|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2. Learning table on primary quantitative measures of crime | | | | |
| **Self report studies (SRS)** | | **Victim surveys (VS)** | | **Synoptic links for OCS, SRS. VS** |
| **What are they?**  These confidential surveys involve asking respondents to admit to offences they have committed. They take the form of a self-completion questionnaire. | | **What are they?**  VS involve asking individuals about their experiences of crime, their fears of crime and their views on the criminal justice system. Two main types of victim surveys have been carried out: local (e.g. Islington Crime Survey) & national (e.g. BCS). | | Research methods/methodology  **Official crime statistics**   * Quantitative method. * Secondary/documentary data. * Advantages from a positivist point of view. * Limitations from an interactionist point of view.   **Self report studies**   * Quantitative primary method. * Surveys used - self-completion questionnaires. * Advantages of method. * Disadvantages of method.   **Victim surveys**   * Quantitative primary method. * Surveys used - structured/formal face to face interviews. * Main types - local & national. * Advantages of method. * Disadvantages of method.   Theories/perspectives   * **Positivism** - positive response to official crime statistics. * **Interactionism** - negative response to official crime statistics.   **Other topics**  **Power & politics**   * **White-collar crimes** are mainly committed by the powerful. For various reasons they are more difficult for powerful agencies of social control (police) to detect & therefore powerful white-collar crimes are under-represented in official crime statistics. * **Cybercrimes** - tend to breakdown class barriers. Committed by powerful and powerless groups and individuals. * **Police practices** -the police are a powerful agency of social control. They use their power to selectively record crime. The police also selectively enforce the law so that powerless groups are more likely to find their way into crime statistics than powerful groups. |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| * Self-report studies call into question the accuracy of OCS. For example, SRS show that 50-90% of people admit to crimes that could result in a court appearance. Furthermore OCS show a working class to middle class crime ratio of 5:1, whereas SRS indicate a ratio of 1.5:1. Self-report studies therefore help reveal the extent of the ‘dark figure’ of crime, especially white-collar crime. * It is possible to use the statistics to generate and test sociological explanations of crime. For example, they highlight the limitations of functionalist explanations which assume that crime is mainly a working class and male problem. * They provide useful data for governments and the police to target crime and offenders.   [http://images.google.co.uk/images?q=tbn:bnt7zcJrCPHcLM:slickbill.com/na/iceberg.jpg](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://slickbill.com/na/iceberg.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.boards.ie/afterhours/calendar.core%3Fdo%3Dgetinfo%26day%3D2005-10-29%26c%3D1&h=871&w=640&sz=53&tbnid=bnt7zcJrCPHcLM:&tbnh=144&tbnw=105&hl=en&start=9&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dice%2Bberg%26svnum%3D10%26hl%3Den%26lr%3D%26safe%3Dvss%26sa%3DG) | * Some self-report studies have been criticised for measuring ‘trivial’ deviant acts. For example **Cambell’s** survey included deviant acts such dropping litter. This makes comparisons with official statistics invalid as they measure serious crime (notifiable offences). * Participants may not tell the truth, thus lowering the validity of the findings. Respondents may conceal or exaggerate offending. Independent tests have shown that around 20% of participants lie in self-report studies. * Many self-report studies cannot claim to be representative as their sample is often restricted to juvenile delinquency. As a consequence little information exists on self reported domestic violence, child abuse and fraud * Recent **Home Office** household self-report studies have been criticised for omitting groups who may be regarded as ‘higher-rate offenders’ (e.g. children in care and in custodial institutions).   Image of a lie detector test | * They call into question the accuracy of OCS. This is because they highlight high levels of unreported and unrecorded crime. For example, in 2005 the **BCS** revealed that only 42% of crimes were reported by victims and of those only 75% were recorded by the police. Victim surveys therefore help reveal the extent of the ‘dark figure’ of crime. * Victim surveys serve to provide vital information about social patterns of victimisation and fear of crime. For example the **BCS** has revealed that inner city residents, ethnic minorities and low income households are more likely to be victims and fear crime than other social groups. * The findings of local and national victim surveys have had a major effect on polices to tackle crime and aid victims. For example, the placement of CCTV cameras and the way rape cases are handled by the police. * National victim surveys are methodologically advanced. For example the **BCS** is carried out annually with a sample size of 40,000 and has a response rate over 75%.   Abuse victim - generic | * The findings may not be totally valid or accurate. This is because victims may forget relevant incidents, make offences up, be unaware they have been a victim, and may conceal crimes. For example, victims may conceal crimes because of loyalty, guilt, fear or embarrassment. * There are problems generalising from victim surveys. It is difficult to generalise from the findings of local victim surveys. This is because the sampling is geographically focused. On the other hand national surveys conceal local variations. For example, very high levels of crime in certain areas of Nottingham. * It is difficult to make comparisons with ocs because victims surveys interview households. Thus they neglect crimes such as fraud, shoplifting, motoring offences and possession of drugs. * Changes in public attitudes towards crime can affect victim survey data over time. For example, if people become more or less concerned about crime this is likely to affect willingness to report crime to sociologists.   http://www.thekidswindow.co.uk/images/products/RAU0016.jpg |
| In conclusion primary quantitative methods provide an invaluable means of highlighting limitations of OCS. They are crucial in revealing the extent of the dark figure of hidden crime. For example, the 2005 BCS estimates the dark figure to be in the region of 5 million notifiable (serious) offences each year. However, it is more difficult to generalise from these primary sources because they are based on smaller data sets than OCS. | | | | |

**Extra reading**

Pilkington et al. - pages 207-215, 230-233

Haralambos & Holborn - pages 338-346

Lawson & Heaton - pages 12- 46