CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY



Francis Pakes and Suzanne Pakes

Criminal Psychology

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Acknowledgements

The teaching of psychology is never dull. Criminal psychology is doubly interesting; the study of human behaviour at its most intriguing. Criminal psychology is an expanding area which involves contributions from psychology's greats, such as Freud, Bandura and Zimbardo. At the same time, it has currency and an applied cutting edge. Many findings influence criminal justice in practice, such as police interviewing or sentencing. It is theoretically vibrant and pragmatically successful. It is also fast moving, as criminal psychology develops alongside developments in criminal justice, mainstream psychology also is affected by advances in criminology, law and forensic science.

We have aimed to do justice to the unique position of criminal psychology: firmly footed in psychology, but placed in an exciting real life context. Apart from the key psychological approaches, studies and theories, this book also discusses key stages and issues in criminal justice. After all, only with a thorough knowledge of the setting to which criminal psychology is applied, can a rich and meaningful understanding of the area be gained.

We hope that that orientation will encourage students to develop career-oriented thinking. That is why the book contains eight interviews with criminal psychologists who work in various settings in criminal justice. Two of these combine research, teaching and consultancy as university lecturers. Another works in a mental hospital whereas yet another conducts research for the National Policing Improvement Agency. One psychologist interviewed is employed in a women's prison, whereas a colleague works with male offenders on long-term prison sentences. A psychologist working in probation explains the complexities of working with offenders whereas an area psychologist explains his role whenever there is a prison riot in one of the prisons

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on his watch. The contributions of these psychologists in profile emphasise that criminal psychology offers a rich variety of careers that can be both exciting and rewarding.

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This book is dedicated to our daughters Katie and Anna. Here's to curiosity.

Chapter I

Crime: the phenomenon

Applying psychology to crime

Criminal psychology mainly seeks to answer two questions. The first is how can psychology further our understanding of crime, its causes, consequences and prevention? The second is how can psychology help the criminal justice system and other agencies in dealing with crime? Criminal psychology is an applied branch of psychology. That means that we seek to apply general psychology to issues of crime and justice.

There are three components to that. The first is that we apply the same research methods in order to understand offending behaviour and the behaviour of criminal justice officials. Secondly, many key studies in psychology have direct relevance to criminal psychology. That includes the Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney *et al.* 1973). That study in a simulated prison setting showed the importance of roles and expectations on how people in that setting behaved. It has direct relevance to understanding imprisonment. Another is Loftus and Palmer's eyewitness study that highlights how easily witnesses' memories are distorted due to information provided after the fact (1974). Finally, the approaches that characterise general psychology apply to criminal psychology as well.

The first section of this chapter will discuss these approaches and their relevance to criminal psychology. After that we turn to crime. We first discuss how the true rate of crime can be established. Then we look at what crime actually is and why certain behaviours are labelled crimes. The chapter ends by discussing fear of crime.



Drunk and disorderly. One in three arrested in England and Wales are under the influence of alcohol; two out of three have recently taken drugs.

Photo courtesy of Jan Brayley (Hampshire Constabulary).

Approaches in criminal psychology

Understanding criminal psychology involves assessing how the main psychological approaches apply to the applied field of criminal psychology. That should help you identify links to key issues in psychology and to position criminal psychology as a specialist area of psychology. In this section we will look at learning theory, psychodynamic theory, cognitive approaches, biological theory, and the social approach.

Learning theory

One way of explaining behaviour is to regard it as the product of learning. Criminal behaviour is no exception. There are several principles that underlie learning theory, such as operant and classical conditioning, imitation and modelling. Pavlov's salivating dog is the best example of *classical conditioning*, or learning by association (Pavlov 1927). It is not thought that classical conditioning has much to do with understanding how criminal behaviour is acquired. *Operant conditioning* on the other hand has more relevance. Operant conditioning is learning via trial and error (Skinner 1938). It occurs when behaviour is displayed and rewarded. That reinforcement increases the likelihood of such behaviour occurring again in the future.

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Operant conditioning can play a role in the early learning processes involving antisocial behaviour: a person engages in some kind of behaviour, and finds that it is intrinsically rewarding. Or a youngster might discover that random acts of vandalism attract approval from peers.

