.
- Make sure that you understand the main ideas of Becker and Young.

You should give some attention to the particular methodological problems involved in trying to find accurate information about these matters. You will find some useful background in Chapter 3:

- Using the data in Figure 7.X, draw pie charts of drug use for both girls and boys. Are the data in the figure likely to be reliable? Why is this?
- What are the main problems involved in obtaining accurate information about drug use?

**Organized crime and terrorism**

We discussed the relationship between formal and informal mechanisms of control in the organization of criminal and terrorist actions.

- Why does the conventional view of organized crime tend to see it as tightly structured and bureaucratic?
- To what extent do you think that ideas of anomie might be useful in explaining involvement in political terrorism?
- Consider some of the issues concerning ethnicity and religion discussed in Chapters 6 and 11. How important is the existence of religious subcultures in ethnic communities for the emergence and perpetuation of terrorism?
Good overviews of the subjects in this chapter are:


Further and more detailed information can be found in:


Goffman, E. (1963), *Stigma* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall). Like all of Goffman’s work, this is very readable and has been massively influential. He sets out a general model of the stigmatization of deviance and difference.

Matza, D. (1964), *Delinquency and Drift* (New York: John Wiley & Sons). An important work that emphasizes the fact that much criminal behaviour results from ‘drift’ and circumstances, rather than from commitment to a criminal career.


Young, J. (1971), *The Drugtakers* (London: McGibbon & Kee). Young’s emphasis on the hippies now seems a little outdated, but the book has much to say about the relationship between work, pleasure, and social control.

International material can be found through the United Nations site on crime and criminal justice:

http://www.uncjin.org

On drugs, the website of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency is the most comprehensive available:

http://www.drugscope.org.uk

The leading international investigator on terrorism is Paul Wilkinson and you will find useful information on the site of his research centre at St Andrew’s University:

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/intrel/research/cstpv/

You can find the official viewpoint on the website of MI5, the British security service, at

http://www.mi5.gov.uk/

The website of MI6, the British Secret Service, can be found at

http://www.mi6.gov.uk/output/Page78.html