

# Theory, Method, and Data in Comparative Criminology

by Gregory J. Howard, Graeme Newman, and William Alex Pridemore

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the recently rejuvenated field of comparative criminology. It begins by considering the context and history of comparative criminology and continues by outlining the contemporary comparative perspective. After identifying several goals for comparative criminology that are often advanced, including theory elaboration and testing as well as policy evaluation and critique, the chapter describes the common approaches to comparative criminological research. The main theoretical traditions of comparative criminology are examined first, with particular attention directed to metanarratives such as modernization, civilization, opportunity, and world system theories and to structural theories based on culture, social bonds, and the distribution of economic resources. Taking up methodological concerns next, the chapter summarizes some of the more common dependent variables studied by comparative criminologists, noting how these variables have been operationalized in the literature, then explores the three methodological approaches most typically deployed in the field, specifically meta-level, parallel, and case studies.

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With the growth of international “transparency” and the capacity of the World Wide Web to disseminate information, data about crime and justice around the world are more accessible than ever. The chapter discusses the three most common types of data on international crime and justice (i.e., official, victimization, and self-report data), describing the threats to the reliability and validity of each type and directing interested readers to existing sources of data relevant to frequently employed explanatory concepts.

In conclusion, the chapter observes that, while comparative criminology is a growing area of study owing to the influence of globalization and concerns about transnational crime, the relative neglect of systematic comparative work in criminology throughout the 20th century means that the field is still in its infancy. Growth in this promising area of inquiry should be nurtured with a renaissance in theory so that research is driven by theory and not by the mere existence of more data.

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# The History and Goals of Comparative Criminology

## The context and history of comparative criminology

**C**omparative criminology is as old as criminology itself. Beccaria, Bentham, Voltaire, Helvetius, Quetelet, and many others of the 18th-century Enlightenment compared and contrasted their own systems of justice with those of other nations. Their recommendations and findings were often influential in bringing about change in countries other than their own. Indeed, the U.S. Constitution owes some of its language and ideas to the writings of these thinkers (see Granucci 1969; Schwartz 1971). Yet, for most of the 19th century and much of the 20th century, comparative criminology was neglected as nations looked inward for solutions to their specific crime problems. It was not until the middle and late decades of the 20th century that interest again emerged in comparing and contrasting the problems of crime across nations. There are many reasons for this renewed interest. The most obvious is that the latter half of the 20th century saw the world become a smaller place, a transformation initiated by revolutions in communication, transportation, and information technology. At the close of the 20th century, nations are increasingly pressured to account for their actions, and the activities of nations are transparent as never before.

One can reasonably argue that transparency began in economic institutions, where trade and commerce demanded it. But the availability of information about various facets of national social life has flourished as well, some have argued, because of an abiding concern with the health of democracy. Kenneth Prewitt, current Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, has suggested, "A healthy democracy needs a healthy number system, and anything that erodes that number system undermines democracy" (American Sociological Association 1999, 3). Gradually, countries have collected and made available to the international community statistics on a wide range of subjects relevant to the interests of comparative criminologists (see, for example, United Nations Development Programme 1998). Among these data are statistics on crime and criminal justice, which have only recently become widely accessible at the international level (Newman 1999). Although nations formerly guarded information on crime and criminal justice zealously, many nations now provide these data on the Internet, where they are available to anyone with adequate technological resources. The transparency and availability of such information have created a climate in which the promises of comparative criminological research may be realistically pursued.

Although many theoretical, methodological, and philosophical problems certainly have dogged comparative criminology since its inception, there is little doubt that this field of investigation is currently in a state of rapid expansion. While this chapter outlines some of the main problems that confront comparative criminology, the discussion also focuses on what cross-national research has accomplished and what it can do for the field of criminology in the future. We begin with two questions often asked of comparative criminology: What is the comparative perspective, and why employ it? Following this discussion, we move to a consideration of the substantive and theoretical issues that lie at the root of comparative criminological inquiry. We must begin with theory, because the plethora of databases and other information now available from many countries provides an environment that tempts rash comparisons and sometimes unsubstantiated conclusions based on what may be incomparable data. Faced with such a challenge, theoretically informed research supported by sound methodology is the wisest defense. Consequently, we look at the theoretical perspectives that have been brought to bear in understanding crime from a comparative perspective. Following this, we consider crime as a dependent variable in comparative work, then stake out the methodological approaches that are often used in this type of investigation. We then consider the data available to researchers interested in pursuing comparative studies and conclude with some observations about the future of comparative research in criminology.

## The comparative perspective

### *Globalization*

In its broadest sense, all social science research is comparative. As Durkheim noted: "Comparative sociology is not a special branch of sociology; it is sociology itself" ([1895] 1938, 157). To the extent that the scientific method depends on comparison, Durkheim is no doubt correct. But comparative criminology demands more than comparison. Comparative investigations do not involve so much a method as a perspective, one that demands a gestalt that in today's terminology might be called a global view. It may be argued that applying today's global perspective to comparative criminology is misleading because comparative studies of crime have been in existence for two centuries. Yet, comparative research has received relatively little attention from scholars in our field. Marsh noted in 1967 that a tiny number of articles in social science journals at that time dealt with crime in two or more cultures, and Beirne (1997, xiii) pointed out that this lack of interest persisted into the 1980s. It is clear, however, that engagement in comparative criminology has increased significantly in the last decade (see Adler, Mueller, and Laufer 1994; Ebbe 1996;

Moore and Fields 1996; Reichel 1994). One major reason is simply that a global perspective on all popular subjects now dominates the world.

### ***The nation-state and the universality of the criminal justice system***

It has become increasingly clear that much of what we call criminal justice depends to a large extent on the operations and structure of modern nation-states. It is the modern nation-state that has given us the tripartite criminal justice system (i.e., police, courts, and corrections) as it is commonly studied today (Newman 1999). Though it may rest within diverse legal traditions and cultures, this basic tripartite structure is similar in all modern nation-states (for authoritative discussions on legal traditions, see David and Brierley 1985 and Wigmore 1936), and investigations that compare nations do so on the assumption that these nations have similar structures of criminal justice. Thus, more attention has been given recently to comparing whole nations in addition to comparing cultures. This is partly the result of globalization, but much is due to the more easily definable boundaries and structures of nation-states when compared with cultures. (The latter, of course, often transcend national boundaries.)

The single most important difference between cultures and nation-states is that nation-states are political entities while cultures are ways of life. Nation-states may be composed of many cultures, as the recent war in the former Yugoslavia attests, and a single culture (depending on how broadly the term is defined) may span several countries (e.g., Roman Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, American popular culture). Because the nation-state is the operational basis for the crime control activities of criminal justice agencies, and because it is more easily defined than the elusive concept of culture, most recent comparative work in criminology has examined similarities and differences with respect to the nation-state (or relevant political subdivisions such as the state or province).

### ***Definitional diversity of crime***

One endemic problem confronting comparative criminology is the enormous diversity in the way different cultures and nation-states define crime, justice, and other relevant concepts. As we shall see, this has not stopped many researchers from conducting a wide variety of studies comparing crime and delinquency

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around the world. Many of these researchers have attempted to resolve this problem by adjusting legally defined crime categories into socially defined categories, many of which conform to various common theories about the functions and patterns of cultures and social structures in society (see the discussion of victimization surveys by van Dijk 1999). Others have managed to reclassify the official legal definitions of national crime categories into general crime categories to which nations can match their crime definitions (e.g., the United Nations Surveys of Crime and Criminal Justice Systems). But these solutions are only partial and many problems remain.

### ***Advantage of diversity for comparative criminology***

The greatest advantage—although often considered an impediment—for research in comparative criminology is the great diversity that exists cross-nationally with regard to social, economic, and political indicators. Though their structure and organization may vary, basic social and cultural categories such as family, urban and rural life, and community are universals of human existence, so they may be used as fundamental classifications when comparing one cultural group with another. Similarly, as previously noted, the criminal justice system deploys basic categories that may be used to guide comparisons of one nation to another. All nations have police, all have courts, and all have a prison system. However, elements of these parts of the criminal justice system differ widely, as do their relationships with each other, and recent comparative studies of criminal justice focus especially on these differences to derive policy and management implications. Of course, the scientific significance of the findings of cross-cultural and cross-national research depends on the deeper questions that one wishes to answer, and these questions are related to the aims and goals of comparative (or any kind of social science) research.

In sum, the comparative perspective is an approach that employs basic unifying concepts of human groups and seeks to compare cultures and nation-states to highlight the similarities and differences between each class with respect to these universal concepts. These comparisons are achieved in many ingenious ways, often depending on the home discipline of the researcher, and have produced rich information. Some of this information is explanatory in a traditional causal sense (i.e., the ordering in space and time of variables and events) and other information provides descriptive evidence of diversity, which also serves as the source of many questions for future research. The scientific merit of this information may well be questioned, however, depending on the methodology and data sources employed. It is a great problem of comparative research that the data sources are, virtually by definition, influenced by the cultures and nation-states from which the information is extracted and by the cultural commitments of investigators themselves. These are standard problems of scientific

research, however, and attention will be paid to these issues in cross-national terms in the pages to come.

