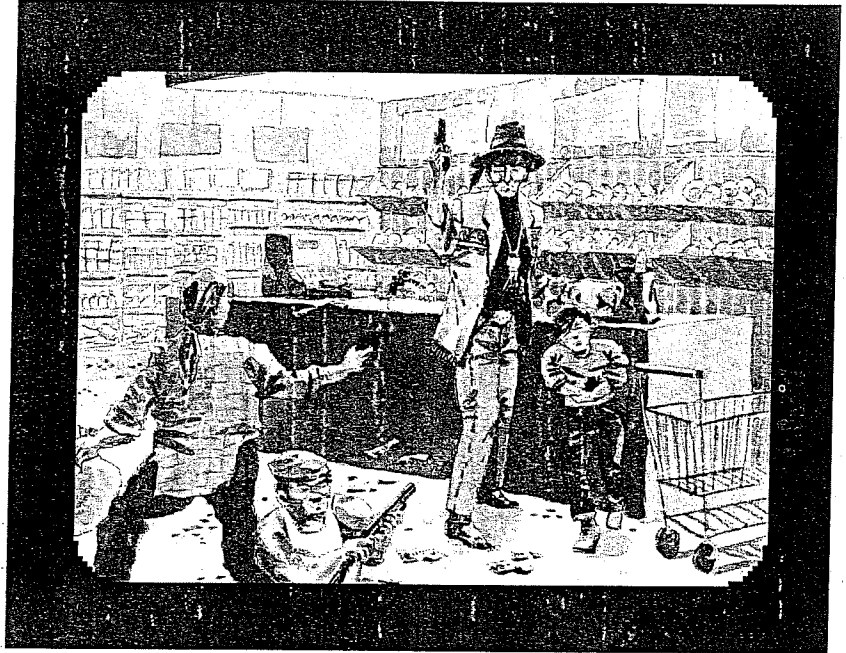


## Chapter 1

# What Is Crime?

A man and woman robbed a grocery store with guns. As they left the store, they ran into a father and his three-year-old daughter. The father happened to be a police officer. One robber ran away. The police officer pulled out his gun. The other robber, Ann B., shot at the officer. Instead, the child was killed by the bullet.

What **crimes**, if any, were committed in this case? Was the robber who ran away **guilty** of murder? What do you think?



CHECK vocabulary words in bold.  
LOOK UP word meanings in the glossary beginning on page 92.

What **crimes** were committed in this case? Was the robber who ran away **guilty** of murder? What do you think? In this chapter, you will learn what a crime is. You will learn about different types of crime and you will learn about the crimes that happen most often.



### CRITICAL THINKING

Go back fifty years to when your grandparents were in school. Which of the following problems do you think their teachers complained the most about: Talking, chewing gum, making noise and running in the halls, poor attendance, or wearing clothing not proper for school? Now, come back to the 1990s. What do you think are the most serious problems teachers have to deal with: Drug abuse, pregnancy and abortion, rape, diseases spread through sex, vandalism, burglary, assault, arson, murder, suicide, drug buying and selling, and gang violence? How have times changed?



Officer Kelly says: "I think TV should clean up its act. So many crime shows focus on unnecessary violence. They don't give any explanation for it, nor do they offer any solutions or remedies to the problems so people can at least learn from the programs. TV

sells crime like the advertisers sell soap. I think TV is guilty of the crime of creating a crime climate."

## What Is a Crime?

A crime is an act or action that the law says you may not do. There are both **federal** laws and state laws about crime. If a federal law says a certain act is a crime, then it is a crime in every state. Yet, each state has its own laws about crime and each state decides how to punish each crime.

**Society** is everything about the way people live in groups—in communities, cities, states, and countries. There are laws against crime because crime hurts society. People make laws to help them live, work, and play together safely and in peace. People elect governments to protect the laws of society. That is why the government **prosecutes** to punish a person found guilty of committing a crime.

## Kinds of Crime

**Misdemeanors** are crimes that are not as serious as **felonies**. Punishment for a misdemeanor is usually less than a year in jail. Punishment for a felony can be many years in prison, or the court may order the **death penalty**.