Criminal behaviour is more susceptible to influences from social or observational learning. Witnessing violence can be a strong precursor to acquiring that behaviour. Bandura, Ross and Ross's (1961) famous Bobo-doll study is a classic involving the transmission of aggression from an adult model to young children. We discuss it fully as a key study in Chapter 2. But we will also look at how violent movies affect juveniles and adults and whether violent video games increase aggression as well. Such influences are often explained in terms of observational learning, or imitation.

Psychodynamic theory

Sigmund Freud pioneered the idea that behaviour is shaped by tension between innate drives and internalised social constraints. This was a key theme running through his psychodynamic approach. In the psychodynamic approach, our mental life is characterised by conflict between desire and restraint. Desires may well propel us towards crime. Stealing can be a way of obtaining nice things, whereas sexual crimes can help us satisfy deep seated and innate urges. But we do not always take what we want, or act on our hormones. Instead, we continually face an internal and largely subconscious struggle between our 'id', out to satisfy our every desire immediately, and our 'superego', our conscience which motivates us to obey the rules of society. The 'ego', our conscious mind, is in essence the battlefield between the 'id' and the 'superego' (Gross 2005).

In order to not be overwhelmed by that continuous state of conflict, the mind utilises so-called defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms reduce stress and anxiety and are therefore said to be adaptive responses. A key one is *repression*, which means keeping unwanted thoughts out of consciousness to the point of completely forgetting them. Repression is a phenomenon we shall revisit when we discuss witness memory, in particularly when dealing with child sexual abuse that occurred a long time ago.

Aggression features heavily in Freud's work. Psychodynamic theory emphasises the role of dark forces when explaining aggression. Men are not gentle creatures, Freud warns us in *Civilization and its Discontents* from 1930. According to Freud, aggression is not exceptional human behaviour: if we were to let loose our 'id', aggression would be most commonplace:

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Men are not gentle creatures, who want to be loved, who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. Homo hominy lupus [man is wolf to man]. (Freud 1930: 111)

Freud's perspective on aggression represents a rather pessimistic view on humanity. But do remember that Freud published this book in 1930. As a Jewish physician in Vienna in the 1930s he soon witnessed the rise of anti-Semitism and fascism. Freud and his family fled Austria to come to the UK to escape persecution. He died in London in 1939 and with hindsight, his work on human aggression was painfully predictive of the horrors of World War II.

Finally, Freud advanced the concept of *catharsis*, i.e. letting off steam. When frustration and tension are pent up in an individual, certain activities can serve to reduce that stress. It includes sports, laughter, but certain criminal offences can also be cathartic, and that might explain certain types of offences that might give the offender a cathartic adrenaline rush. Such offences can include vandalism and violence.

Psychodynamic theories are well suited to explain crime and antisocial behaviour. They look at the human soul as a place in which sinister forces are at work below a thin veneer of civilisation. Because of that, it is tempting to apply Freudian explanations to criminal behaviour. However, we must remember the criticisms levelled against Freud's school of thought. Freud did not experiment, but rather based his theories on subjective interpretations of case studies. In addition, Freud was a child of his time. He probably overemphasised the role of repressed sexuality because he lived in a time and place characterised by sexual inhibition. Thirdly, you might wonder whether Freud himself in his writing displayed one of his very own defence mechanisms, that of projection. Projection means that you attribute your own negative personality traits unto others, so that if you are mistrustful, you assume that everybody else is as well (Freud 1923). It is conceivable that Freud's bleak perspective on humanity has rather been informed by how he viewed himself.

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Sweatbox. Offenders call it a sweatbox: the vehicle used for transporting prisoners. *Photo courtesy of Francis Pakes*.

Cognitive approaches

Cognitive theory is concerned with how people interpret and organise information. It looks at how individuals use information and prior knowledge to make sense of the world around them. In the area of crime, cognitive theory is of relevance in a number of areas. Firstly, there is a link to aggression. It is well-known that aggressive scripts are acquired via witnessing aggressive behaviour. A script is a packet of knowledge that helps us organise the world and derive expectations and plans for action (Schank and Abelson 1977). Aggressive scripts are scripts that suggest that use of violence is the appropriate action in certain situations. It is also established that aggressive children tend to have weaknesses in how they read and respond to ambiguous social situations. That is an area where thinking patterns are of relevance as we shall see in Chapter 2.