## **The goals of comparative research**

There are several goals of comparative research in criminology. Some are obvious applications of the traditional canons of the scientific method, and some are unique to the study of crime in an international setting. Although comparative criminology attends mainly to understanding criminal and deviant behavior as it is manifested globally, these studies will inevitably yield useful insights about the control of antisocial activity. Thus, the study of criminology will naturally intersect with the field of criminal justice if criminological observations are taken to their logical policy conclusions. With respect to the scientific import of comparative work in criminology, a few important goals are noted here.

### ***Extending theories beyond cultural and national boundaries***

Comparative research provides an opportunity for criminological theories, which are typically generated within the context of particular nation-states, to be given a wider hearing (Mueller and Adler 1996). Do the theories developed to explain crime rates in the United States, Finland, Japan, or South Africa serve with equal force to account for criminal violations in other nations around the world? Do theories that try to account for the police use of force in the United States, Russia, Australia, or Brazil help to understand police behavior in other countries? These are questions of replication, and they stand at the heart of the scientific enterprise. Beside permitting criminologists to assess the generalizability of important theoretical propositions, comparative research also assists in the elaboration and specification of theory. If a specific theoretical model does not account for variations in crime in other nation-states, perhaps some refinement can be identified on the basis of this investigation, thereby improving the explanatory power of the theory. Finally, as the world becomes a smaller place through the expansion of globalization and crime and criminal justice become increasingly transnational as a result, comparative investigations ensure that theories of crime and criminal justice will remain relevant to the exigencies of history.

### ***Assessing the performance of national criminal justice systems***

Another important goal for comparative work in criminology is the assessment of national criminal justice systems. For example, an article by Maguire, Howard, and Newman (1998) developed an index by which the performance

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of national criminal justice systems can be validly compared across nations. The idea of a criminal justice *system* is of relatively recent vintage, most forcefully espoused in the 1967 report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*. Despite this conceptualization of criminal justice, which aims to make the practices of crime control more efficient and less fragmented, the promise of the system idea has hardly been realized more than 30 years later, as Inciardi's (1984) characterization of the U.S. criminal justice system as a *nonsystem* suggests.

An index of national criminal justice systems' performances, however, can serve to overcome the fragmented operations of the administration of justice that have been so widely attacked in the academic literature and popular media alike. In short, if the various institutions of criminal justice (i.e., police, courts, and corrections) are to work as a system charged with the control of criminal behavior, there must be some way to assess their performance as an operational unit. The performance measures of national criminal justice systems establish this type of benchmark. Moreover, comparisons of the performance of national criminal justice systems inevitably raise questions of policy and, in the long run, of justice. These are questions for which comparative criminologists should be able to field reasonable answers.

### ***Evaluating national criminal justice policy***

Comparative criminology and criminal justice also promise to yield insights into the efficacy of various policy initiatives. For instance, are high levels of gun violence inevitable in the United States because it harbors a gun culture? Perhaps there are other countries that have a high level of gun ownership but a low rate of gun crime (see Killias 1993). Would the legalization of drugs lead to an epidemic of drug use, as is often argued? Perhaps other countries have had a different experience. This is not to say that experiences with crime and its control in one nation should be copied wholesale to another. But when we see different and successful ways of dealing with crime in other countries, we at least know that it is possible and that the current state of affairs in a particular country is not preordained or inevitable. The work of the International Center for Crime Prevention has done much to highlight success stories in crime prevention throughout the world (Waller and Welsh 1999).



### *Coordinating the fight against transnational crime*

Another response often provided to the question of “Why do comparative criminology?” maintains that the globalization of crime, as expressed in the increasingly popular notion of transnational crime, points to the need for a coordinated or transnational criminal justice response. Here the benefits of comparative criminology extend beyond the merely provincial and become more fully universal (Reichel 1994). Central to the prosecution of coordinated efforts, Moore and Fields (1996, 6) contend, is “greater international understanding” because “the more one knows about another people, society, or culture, the greater the potential for understanding their actions and responses to problems and situations.” Put more pragmatically, a coordinated law enforcement response to transnational crime such as money laundering or drug trafficking requires that the interested parties understand something of the characteristics of transnational criminals and recognize the operational strengths and weaknesses of one another’s crime control systems. Providing this type of information is one important goal of comparative criminology.

### *Critique*

In contrast to the previous point, a final reason for pursuing cross-national studies of criminology is to provide critical scrutiny and a reasoned voice to counter what may often seem to be a knee-jerk embrace of all things global. In the rush to counter what is rather vaguely referred to as the threat of transnational crime, significant freedoms and human rights may be sacrificed in the name of the common, universal good. As those who have studied the historical developments of crime and justice in the United States must be painfully aware, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Therefore, comparative work must serve as the critical conscience of the public to ensure that the widely promoted threat of transnational crime does not lead us down a road to a dystopia that would shock even the likes of George Orwell. Drawing on the words of Ralf Dahrendorf (1970, 55), comparative scholars of criminology can usefully serve the role of “intellectual court jester” or the “fool,” questioning that which is taken for granted and doubting “everything that is obvious, [making] relative all authority, [asking] all those questions that no one else dares to ask.” The goal of the comparative researcher in this capacity is not to be a thoroughgoing naysayer but to strengthen policy agendas and ensure they are defensible in terms of principle and fact. Without such a critical conscience, we are in danger of becoming, like the denizens of Samuel Butler’s ([1872] 1985, 227) *Erewhon*, “a meek and long-suffering people, easily led by the nose.”

Having specified some parameters of the comparative perspective in criminology and identified some of the main goals of this area, we presently move to a discussion of theory in this line of investigation.

## Theoretical Explanations for Criminal Behavior in a Cross-National Context<sup>1</sup>

Three general theoretical frameworks are commonly employed in explaining the variation of crime rates among nations. The first—grand theories—are metanarratives that entail a high level of abstraction and usually assume that one major theoretical construct, such as a nation's level of modernization or its placement in the world's political economy, has the greatest impact on its level of crime.<sup>2</sup> Structural theories, on the other hand, traditionally have been employed with smaller units of analysis, such as cities or states within a particular nation, and attempt to explain the spatial variation in rates of offending via subcultures (i.e., social learning), status-induced strain, or social control. These theoretical explanations are increasingly being tested at the cross-national level. Finally, a nation's demographic characteristics, such as its age and sex structure, may also be employed in an attempt to explain levels of violence and property crime. Each section following contains a brief description of theoretical concepts, common measurements for each of these concepts, and a selected list of studies that analyze crime from the particular approach. In all cases, these studies represent theories that were originally developed within one cultural and/or national tradition but that have been recast and applied to cross-national research designs. Thus, many of the theoretical approaches will initially appear familiar to criminologists. However, the employment of these theories in cross-national research promises either to extend the explanatory power of these theories or to demonstrate their limitations.

### Grand theories

#### *Modernization theory*

Durkheim's notion of anomie is the basis for contemporary theories that pinpoint the effects of modernization as the main causes of crime. Durkheim ([1893] 1964) argued that, as nations develop, they are characterized by an increasingly intricate web of social and economic relations. These complex divisions are suspected of undermining mechanical solidarity and its control over the collective conscience. Thus, rapid social change engenders the breakdown of traditional values, resulting in, among other things, a higher crime rate. Eventually, however, organic solidarity and more formal mechanisms of social control should halt rising crime rates, although they are expected to remain at higher levels than before development.

Within cross-national criminology, Clinard and Abbott (1973) and Shelley (1981) have provided notable contributions to Durkheim's idea of modernization and

crime. In short, the contention is that each nation experiences similar phases of development. The stimulus for modernization is technological advancement, and this catalyst leads to political, economic, and demographic changes within a society (Strasser and Randall 1981). Industrialization and urbanization are key elements of this social transformation. Their effects—which include the tension between groups that accompanies increased social differentiation and the socioeconomic inequality many presume to follow modernization—are viewed as the main contributors to rising crime rates (Heiland and Shelley 1992). The outcomes of this process are expected to provide stronger explanations of crime than any distinct national or cultural characteristics have; thus, all nations are expected to experience similar trends in crime rates as they develop.<sup>3</sup> Finally, changes in both types and rates of crime are expected as a result of development. In general, the overall rate of crime is expected to increase but eventually level off as modernization progresses, while another expected result is the predominance of property and economic crimes over crimes against people.