Even less serious than a misdemeanor is a **violation**, or infraction. If a person throws trash on the sidewalk or honks a car horn near a

hospital, that person can be punished for a violation or infraction, but the person will not get a **criminal record**.

Having a record means that when a person looks for a job, he has to tell employers he has been convicted. People **convicted** of a felony or misdemeanor will have a criminal record. People with a criminal record may not be allowed to work at certain jobs.

There are many traffic violations or infractions that people should know about. A person may receive a ticket or a summons that tells when to appear in court. The court will decide the punishment.

**Crimes of Omission:** Can you commit a crime by not doing something? The answer is yes. For example, if you do not file your income taxes, it is a crime. It is a crime if you do not stop the car when in an automobile accident. These are called crimes of omission. Omission means to leave something out or not do something you should have. It means not taking the responsibility that should be taken in a situation.

Finally, it is illegal even to try to commit a crime. For example, if a person tries to shoot someone but misses, the person is not guilty of murder. Yet, he is still guilty of attempted murder, or trying to commit a murder. This means that the intent of the shooter is as important as the result of the shooting.

### Crimes Against People

The most serious crime against a person is the taking of that person's life. This is called **homicide**. There are three kinds of homicide—murder, **manslaughter**, and negligent homicide.

What is murder? Murder means that the murderer had feelings toward the victim that were bad enough to result in a planned killing.

What is manslaughter? Manslaughter happens when one person does not wish another harm, yet causes the other person to lose his life. There are two types of manslaughter: in involuntary manslaughter, the murderer clearly killed, but without a plan; in voluntary manslaughter, a life is taken because someone behaves in a dangerous way and someone is killed. For example, playing with a loaded gun can result in involuntary manslaughter, even though the death is an accident.

What is negligent homicide? Negligent homicide happens when people are so careless that they cause death. For example, driving dangerously and killing someone because of your driving can be negligent homicide. **Negligence** means not being careful or responsible.

Look back at the story at the beginning of this chapter. It involved two robbers and the murder of a three-year-old who was with her father, a police officer (see page 9). Both robbers were tried in court and convicted of murder. They had not planned to kill the little girl. They had no idea she would have even been on the scene. One of the robbers was not even near her.

Yet, the law says that if a person kills someone while committing a felony, the person can still be **charged** with murder.



#### CRITICAL THINKING

Do you think that a person is born a criminal or that a person learns criminal behavior?

**DID YOU KNOW?** Three out of every four adult criminals committed their first crime before age fifteen.

**EYE OPENER:** Some 45 percent of homicides reported during the 1980s involved handguns. Homicide is the leading cause of death for young African American men in this country.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

8-21-13

What is Crime?

1. Why does Officer Kelly believe TV should clean up its act?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What crime does Officer Kelly believe TV is guilty of?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If a federal law says a certain act is a crime is it also a crime in Missouri? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which is more serious a felony or misdemeanor? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the most sever punishment for a felony? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name four ways people live in groups. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Give an example of a violation. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When would a person have a criminal record? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What tells a person when to appear in court? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is it called when you commit a crime for not doing something? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What is the most serious crime against a person? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. If you kill someone but do not plan it what is that called? \_\_\_\_\_
13. What is it called when someone behaves in a dangerous way and someone is killed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What is negligence? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Were the two robbers on page 9 convicted of murder or manslaughter? They did not intend to kill the little girl. \_\_\_\_\_
16. Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. At what age do 3 out of 4 criminals commit their first crime? \_\_\_\_\_
18. What percent of homicides involved handguns during the 1980s? \_\_\_\_\_
19. What is the leading cause of death among young African American men in this country? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Do you think a person is born a criminal or learns such behavior? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8-21-13

## Critical Thinking

(Pages 2 and 3)

1. Fifty years ago what do you think teachers complained about the most concerning student activity?
2. What student activity do you see today that teachers might complain about?
3. Do you think a person is born a criminal or that a person learns criminal behavior?
4. What is a Crime?
5. Describe a crime of omission.

-OVER-

6. Describe three types of homicides.

7. While committing a felony, when could a person be charged with murder?