The reliability of eyewitness testimony has been researched intensively from the cognitive perspective. It is well known that human memory does not act as if it is a DVD recorder that passively and accurately records all information. In fact, memory is an active, constructive process that is subject to distortion (Bartlett 1932). Furthermore, the way in which a witness is interviewed by the police can substantially facilitate or hamper effective and accurate recall. For that reason, the

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so-called cognitive interview has been developed in order to maximise the information that is obtained from witnesses via interviews (Milne and Bull 1999). Such research is vital for the administration of justice. This is an area that we will consider in detail in Chapter 3, Solving crime.

The cognitions of jurors are assessed in the area of courtroom psychology (see Chapter 4). Juror assumptions about human behaviour and their stereotypes as to which individuals might be criminal are an important area of study. Thus, cognitive theory informs criminal psychology in a variety of settings, varying from understanding the thinking patterns of the offender and the training of police officers about the intricacies of memory, to the decision making of jurors.

Biological theory

The extent to which our behaviour is determined by our biological make up is a controversial issue in criminal psychology. It is also difficult to assess. Crime is not a natural category but a diverse set of behaviours that for various reasons have been prohibited, as we shall see later. If crimes are a social category you would not assume that a biological theory would be able to further our understanding of crime very much. But that does not mean that there is no place for biological theories in criminal psychology. It has been established via brain scans that certain violent criminals show patterns of brain activity that are different from other people (Raine et al. 1997, see Chapter 2). In addition, a link has been established between Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children, and later offending. ADHD is in part hereditary (Pratt et al. 2002). We will later discover via twin studies that a modest influence of genes on crime is not unlikely. Thus, to a limited degree, we can use biology and genetics to further our understanding of criminal behaviour.

It is, however, important to be aware of the caveats. Biology or genes by themselves do not explain human behaviour sufficiently. There is no such thing as a 'crime gene', nor is there an aggression gene, nor is there one particular genetic set of characteristics that make a life of crime inevitable. Such a view would be unjustifiably *reductionist*. Genes interact with each other and with the person's environment in complex ways, so that prediction becomes very difficult indeed: human behaviour is shaped by many factors. That said there are some areas where the exclusion of any influence of biological or genetic variables would be unduly restrictive.

Reductionism

Reductionism refers to the tendency to oversimplify the causes of human behaviour. If we ascribe the causes of behaviour to our biological or genetic make-up, we ignore many other factors. It is unlikely that criminal behaviour is always explained by the same one or two factors. It is likely to be much more complex than that so that an overly reductionist view on crime is likely to be inaccurate.

The social approach

We are social animals. Our behaviour is profoundly influenced by the behaviour of the people that surround us. The social approach has relevance for criminal psychology too. Much criminal behaviour is group behaviour and being part of a group affects the way we behave. Nowhere is this clearer as in the area of *deinviduation* (see Chapter 2). The jury is another closed group. There is no doubt that group processes (such as involving conformity e.g. Moscovici *et al.* 1969) play a role in jury deliberation (see Chapter 4). The Stanford Prison Experiment, a key study in this book shows how group processes can lead to a breakdown of human decency in a simulated prison (Zimbardo 1973, see Chapter 5).

Additionally, much violence is partly the result of deficient social information processing. We will examine that in detail in Chapter 2, where criminal thinking patterns are discussed. It highlights that the social approach is not just about the direct effect that other people have on us. It also involves the way we think about our social environment and the motives of others. Miscalculations on that front form part of the explanation of crime.

It is important to stress that no one approach or explanation is always right. In general, psychological approaches are methods by which we can come to an understanding of criminal behaviour. They do not provide a complete picture on their own. Human behaviour is too complex to suggest that one way of looking at it is always the best way forward. When discussing the wide variety of criminal behaviours, we must be flexible and pragmatic. It is therefore best to regard these approaches as part of a toolkit that we can use in order to understand human behaviour (Eysenck 2000). Knowledge of these approaches is important, so that they can be brought to bear when required.

Activity

Steve was a difficult baby, and a hyperactive child. As a teenager he started smoking at an early age and taking alcohol and illegal drugs. He calls himself an 'addictive personality'. Other issues include a poor relationship with his father who frequently beat him and always put him down. He says he has always been closer to his friends, most of them also delinquent. His numeracy and literacy skills remain poor. His first case of violence that led to an arrest was when he assaulted a shop keeper because he thought he was given the incorrect change. He was mistaken.

Since then there have been numerous assaults, often further to disagreements and arguments. Steve is now 26, unemployed, with no history of secure employment. He lives on benefits and has lost contact with his parents. He is quite heavily drug and alcohol dependent. The crime for which Steve was arrested yesterday was an assault outside a pub. Heavily intoxicated, he bumped into someone, who pushed him off. A fight ensued in which Steve broke the victim's nose and cheekbone. The victim ended up in hospital requiring surgery and will not be able to work for several weeks.