Recent examples of international research on modernization and crime include:

- Bouley and Vaughn's (1995) study of violent crime in Colombia, in which regression analysis revealed support for grand theories with respect to the crimes of theft and robbery but not for the more violent crimes of assault and homicide.
- Mahabir's (1988) work on urban gangs in the Caribbean.
- Industrialization and crime in the Russian region of Tuva (Balakina 1994), which official data show has the highest homicide rate in the country (Pridemore 1999).
- Huang's (1995) multivariate analysis of 29 countries employing United Nations data, which showed support for the modernization hypothesis.
- Ortega and colleagues' (1992) analysis of 51 nations using International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) crime data, which revealed support for the Durkheimian-modernization thesis.
- Johnson's (1990) work, which examined crime and industrial development in Germany and concluded that modernization theory did not hold in this case.
- Matsuoka and Kelly's (1988) study of the negative impact of resort development and tourism on Native Hawaiians.
- Neuman and Berger's (1988) evaluation of modernization, Marxian world system, and ecological opportunity theories, which lent only weak support to the modernization theory.

- An application of Blau's (1977) macrostructural theory by Messner (1986), who claimed that the inequality that accompanies development is a major reason for heightened crime rates. (Inequality and heterogeneity have been popular topics with cross-national researchers; see Avison and Loring 1986; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Krahn, Hartnagel, and Gartrell 1986).
- Schichor's (1985) examination of homicide and larceny rates, which indicated that development is likely to be accompanied by increased property and decreased violent crime.

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### **Civilization theory**

Where modernization assumes that crime rates will increase and then level off over time, civilization theory expects decreasing crime rates as governments and their citizens become more humane and civilized. Civilization theory is based largely on the work of Elias (1982), who argued that social norms and manners have become increasingly refined over the centuries. As this civilizing process occurs, individuals learn to inhibit their urges and societies become less violent as a result. Self-restraint, therefore, has become the hallmark of control, not external (i.e., state) threats or punishments.

As it relates to crime and control, proponents of this theory usually focus on how the forms of official social control and punishment have changed, but individual behavior obviously plays an important role.

Similar to the Durkheimian ([1893] 1964) notion of modernization, these theorists contend that as industrialization expands, it creates a complex division of labor that demands a high degree of interdependency. As this organic solidarity grows stronger, people exercise a higher degree of internal control over their behavior because others increasingly depend on them (Heiland and Shelley 1992). This internalization of control is expected to lead to a decrease in crime rates, especially in violence. As individuals increasingly repress their urges, however, they are likely to experience an increase in psychological pathologies (Freud 1962) and self-inflicted victimization (e.g., suicide and drug abuse).

Empirical studies by criminologists with direct references to the civilization hypothesis are rare. However, one study that does claim support for the theory is Gillis' (1994) work on literacy and violence in 19th-century France. The author employs data on violent crimes and suicide in France from 1852 to

1914, revealing that the climbing literacy rate was associated with a decrease in the rate of crimes of passion (e.g., homicide and certain other types of violence) and an increase in the suicide rate. Gillis argued that this information represents strong support for the hypothesis, which predicted that, as the civilization process occurs, interpersonal violence will decrease and violence directed against the self will increase.

### **Opportunity theories**

In recognizing the complex social-structural changes that accompany societal evolution, opportunity theories are similar to both modernization and civilization theories. However, while the modernization hypothesis focuses on how changes compromise traditional values and the civilization thesis expects the development of internal self-restraint (as opposed to the external social control of the state) to inhibit harmful behavior, opportunity theories suggest that modern economies and social organization provide increased opportunities to engage in criminal behavior (Cohen and Felson 1979). For example, expanding economies create an increase in expendable income in the average household, which people can then spend on a growing variety of consumer goods, which in turn are increasingly available for theft. At the same time, technological gains produce smaller and more portable electronic devices that are easily stolen. Similarly, work (e.g., both spouses working instead of only one) and leisure activities (e.g., a larger amount of expendable income to spend on entertainment) may mean less time spent at home for many, which results in less guardianship over household items that may be stolen. At the same time, increased residential mobility and cultural heterogeneity may lead to weaker community ties than in the past, resulting in communities composed of people who are less willing to guard the personal safety and private property of neighbors they barely know.

It should be made clear that opportunity theorists do not expect the conditions of modern society to create forces that cause criminal behavior; rather, they assume that we are all motivated offenders who will act criminally in a situation given the presence of a suitable victim and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen and Felson 1979; Felson and Cohen 1980). Thus, opportunity theory posits an increase in property crimes and a decrease in violent crimes over

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time. Studies that directly test opportunity theories are not widespread at the cross-national level (for example, see Bennett 1991a, 1991b; Gartner 1990; Kick and LaFree 1985; Ortega et al. 1992). However, though it may be difficult to measure the amount of time citizens of different countries spend away from home or the average weight of their televisions, studies that examine the effect of modernization and crime may also be interpreted in terms of this thesis. For example, while Bennett (1991b); Groves, McCleary, and Newman (1985); Neapolitan (1994, 1996); and several others show no significant increase in the homicide rate with economic development, others, such as Stack (1984) and Hartnagel (1982), have shown that increases in property crime accompany economic development and/or urbanism, which can result in an increase in the number of victims and, due to mobility and heterogeneity, a decrease in guardianship.

### ***World system theory***

World system theory borrows from the Marxist perspective to explain the impact of an ever-expanding capitalism on nations that vary in their level of development (see Chirot and Hall 1982). This theory recognizes that the legitimacy of a market economy is spreading around the globe and that its expansion is uneven, meaning that (1) nations are no longer autonomous political and economic entities but are instead actors in an international political-economic system, and (2) weaker countries are politically and economically exploited by stronger ones (Smith 1984). This uneven expansion results in nations that are placed into one of three categories:

- *Core* nations are industrialized, and market relations in them are highly advanced.
- *Periphery* nations are characterized by a history of colonialism and the possession of natural and human resources that are underdeveloped but available for exploitation by the industrialized sectors of core nations. These nations are viewed as economically dependent on the core nations.
- *Semi-periphery* nations are underdeveloped, perhaps only partially industrialized, and at the mercy of both the core and the periphery (Evans and Timberlake 1980; Walton 1982).

As capitalism expands, world system theory maintains, it disrupts indigenous cultures and traditional means of subsistence, producing exploitation from the outside and new inequalities within. Political and legal formations are disrupted, and social dislocations become widespread. The rural population begins to migrate to cities in search of employment, creating class conflict and

competition for scarce resources (Castells 1977; Gilbert and Gugler 1982). Social relationships are replaced by market relations, and consumerism replaces traditional use patterns (see Fromm 1976).

World system theorists argue that shifts in political, economic, and social organization, together with the poverty, inequality, and poor living conditions resulting from this process, produce criminogenic conditions of all sorts. First, as a result of the human toll, the process itself is viewed as illegal by some, and multinational corporations and governments are labeled criminal (see Reiman 1998). Second, informal economies that deal in illegal goods develop as a way to produce income for the poor, but they may also help create destructive behavior and higher victimization rates among the lower classes. Third, the social and psychological strain that results from cultural shock and poor living conditions, together with culture-specific inequities that distinguish “acceptable” scapegoats for victimization, result in increased rates of violence (Messerschmidt 1986). Finally, collective responses such as protests, riots, and even some types of theft and violence might be viewed as an attempt to (1) foment political unrest, (2) create class consciousness out of the power and economic inequities, and (3) spark revolution—or at least forms of primitive rebellion (Hobsbawm 1959, 1969; O’Malley 1980).

As with most conflict-based theories, the tenets of world system theory lend themselves more to descriptive studies and are difficult to test empirically, especially at the cross-national level. Of course, the general findings of work testing other metanarratives, such as modernization, may be interpreted from the world system theory approach. Commonly, world system theory is advanced through case studies of one or a few nations in which the processes mentioned previously are described and general economic and political indicators are used to classify nations as core, periphery, and semi-periphery so that the relations between the indicators (and the resulting social problems they may create) can be discussed. This literature, however, is usually found in the disciplines of political science, anthropology, and sociology, and criminological issues often are considered only in tangential fashion.

Although there is no space here for a complete critique of each of these theories, there are two important points, one theoretical and one empirical, that should at least be introduced. Theoretically, these are metanarratives that attempt to explain crime causation largely in terms of a single, albeit broad, issue. As a result, an appreciation for a multicausal understanding of crime may be lacking. Empirically, these metanarratives are, in fact, theories of social change and of the effects of societal evolution on the nature and quantity of crime in a society. However, nearly all the studies mentioned previously employ cross-sectional designs to evaluate theories of temporal variation. For example,

it may be argued that a relationship between economic distress and crime within a country reveals support for a Marxist approach, but this does not necessarily speak to a larger world system and whether this system in fact has created the poor economic conditions within a nation. A cross-sectional design is not an entirely inappropriate methodology, and its predominance has perhaps been necessary due to the limited availability of data on nations over time. However, given the increasing availability, reliability, and validity of cross-national data and the growing sophistication of scientific techniques employed by criminologists, we must take care to design studies that best answer the proposed theoretical hypotheses and recognize design limitations when drawing our conclusions.

