Defining deviance

- Deviance: behavior, belief or condition that violates social norms
  - By defining what is normal, society defines what is deviant (relativist approach to deviance)
- Origin of term is in statistics—"deviation" is the difference between the value of a given case and the group average
- Sociologists began using "deviance" in 1950s to encompass four major topics—crime and delinquency, mental illness, drug use/addiction, sexual misbehavior
- Different approaches to studying deviance:
  - Why do people commit deviant acts? (causation approach)
  - Why are some people labeled as deviant and what are effects of label? (labeling theory)
  - Why do rules and punishments benefit some groups more than others? (conflict theory)
  - Why are some forms of deviance considered problems and others are not? (social problems approach)

Key points about crime trends

- People most fear "random crime" (Joel Best)
  - Patternless: It can happen to anyone
  - Increasing: Crime is getting worse
  - Pointless: Criminal motives make no sense
- But none of these claims are true
  - Crime is not random: It is stratified by gender, race, class and age
  - Official crime has been declining over the past decade or longer (but may have risen slightly in recent years)
  - Criminals have reasons for committing crimes

Violent crime rates, 1973-2005 (NCVS)

Property crime rates, 1973-2005 (NCVS)

Homicide rates for 20th Century
Homicide victimization by gender & race, 2002 (UCR)

- Total: 25.8
- Male: 5.6
- Female: 8.8
- White: 3.3
- Black: 20.8

Victimization per 100,000

Homicide victimization by age, 2002 (UCR)

- Under 14: 0.0
- 14-17: 5.0
- 18-24: 10.0
- 25-34: 15.3
- 35-49: 5.7
- 50+: 2.5

Labeling theory

- Labeling theory: theory which states that deviance is the consequence of the application of rules and sanctions to an offender; a deviant is an individual to whom the identity “deviant” has been successfully applied.
- Two types of deviance:
  - Primary deviance: routine instances of norm violation that may or may not result in labeling.
  - Secondary deviance: deviance following and resulting from the label.
- Reasons why label may lead to deviance:
  1. Cut off from participation in conventional groups.
  2. Treatment may produce increasing deviance.
  3. Labeled person may believe the label.

Deviance by sociology 134 students

- Underage alcohol purchase: 50.5%
- Smoked marijuana: 59.7%
- DUI: 60.8%
- Drag racing: 76.2%
- Driving without license: 81.2%

- Arrested: 17.2%
- Not arrested: 36.6%
- Never: 46.2%