Imagine that you are Steve's probation officer. You might be asked to write a report on Steve advising the Court on Steve's background and to suggest a suitable sentence. Discuss the following points. Refer back to the approaches in criminal psychology section in Chapter 1.

- What are the main underlying causes of Steve's violent behaviour?
- What are the specific circumstances that prompt his aggression?
- Are there ways in which this can be addressed?
- What punishment would be suitable?

Are we living in a crime society?

Modern societies are in the process of learning to live with millions of crimes per year. Consequently crime features heavily in the news, in television dramas, and in public discourse. Although to become a victim of a serious crime is actually a rare event, concern about crime shapes our everyday activities. Crime, in short, is part of the backdrop of our lives.

On any given day, there are plenty of crime stories in the news media. These often concern crimes of a violent or sexual nature. In addition, there are many news reports that suggest that the criminal justice system cannot cope. For instance, the

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BBC reported that convictions for rape hit a record low in 2005. The number of rapes reported to the police is rising – but only 5.6 per cent of 11,766 reports in 2002 led to a rapist being convicted (BBC News 2005). At the same time however, we learn that prison figures have risen to record levels. Prisons are overcrowded and it is said that they are reaching breaking point.

News editors know that crime stories are among the bestread news items. The same is true of internet news sites and blogs. Through the media it does indeed seem as if crime is everywhere. But does that mean that we live in a crime society? In order to assess the state of crime in society we must firstly establish the rate of crime. In this chapter, we will discuss police statistics, victim surveys, self-report studies and observational data. We will discover that all methods of counting crime have their limitations and conclude that counting crime is in fact far from easy.

In addition, we must consider how the risk of falling victim to crime shapes our lives. We will look at research into fear of crime, and into the financial and emotional costs incurred because of crime. But we must also think about the many other ways in which crime carries meaning. On the one hand, crime is a worry, but on the other hand, talking and thinking about crime can be quite exciting. Even committing a crime, many a juvenile offender would attest, can be quite exhilarating. In Chapter 2 we will discuss psychological theories on why offenders commit crime and 'the thrill of it', is certainly a factor. Thus, to live in a 'crime society' means being aware of and being exposed to crime in a variety of ways. The remainder of this chapter will explore exactly how crime in its various manifestations affects our lives.

How much crime?

For decades, policymakers have attempted to measure the 'true' extent of crime. The true prevalence of offending behaviour is important to establish as it can serve as a benchmark. *Reliable* crime statistics allow us to gain a picture of crime as a whole and its fluctuations over time. That will help us decide whether crime policies are successful. In addition, crime statistics allow us to make comparisons between cities, areas, regions or whole countries. That is useful as we may want to investigate so-called low crime countries and assess what it is that makes their management of crime so successful.



Wandsworth Prison. One of London's (and Britain's) busiest prisons. *Photo courtesy of Francis Pakes.*

Official statistics

In 2005/06, the police in England and Wales recorded over 5.5 million crimes. There were 765 homicides (which includes murders, manslaughters and infanticides, which is defined as the killing of a child younger than one-year-old). Some two out of three homicide victims are male, and four out of five known perpetrators were men. The weapons used most often for male and female victims are listed below in Table 1.1.

In 2005/06 the police in England and Wales recorded just over 1 million violent crimes and 14,449 reports of rape. Altogether, in 2005/06 over 62,000 sexual offences were recorded and some 645,000 burglaries.

Table 1.1 Homicide by method for male and female victims in 2005/06

	Male victims (%)	Female victims (%)
Sharp object	31	23
Hitting, kicking, etc.	18	8
Shooting	8	4
Blunt instrument	8	8
Poison/drugs	4	4
Explosives	4	12
Strangulation	4	16
Burning	4	4
Other	19	21

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Source: Coleman et al. (2007).

Activity

Examine Table 1.1. Consider the following questions:

- 1 Why are women victims relatively more likely to be strangled?
- 2 Why are male victims more likely to be killed via hitting and kicking?
- 3 Look at the percentage of victims that died due to explosives. The year 2005 was the year of the so-called 7/7 bombings in London, in which 52 people died. Can you say that this year is *representative* for any other year with regards to the number of homicides, and the methods used?