## Structural theories

There are three general approaches to the study of the etiology of crime: social learning, strain, and social control. The structural analogs of these theoretical strategies are culture, strain (usually represented by absolute or relative economic deprivation), and social disorganization. These three theories, together with attempts to measure them and identify their impact on crime at the cross-national level, are outlined briefly.

### *Culture*

The attempt to explain crime via cultural variation is a longstanding enterprise. In the first half of the 19th century, Guerry blamed the high rates of violence in the south of France on regional differences in culture that resulted from migration and settlement patterns (Corzine, Huff-Corzine, and Whitt 1998). In Italy, many argued that southern Italians, such as the Neapolitans and Sicilians, possessed cultural traits responsible for the high levels of crime in the regions they inhabited. In the United States, Redfield (1880) began a research tradition that continues today, when his systematic research revealed heightened rates of homicide in the American South.

Despite the fact that southerners everywhere seem to be viewed as a rather impetuous lot, cultural theories of crime are actually grounded in social learning processes and cultural norms. Researchers do not believe, for example, that southerners are born violent; instead, they submit that residents of the South learn violent traits from those in close proximity to them.<sup>4</sup>

Modern cultural theories, then, build on Sutherland's (1947) notion of differential association, in which norms conducive to violence are transmitted to individuals and across generations via processes of social learning. Having acquired these cultural values, the individual is provided with a "tool kit" for living (Swidler 1986), as culture provides one with the means to interpret interpersonal



interactions while at the same time providing an accepted repertoire of responses appropriate for each situation (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). Individuals in one culture, for example, may be offended by an action that someone in another culture dismisses as unimportant. Similarly, Luckenbill and Doyle (1989) argue that individuals in some cultures are more likely to view a negative interaction, no matter how slight, as an injustice that demands revenge. Thus, cultural norms may promote or condone violence in certain situations, meaning that the attitudes and values of individuals within cultures that have higher rates of crime or violence should be distinguishable from those with lower rates.

Measuring and analyzing the effects of culture are extremely difficult tasks for the researcher. Some suggest that culture dictates the form of social institutions within a society (Lynch 1995a), while others argue that institutional/structural conditions have a hand in creating (sub)cultural values and that these values mediate the effects of social structure on behavior (Curtis 1975). These two views are not mutually exclusive and both are probably correct. However, attempts to measure culture at this level of analysis have been weak at best—usually taking national, regional, or ethnic group membership as a measure of culture—thereby making efforts to separate the discrete effects of culture and structure nearly impossible.

Research in the United States has focused on *subculturally* violent groups (see Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967; Messner 1983a, 1983b; Nisbett and Cohen 1996), but those interested in cross-national comparisons must focus on the nation as the unit of analysis. This makes it difficult to examine cultural influences on crime because a cross-national sample requires an assumption that countries are culturally homogeneous, which is rarely the case. Therefore, although the literature (especially anthropological) abounds with case studies that examine the relationship between sociocultural attributes and levels and types of violence, there have been few empirical attempts to measure the effects of culture on crime with a cross-national sample.<sup>5</sup> This is not a futile task, however. It is possible to devise a standard survey instrument that might measure beliefs concerning situational acceptance of violent behavior and other similar attitudes among members of different nations.<sup>6</sup> To say that cultural variation does not affect levels and types of violence among countries makes little sense; most agree that it does. Cross-national researchers, however, have yet to

*Thus, cultural norms may promote or condone violence in certain situations, meaning that the attitudes and values of individuals within cultures that have higher rates of crime or violence should be distinguishable from those with lower rates.*

include an adequate measure of culture in structure-level models. This seems like a fruitful avenue of research, but we must be careful in how we analyze the issue. Just because one country or culture consistently exhibits higher crime rates than others, for example, does not make it culturally criminal (as has been suggested with the subculture of violence thesis in the United States) because, as noted, culture is integrally linked to history and to political and economic structure.

### ***Strain***

Some researchers argue that, regardless of cultural attributes, crime rates will vary spatially based on local structural composition. Strain, usually represented as absolute or relative deprivation in structure-level models, is one of the most widely tested elements in cross-national research on crime. For example, many suggest that the social and psychological strains generated by poverty lead to higher rates of crime in areas possessing a higher proportion of people facing these conditions (see Williams and Flewelling 1988). Some contend, however, that individuals' perceptions that others are somehow better off creates frustration over this inequitable distribution of resources, which is eventually expressed through aggression and violence (Blau and Blau 1982; Fowles and Merva 1996; Merton 1938; Messner 1982). This is contingent on the assumption that community members recognize these inequities, regard them as unfair, and respond violently to them.

Oddly enough, given the consistent findings in U.S. studies relating poverty to violence, this relationship is rarely tested at the cross-national level. Instead of using a measure of the extent of poverty within a nation, most researchers choose to employ a gross domestic product (GDP) or gross national product (GNP) per capita measure as an indicator of modernization (see the previous section on modernization; other examples include Bennett 1991a; Fiala and LaFree 1988; Groves, McCleary, and Newman 1985; Ortega et al. 1992). Because a measure of central tendency—such as average income—is only a rough measure of the magnitude and depth of poverty in a population (see LaFree, Drass, and O'Day 1992; McDowall 1986) we must be careful in interpreting this in terms of a poverty-violence relationship. However, several cross-national studies have shown that as per capita GNP or GDP increases, homicide rates tend to decrease (Krohn and Wellford 1977; McDonald 1976; Neapolitan 1994, 1996). This is the opposite of what modernization theorists expect, but it may lend tentative support to the poverty-violence thesis.

Although theoretically defined in terms of anger and frustration resulting from the inequitable distribution of resources, inequality is most often measured in terms of the Gini coefficient, which measures income distribution but not anger

or frustration. The Gini coefficient (often referred to as the index of income concentration), ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating perfect equality and 1 indicating perfect inequality within a population.<sup>7</sup> A few cross-national studies that employed the Gini coefficient as a measure of inequality include Avison and Loring's (1986) study of population diversity and homicide, Gartner's (1990) work on homicide victims, Messner's (1989) analysis of economic discrimination and homicide rates, and Messner and Rosenfeld's (1997) exploration of the relationship between institutional anomie and homicide rates. Alternative measures of inequality are defined in terms of the percentage of overall income received by a specific proportion of the population or as a ratio of the earnings of one segment of the population to that of another. For example, Fiala and LaFree (1988) used both the percentage of total income received by the bottom 20 percent of the population and the ratio of the percentage of income received by the top 20 percent to that received by the bottom 40 percent of each nation.

### ***Social disorganization***

While cultural models are founded in social learning principles and strain theories argue that economic and other forms of distress may propel people or groups toward criminal behavior, the theory of social disorganization posits that crime occurs as a result of a breakdown in social bonds. Structural forces act to disrupt social ties and group solidarity, thus interfering with community mechanisms (both formal and informal) of control. Detached from their social bonds and in the absence of the community's ability to control the behavior of its members, people are free to become involved in criminal behavior (Bursik 1988; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). Thus, social disorganization is an extension of the modernization thesis outlined previously (e.g., one situation in which normative controls may be broken is when shifts in urbanization and the political economy occur during development). This view of community disorganization is similar to the notion of social control discussed by Park and Burgess (1924) in their work on human ecology.

The community or neighborhood is usually considered the most appropriate level of analysis for testing social disorganization models. However, structural forces outside the community, such as political-economic shifts that redirect the distribution of jobs and services (Bursik 1988), obviously have an impact on social cohesion within a neighborhood. Thus, this theory is often tested at higher levels of analysis, including cross-nationally. The commonly accepted elements of these macrolevel models of social disorganization are poverty, population density, ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility, and family disruption. Each is suspected of disrupting social integration and cohesion within communities, thereby weakening controls and allowing increases in crime rates (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997).

The structural elements of social disorganization are described theoretically in a manner that makes them relatively easy to operationalize in measurement models for cross-national analysis. For example, poverty can be measured as the proportion of the population living below the poverty line; population density can be captured as the percentage of the population that resides in urban areas (see Krahn, Hartnagel, and Gartrell 1986; Messner 1989; Ortega et al. 1992) or even the density of the whole country (see Avison and Loring 1986; Neapolitan 1994). Several definitions of heterogeneity are available, including ethnic and linguistic differentiation (commonly consisting of the percentage of the population that is not of the same ethnic background—or that speaks an alternative first language—as the majority; see Gartner 1990; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Messner 1989). Residential mobility can be operationalized in terms of either urban (Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980; Fiala and LaFree 1988) or total population (see LaFree and Kick 1986; Schichor 1990) growth or decline. Family disruption is most often measured as a nation's divorce rate (see Gartner, Baker, and Pampel 1990; Rosenfeld and Messner 1991).