Police recorded crime is currently falling but not to a large extent. It peaked around 2003/04. Over the course of the 20th century, recorded crime has risen enormously. Table 1.2 below shows rates of murder, violent crime, sexual crime and all recorded crime in 1900, 1910, 1920 and onwards. In 1900, the police in England and Wales recorded fewer than 80,000 crimes. That hardly compares to today with over 1 million instances of violence alone recorded by the police in 2005. Despite the massive rise, there are some offences that actually occur less frequently today than they once did. One of those is the offence of 'concealing child birth'. This probably reflects changing attitudes towards unmarried mothers and unplanned pregnancy.

Table 1.2 Officially recorded crime 1900–2005

	Homicide	Total violence	Total sex offences	All recorded offences
1900	312	1,908	1,582	77,934
1910	288	1,972	1,962	103,132
1920	313	1,546	3,070	100,827
1930	300	2,123	3,546	147,031
1940	288	2,424	4,626	305,114
1950	346	6,249	13,185	461,435
1960	288	15,759	19,937	743,713
1970	393	41,088	24,163	1,555,995
1980	620	97,246	21,107	2,688,235
1990	669	184,665	29,044	4,543,611
2000	850	600,922	37,311	5,170,843
2005	765	1,059,913	62,081	5,556,513

Source: Nicholas et al. 2006.

These figures paint a compelling picture. However, we must emphasise that police statistics are not proper indicators for the true extent of crime. We can therefore say that as a measurement tool they lack *validity*. There are a number of reasons for this.

Firstly, many victims do not report their crime to the police. Victims might for instance think that the crime they suffered is not serious enough, or that the police would not be able to help them. In addition, we must realise that within certain groups in society there are substantial levels of distrust towards the police. They might be less inclined to report victimisation than other groups. This might be the case for, for instance, prostitutes or individuals with a criminal record. Thus, confidence in the police is a factor that correlates with police reported crime (Newburn 2007).

In addition, people might not realise that they have become victims of a crime. They might assume that their mobile phone was lost, rather than stolen, for instance. Similarly, as crime definitions can be complex, victims might not realise that what happens to them is not just a nuisance, but is actually a criminal offence. For instance, a woman victim might simply not know that an ex-boyfriend who repeatedly harasses her might actually be committing the offence of stalking.

Court statistics suffer from the same drawbacks as police data.

Validity

A measurement's *validity* is determined by the extent to which it measures what it intends to. Police statistics only record crime reported to, or discovered by the police. But there is, in fact, a world of crime that never gets reported or even discovered. This can vary from intricate fraud scams, to petty theft, to serious sexual offending. Because of that, police statistics are a measurement of low validity to measure the 'true' rate of crime.

What is not reported to the police is most unlikely to come to the attention of the criminal courts. Thus, in summary, what the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the criminal courts encounter, is only a subset of all crime. It is probably better to ask the public precisely about their experience of crime, and use that as a measure of how much crime actually occurs. That is exactly what the British Crime Survey sets out to do.

Ten million crimes: the British Crime Survey

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is conducted under auspices of the Home Office. It asks a representative national sample of

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people over 16 years of age living in private households about their experiences of crime and of the criminal justice system. It was first held in 1982 and was carried out every two years. Since 2001, the survey has been carried out continuously and its results reported annually. The 2005 measurement involved no less than 48,000 interviews. It formed the basis of a Home Office publication by Walker *et al.* (2006) called *Crime in England and Wales* 2005/06.

Based on these BCS data, Walker and colleagues estimate that in the year measured 10.9 million crimes had occurred against individuals over 16 years of age living in private households. The good news is that since 1995 there has been a reduction in crime of 44 per cent. Accordingly, the risk of becoming a victim of crime within a year has been reduced to 23 per cent (it was 40 per cent in 1995). That means that fewer than 1 in 4 people were the victim of a crime. Property crime (such as theft and burglary) accounts for over three quarters (77 per cent) of all crime.

These statistics suggest that society has become considerably safer since 1995. Unfortunately, many citizens do not feel that way. In the British Crime Survey, 63 per cent of respondents said that they thought crime had actually increased. Interestingly, the percentage of people who said that crime in their local area had increased is actually substantially lower, at 42 per cent. Readers of tabloid newspapers were twice as likely to say that crime had increased than broadsheet readers. Women were more likely to think the crime rate had increased 'a lot' (34 per cent of women and 25 per cent of men were of that opinion). In addition, older people were more likely than younger age groups to think that the crime rate had gone up. Finally, these impressions varied according to levels of education: 38 per cent of people who had no educational qualifications thought that crime in the country had risen compared with only 21 per cent of people with a university degree (Walker et al. 2006).