Within the past 15 years, elements of social disorganization have become widely tested in cross-national empirical studies. Even if not directly discussed in terms of this theory, the concepts involved are commonly employed as control variables. No doubt there are problems—in terms of theory, measurement, and the congruence of the two—with each of the measures discussed in the previous paragraphs, which authors of these studies sometimes address. However, the theoretical model for social disorganization is constructed in such a way as to make the production of a measurement model relatively simple, especially because data on these concepts are often readily available cross-nationally. Finally, tests of this model result in similar findings at several levels of aggregation (e.g., community, city, nation), suggesting that it might be a viable model that deserves further scientific attention at the cross-national level.

## The demographic correlates of crime

Although they do not provide causal mechanisms, the demographic attributes of a nation's population are often used as control variables and, more recently, as elements of opportunity theories. In cross-national research, these demographic correlates are commonly accepted to be sex and age.<sup>8</sup> In most studies, the sex and age categories are combined, the suggestion being that young males have the highest offending and victimization rates, and thus, as their proportion of the population increases, so will crime rates. Empirically, the cross-national findings examining this relationship have been inconsistent at best. Using various measures (age categories include younger than 15 years, 15–19, 15–24,

and 15–29, with some employing only males of these ages and others including both males and females), findings ranged from positive (see Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Ortega et al. 1992), to nonsignificant (see Gartner 1990; Messner 1989; Neapolitan 1994), to negative (see Bennett 1991a). At this stage, these inconclusive findings are of relatively little concern because they may be explained by any or all of the theoretical processes outlined previously or by the cross-sectional methodology usually employed. Given the commonly accepted association between these correlates and crime, however, any empirical test should continue to employ them as controls.

## **Methodology**

This section of the chapter contains two main sections. The first is a survey of comparative research that examines specific substantive issues of crime (e.g., violence, property crime, genocide, transnational crime). The second section examines the general types of studies (i.e., metalevel, parallel, and case) normally undertaken by comparative criminologists.

## **Crime as a dependent variable**

When comparative researchers undertake their studies of crime in a cross-national context, they often consider only one category of crime. In the next few pages, we first address some of the most common types of crime considered in comparative inquiries, such as violent and property crimes, then move to a discussion of a few types of crime that are only now beginning to receive serious scrutiny. Obviously, this brief overview of crime as a dependent variable is far from complete, as the proper subject of criminological investigation cannot be so summarily dictated given its constant state of development. For instance, we do not directly consider the import of Beirne's (1999) recent call for animal abuse as an object of criminological study, although provocative comparative work certainly could be pursued on this topic. Still, the dependent variables that we do identify are those most commonly deployed in comparative criminology, and the domains that we signal as areas of criminological inquiry in the future should alert scholars to the significant promise of these arenas of study.

### ***Comparative studies of violent crime***

Comparative studies of violence appear more often than studies about any other category of crime. Although violent behaviors such as assault, rape, and robbery have been the subject of much comparative research, studies of homicide are probably the most popular because of the mortal nature of the offense and

the higher availability, reliability, and validity of homicide measures for a large number of nations (see LaFree 1998 for a review of cross-national studies of homicide). A nation's homicide rate is also considered by many to be a fairly accurate indicator of its overall level of criminal violence (Fox and Zawitz 1998).

Comparative studies of violence may be able to answer several questions for criminologists. For example, do a nation's levels of modernization and industrialization increase its level of violence? Do different political-economic structures exhibit varying rates of violence (e.g., are homicide rates under communism and a state-run economy significantly higher or lower than nations with rule-of-law and free markets)? Do rates of violence vary with the levels of ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity within a nation? The answers to these and other questions posed by comparative criminologists can provide insight into the fundamental effects of cultural and structural organization on a nation's amount and forms of violence. Comparative studies of violence may also aid us in understanding whether varying manifestations of violence (e.g., rape, assault, homicide) are discrete forms of behavior that require separate causal models, or if they should all be contained under the general category of violence.

### *Comparative studies of property crime*

Empirical work on property crime at the cross-national level has faced significant difficulty in the past due to definitional problems. The legal protection of private property, even the demarcation between private and public property, varies across nations. In a communist country, for example, all property in theory belongs to the state; thus, legal protection of private property is limited. Further, the likelihood of the development of an alternative economy for goods not provided by the centralized economy is high in such nations, and state ideology might label such transactions as speculation (for which there is no room in a strictly communist political economy) and police them accordingly. Both this ideology and the parallel economy confuse what Westerners normally call property crime. Legal definitions of property crime also vary among countries. Robbery in one country might be coded as a simple or aggravated theft in another. Bicycles may be the major mode of transportation in a nation and expensive for citizens to replace: Should theft of bicycles in this case be considered equivalent to motor vehicle theft elsewhere? Reporting practices also vary across nations, depending on several factors discussed elsewhere in this chapter. This presents further difficulty to researchers interested in property crime. Finally, the availability, reliability, and validity of data from a variety of different types of countries (e.g., developed and developing, socialist and free market) are far from ideal.

Cross-national study of property crime presents several intriguing questions, however. How much money do citizens of the world lose every year due to property crime? Does development really increase theft, as opportunity theorists suggest, simply because there are more attractive and more portable goods to steal? Do poverty and inequality have different levels and types of effects on the rates of property crime? Does property crime take different forms in different nations, especially those with disparate political-economic structures or levels of development? Are the antecedents of property crime around the world the same as those of violent crime? In what way might a nation-state's culture mediate the effects of its structure on property crime? Recent advances in methodology that rely on behavioral rather than legal definitions of crime (as described in the data sources section) make undertaking research on these questions less difficult. The answers to these questions, however, must be based on careful consideration of many fundamental issues sometimes not considered by criminologists (e.g., social-structural and political-economic conditions, the presence or absence of insurance companies). Keeping in mind these caveats, the comparative literature on property crime looks to expand in the coming years. The increasing availability and validity of data, coupled with increasingly sophisticated theoretical models, should allow criminologists to make significant gains in the study of property crime cross-nationally.

### ***Genocide: National crimes with international implications***

Although certain wartime behaviors and genocide have been recognized as international crimes since the end of World War II, these two subjects have received little systematic criminological attention (Adler, Mueller, and Laufer 1994). Questions about war crimes and genocide fall roughly under the rubric of macrocriminology (Shoham 1995). This term refers to crimes committed by whole governments—indeed, whole nations—against either their own citizens or those of other nations. In recent years, there have been attempts to establish an international legal machinery that defines the actions of individuals who perform genocide in the name of governments as crimes against humanity. It is rare, however, for a whole nation to be held accountable for crimes. Perhaps Iraq is an exception to this general rule, given the harsh sanctions imposed on it after it lost the Gulf War. However, the question of the criminality of that nation remains in dispute, especially as the tendency to hold individuals accountable for the acts of nations persists. Thus, Saddam Hussein, the “Butcher of Baghdad,” is vilified as the criminal leader of Iraq. In a similar vein, Slobodan Milosevic is denounced as the “Tyrant of Serbia” and Augusto Pinochet, the criminal “Dictator of Chile.” Attempts to apply criminal law in the international court are therefore limited, probably by the model of criminal law itself. Criminal law is essentially constructed to apply blame and attribute

responsibility to individuals or small groups of individuals (e.g., participants in conspiracies, corporations) but not to whole nations (see Barak 1991; Chambliss 1993; and Ermann and Lundman 1992 for intriguing discussions on the subject of state and governmental crime).

However, the inclusion of these topics in the field of cross-national criminology is crucial for an important philosophical reason. It has been argued in some quarters that comparative criminology is essentially impossible because the definition of crime is relative to particular cultures in particular times and places. This argument is most often put forward by the relativists of social science and criminology (Beirne 1997). Briefly stated, the claim is that by definition crime is a social phenomenon, defined by the culture and history unique to each nation. Thus, they claim that what is criminal in one country may not be defined as criminal in another. For evidence, they point to the wide variety of legal definitions and legal systems existing across the world.

While we need not go into the philosophical debates concerning relativism and social science (for discussions on this topic relevant to criminology, see Beirne 1983; DiCristina 1995; Leavitt 1990; Newman 1976), we simply point out the consequences of pursuing such a position. Put simply, the relativist position maintains that it is impossible to make judgments about human rights, the tyranny of dictators, or genocide committed against innocent citizens anywhere in the world. The relativist view is that, because these acts are not defined as crimes within a particular country (instead, they are lauded as ethnic cleansing or favorable to national security), they cannot be judged as more or less criminal than any other act. Nonetheless, the atrocities of this century have given rise to attempts to hold individual tyrants from particular countries responsible for their actions (the best examples are the Nuremberg trials after World War II and the establishment of the International Court of Justice in The Hague). These efforts suggest a recognition that some crimes are universally abhorrent (in the sense that the whole world suffers when they are committed). We merely ask the relativists whether they would prefer to not make such judgments. Thus, we conclude that the study of genocide, war crimes, and human rights is nascent but involves extremely challenging and legitimate research for criminologists, and we urge the development of a new field that can be termed macrocriminology. We are aware of some works emerging in this field, such as those concerned with comparative human rights (Bouloukos 1999) and genocide (Shoham 1995), and we encourage further efforts in this line of inquiry.

### *Domestic violence*

It is often the case, especially in cross-national work, that the topics that most interest researchers are the most difficult to study. This is especially true for



domestic violence,<sup>9</sup> a general term we use here to encompass spouse and child abuse, incest, infanticide, and similar family-related violence. An understanding of the variation in levels of domestic violence cross-nationally could yield valuable insight into the status of women and children around the world as well as help unearth the etiological factors responsible for this type of violence. Researchers might also be able to determine the association between domestic violence and overall violence, perhaps revealing whether the former is a special case of the latter or if different models are needed to explain each. Researchers can test any of the theories discussed previously (e.g., opportunity or strain theories) to determine their explanatory power in terms of spouse and child abuse. In short, an understanding of the cross-national variation of domestic violence could yield important revelations about both culture and social structure.

Unfortunately, empirical research of domestic violence at the cross-national level is extremely difficult for several reasons. First, disparate historical experiences, economic structures, religious beliefs, and other cultural factors have resulted in widely varying definitions of spouse and child abuse. Further, even given similar legal definitions, cultural norms may preempt legal dictates in regard to tolerance for actual behavior and the reporting and recording of incidents. Also, the availability and accessibility of institutions created to assist victims, punish and/or counsel offenders, and generally respond to these crimes vary widely throughout the world and are themselves a viable area of study. The availability of these institutions is likely related to some of the factors that produce varying levels of domestic violence, and their presence or absence also likely affects the true rate (and the reported and recorded levels) of victimization within a nation, possibly creating spurious associations between independent and dependent variables. Given cultural and structural differences, the form that spouse and child abuse takes likely varies from country to country, making measurement even more difficult. Finally, the structural, cultural, and religious factors that might mediate or exacerbate domestic violence are themselves difficult to capture in quantitative measures. These challenges have not stopped researchers from undertaking several qualitative case studies of different countries and from offering general comparisons of rates among nations. Also, as data increasingly become available, the number of comparative studies and scientific examinations of the etiology of domestic violence is rising, which should provide valuable insight into the various aspects of family-related violence throughout the world.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Transnational crime***

Perhaps the most recent and popular addition to the domain of comparative criminologists is transnational crime. Tremendous increases in trade and commerce

have produced considerable movement of people, goods, and ideas across borders at lightning speed. The enhanced interdependence among nation-states demanded by globalization has created a world in which transnational crime is not only possible, but perhaps inevitable. Of all the categories of crime described in this section, this type is the most fluid. Adler, Mueller, and Laufer (1994, 533) have defined transnational crime as "criminal activities extending into, and violating the laws of, several countries." For their part, Martin and Romano (1992, 1, 4-5) specify transnational crime, or what they prefer to call "multinational systemic crime," as "crimes by various kinds of organizations that operate across national boundaries and in two or more countries simultaneously. . . . It is crime by networks operating within a multinational arena, often with state support."

Given its very nature, transnational crime would seem to require some organizational sophistication; for this reason, it is often linked to the idea of criminal organizations such as the Russian Mafia (although nation-states themselves cannot be excluded from the realm of transnational criminality). The types of behaviors that can be grouped into this category of behaviors are vast, and the diversity of activity considered to be transnational crime has probably hampered systematic efforts to study it. Nevertheless, a number of types of transnational crime have garnered recognition, including terrorism, espionage, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, environmental crimes by multinational corporations, motor vehicle theft, trafficking in humans and organs for transplants, fraud, money laundering, and art theft. Because these criminal activities take advantage of the interstices between nation-states, little official attention has been directed toward them, and consequently, there is a lack of data with which to assess the problem. Moreover, efforts at stemming this type of crime are further hampered by the fact that criminal justice systems are developed with the aim of policing within national borders.

Nevertheless, the increased attention presently devoted to this variety of crime by the United Nations, individual nations, and scholars is increasing the information available to criminologists who wish to undertake investigations of transnational crime. Surely, this will be an area of criminological investigation that will begin to bear fruit in short order. For the moment, however, much of the information is anecdotal and depends to a large extent on media accounts of transnational crime, and these data sources bring with them considerable difficulties in terms of validity, as noted by a number of researchers (Passos 1995; Williams 1999).

## Methodological approaches to comparative studies of crime

We divide our discussion of methodological approaches to comparative studies in criminology into three general varieties. We begin with what we call metalevel studies, move to a consideration of parallel studies, and conclude with a consideration of case studies.

### *Metalevel studies*

We use the generic term metalevel studies to describe research that employs the nation as the unit of analysis to quantitatively compare criminological issues in several countries. This work usually takes the form of multivariate regression analysis undertaken to test one or more of the theories discussed earlier. For example, a researcher may wish to examine the effects of poverty on homicide rates around the world or discover if a nation's level of development increases its rate of property crime. This is the most common category of empirical research done cross-nationally and, with the increasing availability, reliability, and validity of data, is becoming a more sophisticated and popular approach.

Examples of this type of comparative analysis are usually quantitative in nature, either simply describing trends, patterns, similarities, and differences between nations or employing statistical techniques to test criminological theories and search for correlates of crime at the cross-national level. The examples included here have been randomly chosen. Almost all have been published within the past 15 years, most during the 1990s, and works cited elsewhere in this article are not repeated here. The examples have been selected to present the variety of work undertaken by comparative criminologists, and their inclusion in no way suggests support for the validity of the theory, methodology, measurement, or findings involved.

Because homicide is commonly accepted as the most reliably measured crime, work on this topic has dominated cross-national research on violence. Examples include LaFree's (1998) summary of cross-national studies of homicide, Gartner's (1990) examination of the victims of homicide, Lester's (1991) test of the opportunity thesis as an explanation of European homicide rates, and Neapolitan's (1994) study of homicide in Latin American countries. Work by Krug, Powell, and Dahlberg (1988) and Killias (1992, 1993) addresses firearm-related deaths, gun ownership, and violence throughout the world. Recent research on child homicide includes studies by Fiala and LaFree (1988) and Briggs and Cutright (1994) and a comparison of the levels of child homicide in developed countries by Unnithan (1997). Junger-Tas (1996) and Pfeiffer (1998) have both published studies of juvenile violence in Europe. Examples of work on violence other

than homicide include research on family violence by Bowker (1985), who examined the effects of modernization on spouse abuse in developing countries; an early review of the literature on spouse abuse in several different nations by Cornell and Gelles (1982); a more recent and extensive cross-national bibliography on family violence by Patrignani and Ville (1995); and an edited volume on child abuse and neglect by Gelles and Lancaster (1987), which includes essays on several aspects of child abuse in different countries.

Cross-national variation in definitions and differences in the reporting and recording of property crime makes it difficult to examine this topic empirically, but the recent addition of victimization surveys and self-reports is a boon to this area of study. Cross-national research has examined the impact of development on property-related crime in Africa (Arthur 1991), on property crime patterns in general (Schichor 1990), on gender and property crime (Anderson and Bennett 1996; Widom and Stewart 1986), and on cross-national differences in theft in less developed nations (Neapolitan 1995). Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate (1995) presented a volume that provides discussions on criminal victimization in developing countries based on the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) (see also Alvazzi del Frate 1998). Kick and LaFree (1985) examined the social determinants of theft in 40 nations, and Stack (1984) provided cross-national evidence for a relationship between income inequality and property crime. In another volume, Kangaspunta, Joutsen, and Ollus (1998) employed data from the Fifth United Nations Survey to examine levels of property crime offenses (including burglary, motor vehicle theft, and car vandalism) in European and North American countries. Luikkonen (1997) provided a more indepth look at motor vehicle theft in Europe, and van Dijk and van Kesteren (1996) used ICVS to study criminal victimization in European cities. Property crime committed by juveniles was the topic of empirical research completed by Bennett and Basiotis (1991) and Bennett and Lynch (1990), with both examining the structural correlates of juvenile crime cross-nationally, and by Junger-Tas, Terlouw, and Klein (1994), who provided a volume that includes research based on the International Self-Report Delinquency study.

Finally, a few studies that do not fit exactly into these categories but that may be of interest to some scholars of comparative criminology include a review by Rummel (1994) that addresses several issues of genocide in the 20th century, including which types of regimes might be more prone to this behavior; Lester's (1994) study of interpersonal violence in bellicose nations, which examines the relationship between nations' levels of participation in wars and their levels of interpersonal violence; data released by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) (1997) on the supply of and trafficking in narcotics around the world; and Farrell, Mansur, and Tullis' (1996) use of UNDCP's

data in a cross-national comparison of cocaine and heroine prices and trafficking in Europe.