It is important to realise that according to self-report victimisation surveys, the rate of crime has decreased much further than when looking at police statistics. That is the picture of the last decade. The long term trend, however, is very different. If we compare crime rates from the 1960s with those of the 1990s, we see a massive increase. That indicates substantial social change. Thus, the crime picture of society in the days of our grandparents was very different from the one we see today. But many of us have been born into a 'ten million crime society', as that has been the state of affairs for about 20 years.

Despite the fact that the BCS is extensive and elaborate, it has

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its limitations and it is not without its critics. The box below outlines the areas where the BCS fails to obtain reliable figures on rates of crime. Due to these limitations, it has been argued by Jock Young that large scale victimisation surveys are no more than a *numbers game*. Counting crime is not the same as understanding the nature of crime. Young uses the term 'voodoo criminology' for such flawed endeavours (Young 2004).

Evaluate

The British Crime Survey: what it does not show

Over 40,000 people are interviewed for the BCS every year. It goes to great lengths to make sure that its sample is *representative* for the population in Britain. For that reason, it works with a sample of households throughout England and Wales. In every household, one person over 16 years of age is interviewed. On occasion, the BCS additionally includes a so-called booster sample of ethnic minorities to ensure that these minorities are properly represented. In order to encourage respondents to respond truthfully about sensitive matters, respondents can enter answers on sexual and domestic violence questions themselves on a laptop computer. All participants are ensured that their data will be handled anonymously and confidentially (Crowther 2007).

Despite all this, the BCS cannot provide a full and complete picture of crime. Firstly, it excludes certain groups of respondents:

- Under 16s;
- People not in private households, such as people in psychiatric institutions, probation hostels, and the homeless;
- Businesses.

In addition, the BCS is likely to under-represent crimes that do not necessarily come to the notice of citizens, or who might not think to mention it. These can include:

- Identity fraud;
- Internet fraud;
- Benefit fraud;
- Tax fraud;
- Traffic offences;
- Environmental crimes;
- · Transnational crimes.

Thus, although the BCS might provide the most precise measurement of crime, it cannot provide a completely accurate state of affairs.

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Other ways of counting crime: observational and self-report studies

With such criticisms in mind, researchers have developed other ways of counting crime. Some of these occur in settings not covered by large-scale victimisation surveys. Binder and McNiel conducted an observational study on a psychiatric hospital ward. Over a three-year period they documented 510 instances of violence against staff, mostly against nurses. They concluded that 'violent behaviour is a significant occupational hazard on acute inpatient units' (Binder and McNiel 1994: 245). Whittington and Wykes (1994) also looked at aggression by psychiatric inpatients against staff. They documented 63 instances of assaults by patients on staff. Eighty-six per cent of the assaults were immediately preceded by the assaulted nurse having delivered an aversive stimulus to the patient, such as giving an injection, or a refusal of a patient's request. Staff viewed many of these assaults not as crimes but as occupational hazards. Most nurses felt that such incidents are simply part of working in such environments.

Field studies like these might be the only way of establishing levels of crime in relatively 'closed' environments such as psychiatric hospital wards. That is not only relevant with regard to establishing the true extent of crime in society. It is also of interest because people in such settings are likely to interpret and manage violence differently. Therefore, they add a valuable dimension to crime research. Do note that these studies are not experimental but observational. As such, they can help identify the extent of crime, but struggle to provide insight into its causes.

Other survey measurements of crime focus on those younger than 16 years of age. The Home Office runs a survey specifically focused on youngsters, the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (Wilson *et al.* 2006). In contrast to the British Crime Survey, it also asks about the respondents' own offending behaviour. We can therefore call the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey in part a *self-report* survey on crime.

In total 25 per cent of respondents revealed that they had committed an offence in the last 12 months. The most commonly reported offence categories were assault (committed by 16 per cent) and 'other thefts' (11 per cent). Four per cent of young people admitted to having carried a knife in the last 12 months. Seven per cent of all young people were classified as frequent offenders: they had committed six or more offences in the last 12 months. This seven per cent was responsible for the vast majority (83 per cent) of all offences measured in the survey (Wilson *et al.* 2006).

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