The advantages and disadvantages of this methodological approach are widely discussed in the literature on comparative criminology, so they are summarized only briefly here. As for advantages, first, both explanatory and crime data for nations are becoming increasingly available to researchers. Second, descriptive studies employing nations as units of analysis can illuminate patterns and trends in violent, property, and other types of crime throughout the world. For example, do certain areas or countries of the world exhibit significantly higher or lower crime rates than elsewhere? Are these rates undergoing significant increases or decreases over time? Finally, by testing the rigor of the theoretical paradigms developed to explain these differences and/or trends, we are able to draw conclusions about national-level correlates of crime that add to the criminological literature that previously was based on work completed in a single nation or culture.

The main disadvantages of this type of work revolve around aggregation and the validity of data. First, aggregating to such a high level of abstraction presents many problems for researchers. Most importantly, it masks what is likely to be significant spatial variation in both crime and explanatory factors throughout a nation. Similarly, with available data only about the attributes of the nation as a whole, researchers are unable to recognize the more proximate causes of crime within the country. Second, measurement issues can present serious threats to validity. It is often difficult to construct precise operational measures of theoretical constructs at this level, especially because cross-national researchers usually depend on secondary data collected by governments for administrative, not scientific, purposes. Even if we are able to find a measure that closely corresponds to the theoretical elements, the likelihood of obtaining valid measures for a broad range of nations throughout the world (based on factors such as geographic location, level of development, type of government, or predominant religion) are slim. One way to overcome these disadvantages is to look more closely at the internal workings of criminal justice systems and structural and cultural contexts of crime within individual countries. Parallel studies have succeeded to some degree in achieving this.

### ***Parallel studies***

Parallel studies generally focus on a close analysis of the criminal justice systems or the nature of crime within two nations. They may be divided into three general subtypes.

**Crime rate/criminal justice system analysis.** Many studies compare in detail crime rates or other types of generated official statistics about crime or criminal

justice systems in two nations. A good example of this type of study is Downes' (1988) examination of incarceration rates as a function of the penal policies of The Netherlands, England, and Wales. This study required attention to the fine detail of the complex legal and bureaucratic processes that produce incarceration rates. A more recent example is that of McClintock and Wikstrom (1992), who initially compared crime rates between Scotland and Sweden, followed by a study comparing violent crime between Stockholm and Edinburgh.

In most cases, these types of studies are able to overcome the many difficulties of comparing official statistics across countries in the larger cross-national studies reported elsewhere in this chapter. Differences in police recording of offenses can be noted and accounted for and differences in legal procedures and definitions of crimes examined. When only two countries are examined, more meaningful comparisons can be drawn and explanations for similarities and differences in crime rates convincingly made. Another example of this approach is a study by Langan and Farrington (1998) that employed official data to compare crime rates and other criminal justice statistics between the United States and England and Wales. Through the creative use of official statistics as well as victimization surveys in the two countries, these researchers were able to make persuasive conclusions concerning the comparative levels of particular types of crime and other aspects of the criminal justice system—such as incarceration rates—that are notoriously difficult to compare cross-nationally.

**Topical comparison.** Here, researchers generally follow a particular perspective or approach concerning the same topic or social problem in two countries. Studies of this kind are often anthropological and/or historical. An excellent example of this approach is a study by George DeVos (1980), in which he studied the minority status of delinquents in Japan and compared it with the minority status of delinquents in the United States. The questions driving the study were why Japanese-Americans had a very low rate of delinquency and how this may be related to delinquency rates in Japan. DeVos used a variety of anthropological observations in each country and combined them with various psychological assessment instruments administered in both nations as a parallel methodology. Other studies include Zehr's (1976) study of crime and development in 19th-century Germany and France; Gurr, Grabosky, and Hula's (1977) work on violence in four cities in a historical perspective; Bayley's (1976) comparison of policing in Japan and the United States; Kaiser's (1984) study of prison systems and correctional law in the United States and Europe; and Bouloukos' (1999) comparison of human rights and the law in the field of incarceration.

**Replication of an experimental design.** Studies that replicate an experimental design in two countries are rare, no doubt because they require considerable

coordination. An example of this type of study is Friday, Yamagami, and Dussich's (1999) construction of a questionnaire to measure the threshold in perceptions of violence among respondents in Japan and the United States. The samples were drawn according to the same research design, and the questionnaire was constructed with reference to the differing cultural requirements of each nation. Researchers attempted to carry out the studies during the same time period to the greatest extent possible. Similarly designed studies have been conducted studying policing behavior (Ivkovic and Klockars 1996).

In sum, the central advantage of parallel studies is that meaningful comparisons between individual nations can be made while controlling for the many known factors that may lead to spurious conclusions in comparative criminal justice. Each of the three types of parallel studies described here attempts to achieve this in a different way. Although ideally the third type, the experimental design, promises the most scientific control, it requires a narrow definition of the issue addressed, thus limiting its generalizability. Of course, this is a standard problem of any experimental design employed in social science. Conversely, topical comparisons and crime rate/criminal justice analyses offer excellent ways to develop comparisons, but they may do so at the risk of somewhat divorcing the subject matter from the overall context of the nation and culture in which the problems occur. Case studies seek to overcome this disadvantage.

### ***Case studies***

By the term case study, we mean research undertaken in a single nation. This type of work is usually, though not necessarily, qualitative and descriptive in nature and often includes a historical element. Others have suggested that work done in a single country has "no obvious comparative intent" (Beirne and Hill 1991, viii) and thus do not include this methodological approach in their definition of comparative criminology. Even when no direct comparisons are made with other nations, however, descriptions of crime or criminal justice within a single country obviously increase our knowledge about these subjects throughout the world. Thus, we include a brief discussion here.

As in the previous sections, these examples are chosen to represent a wide array of comparative research by criminologists and others. First, there are a few books that make a good starting point for single-country studies of crime and justice. Heiland, Shelley, and Katoh's (1992) volume presented essays on crime in several countries around the world, including socialist, developing, and developed nations. More recently, Barak's (1999) volume provided chapters on crime and its control in an extended list of nations that are geographically, economically, and politically diverse. Finally, the United Nations *Global*

*Report on Crime and Justice* (Newman 1999) included both crime data and topical essays on a broad range of crime and justice issues throughout the world.

The impact of development on crime is a popular topic for researchers performing case studies. One example is Skinner's (1986) study of development and crime in Iceland, which revealed a lower crime rate in that country than in other modernized nations; the author attributes this to Iceland's culture of egalitarianism and its low unemployment rate. Other examples include Hatalak, Alvazzi del Frate, and Zvekic's (1998) volume that reported on ICVS findings from nations in transition; Zvekic's (1990) volume on crime and development; and Arthur and Marenin's (1995) essay on crime in developing nations, which recognized the difficulties involved in this type of research and called for a case study approach in order to understand country-specific experiences with crime and development. The series of volumes produced by the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control has also, for a number of years, supplied case study material as a background for interpreting larger scale quantitative analysis.

Abel (1987) provided an annotated bibliography with many references to single-country studies of homicide. Other examples of case studies on violence include examinations of alcohol and homicide in Copenhagen (Gottlieb and Gabrielsen 1992); patterns of homicide in Greece (Chimpos 1993); an in-depth examination of several violence-related issues among American Indian populations (Bachman 1992); a study of the effects of the drug trade on violence in Brazil (Zaluar and Ribeiro 1995); and an examination of the spatial, temporal, and demographic variation of homicide rates throughout Russia (Pridemore 1999). Examples of research on sexual assault and rape include studies of wartime rape in Yugoslavia (Stojsavljevic 1995) and a survey of survivors of sexual assault in Australia (Easteal 1994). Studies of spouse and child abuse in different nations and cultures can provide insight into the variation of cultural norms concerning the status of women and children within society. Examples include research on family violence in Canada (DeKeseredy and Hinch 1991), South Africa (Adams and Hickson 1993), India (Natarajan 1995), Zimbabwe (Khan 1995), and Russia (Gondolf and Shestakov 1997) and of Chinese immigrants in the United States (Chin 1994).

Case studies that include research on property crimes include Wu's (1995) look at declining gender differences in crime in Taiwan, Arthur's (1992) study of social change and crime rates in Puerto Rico, Helal and Coston's (1991) examination of Islamic social control and low crime rates in Bahrain, the results of victimization surveys in Estonia and Finland (Aromaa and Ahven 1993), research on school crime in Sweden (Lindstrom 1997), and rising crime rates in Switzerland (Niggli and Pfister 1997).



Juvenile delinquency is another popular topic among comparativists, and case studies of delinquency throughout the world include Mutzell's (1995) examination of troubled youths, drug abuse, and violent crime in Stockholm, as well as Hartjen and Priyadarsini's (1984) indepth study of delinquency in India. Finckenauer (1995) has done extensive research on Russian youths, and Pridemore and Kvashis (1999) provided a discussion of social problems and juvenile delinquency in post-Soviet Russia. Rechea, Barberet, and Montanes (1995) presented findings about Spain from the International Self-Report Delinquency survey; and Murty, Al-Lanqawi, and Roebuck (1990) explored self-reported delinquency of Kuwaiti males. Other examples include case studies of juvenile delinquency in Korea (Lee 1990), Cameroon (Ade 1995), Japan (Miyazawa and Cook 1990), and Nigeria (Ogunlesi 1990) and the impact of antiamphetamine laws on juvenile offending in Taiwan (Wu 1996).

Finally, some case studies do not fit exactly into any one of the previous categories but are likely to be of interest to comparative criminologists, including Morales' (1986) examination of how the drug trade is affecting the social organization and culture of peasants in the Peruvian Andes; the effects of warfare on interpersonal violence in Israel (Landau and Pfeffermann 1988) and Japan (Lunden 1976); the sex trade directed at international tourists in Southeast Asia (Fish 1984); and Maria's (1990) volume on parallel economies (i.e., the black market) in Marxist states.

The obvious advantage to this methodological approach is its contextual analysis of one nation or culture. This type of work is able to incorporate a deeper understanding of subnational processes, as well as historical- and cultural-specific information on the country or culture under study. Thus, case studies are best situated to avoid the cultural imperialism tag sometimes aimed at comparative criminology. Similarly, researchers are able to examine the effects of a significant event on a nation—such as the transition toward a free-market economy or a change in political regimes—on crime rates or types of crime being committed. This approach is invaluable as both an exploratory tool that can lay the foundation for more statistically sophisticated work and a mechanism for providing contextual information that quantitative analysis simply is unable to supply. Further, indepth study of one country can result in data disaggregated to a level lower than that of the nation, presenting researchers with the ability to examine the reliability of theories developed to explain crime in the United States or other Western nations.

The main disadvantage of this methodological approach is the inability to generalize findings to a broader population. Disaggregated empirical studies of a nation can test the reliability of theories in disparate settings, but most case studies are qualitative in nature and employ unique definitions and measures of

deviance, crime, and justice. Thus, although such work is contextually rich, it is difficult to replicate elsewhere or compare it directly with studies undertaken in other nations. A final disadvantage is the fault of comparative criminologists ourselves, not the method. Other disciplines, most notably political science and anthropology, have created wide-ranging literatures that directly or indirectly take on subjects such as deviance, justice, culture, and social organization in scores of different nations and cultures that are relevant to our field. Unfortunately, however, disciplinary boundaries often keep us from incorporating the results of this work into our own.

So far, we have discussed the major theoretical approaches employed in comparative criminology as well as the main methodological strategies that have been used to investigate crime in the cross-national setting. Our aim in the following section is to identify some of the primary sources of data that are likely to be of greatest use to comparative criminologists.

## **Sources of Cross-National Data for Research on Crime and Criminal Justice**

At the present time, comparative criminologists can draw on a wide variety of data sources to inform their investigations. Official crime and criminal justice data are collated and disseminated by a number of international organizations, and researchers can also retrieve official data directly from national statistical agencies. Moreover, recent years have seen the development of victimization and self-report data collection efforts at the cross-national level. We will discuss these sources of information on crime and criminal justice in the coming pages. Of course, most comparative criminologists are interested in testing theories about the nature of crime and the social response directed at it by nations around the globe. In other words, these investigators also desire an assembly of explanatory variables at the nation-state level. In the last pages of this chapter, we will indicate some of the best sources for political, social, and demographic indicators about nations around the world.

### **Data on crime and criminal justice**

#### ***Official data***

There are three main sources of official crime data at the cross-national level. First, for those researchers interested in a specific country or for comparative analyses of a small set of countries, the best approach is to gather information

directly from the nations themselves. Although the problems of using official data remain (on the difficulties associated with official data, see Newman 1999), this strategy allows the researcher to become more familiar with the definitions of specific crimes and the idiosyncrasies associated with data collection in each nation. This clearly presents the investigator with a more thorough understanding of measures and promises stronger, more informed research. Familiarity with these agencies and their data also allows the researcher access to a broader range of information, including data aggregated to subnational levels.

These agencies are not always accessible to social scientists, however, especially if researchers wish to include a large number of nations in their study or if they are not proficient in the languages of the target countries. In these cases, investigators can take advantage of two other sources of cross-national databases on crime: Interpol and the United Nations crime surveys. They are outlined briefly here (for a thorough review of cross-national crime and explanatory data as well as information about gaining access to these data, see Neapolitan 1998).

Interpol has collected crime statistics from its member countries since 1950 and now publishes them annually in its publication *International Crime Statistics*, which contains information from approximately 100 countries each year (Interpol 1995). A standard form is sent to each country, with instructions provided in French, English, Spanish, and Arabic. Data provided to Interpol represent police and judicial statistics and are limited in scope. No attempts are made to evaluate the validity of the data. For this reason, Interpol is clear in publications that its data should not be used as a basis for making comparisons among nations. The Interpol database contains information on the volume of crime and the persons responsible for these offenses in general categories of crime, including murder, assault, robbery, burglary, fraud, and drug and sex offenses. Volume of crime figures include the total number of cases known to the police, the percentage of these cases that are attempts, the percentage of the total number of cases solved, and the rate of each offense per 100,000 population. Interpol also requests information on the total number of offenders and the percentage of known offenders who are females and/or juveniles<sup>11</sup> and who are not citizens of a particular country.

A second, more extensive source of official crime data is provided by the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (UNS). Five surveys have been completed thus far, covering the periods 1970–75, 1975–80, 1980–86, 1986–90, and 1990–94. These surveys gather qualitative and quantitative information on crime and criminal justice systems in the member countries of the United Nations, with the goal of improving the dissemination of this information to a global audience of researchers and administrators (Joutsen 1998; United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network 1999).

Although not all countries reply to each survey and no country answers all the questions on the form, the number of countries responding to the questionnaire rose in the fourth and fifth surveys, and the United Nations urges each nation to return the survey even if it is able to provide only limited information.

Given the nature of the data collection process, the material provided by UNS comes from the official criminal statistics of each nation. Thus, the origin of this information is similar to that from the Interpol database. However, because nations report these data to the United Nations (of which each is a member and by which each has been urged to respond to the questionnaire) whereas Interpol collects its information from police chiefs, the UNS data might be considered a more official statement by each nation about crime and its criminal justice system (Neapolitan 1997; Newman 1999). The survey's section on crime includes items related to intentional and nonintentional homicide, assault, rape, theft, robbery, burglary, fraud, embezzlement, drug-related crimes, bribery, and corruption (United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network 1999). Among other things, the survey asks for the number of crimes recorded by police and the age and gender of arrestees.

Unlike Interpol, the collectors of UNS data employ several methods of validating the information they receive as well as making the survey as user friendly as possible. First, in an attempt to minimize errors due to cross-national differences in categories of crime, the United Nations provides a standard definition for each crime and, although few countries respond to the query, they are asked to note any discrepancies between their definition and that of the United Nations. Second, if there is a 30-percent change in any reported number (e.g., the number of rapes or burglaries) from year to year or if the numbers at one stage of the criminal justice system do not match those at another (e.g., considerably more people were admitted into prison than were arrested), the United Nations contacts the reporting agency to account for these potential inaccuracies. The countries are also encouraged to report any situations, such as wars, political turmoil, or accounting practices, that might be responsible for significant changes. Finally, the United Nations reviews its experience with the process after each survey, as well as comments from the reporting agencies in each country, to improve on future questionnaires.

Researchers wishing to employ these two sources of information on criminal behavior across nations face not only difficulties common to all official crime data but also unique problems associated with the cross-national nature of the sample. First, no matter which database is chosen, researchers are in effect working with little more than a convenience sample (i.e., we can only use data for those nations that respond to Interpol and UNS queries), and it is likely that the sample of nations used will affect the results of cross-national comparisons

(Kohn 1989; Neuman and Berger 1988). Second, only national-level trends and relationships can be detected with this type of data. We can assume that aggregation to such a high level will mask the tremendous variation in crime rates and their social-structural correlates likely to be present throughout a country (Lynch 1995a). This has led many researchers to call for country-specific research that is capable of analyzing these issues at subnational levels (Archer and Gartner 1984; Arthur and Marenin 1995; LaFree and Kick 1986; Neapolitan 1997). Third, police data result from legal standards and administrative needs and practices, which can diverge extensively among different cultural, political, and economic systems. Policing agencies also vary in their level of professionalism, efficiency, recording procedures, and ability to collect data from all jurisdictions within their respective countries, making it difficult to ensure comparability in these data across nations.

For both administrative and cultural reasons, the number of crimes that come to the attention of the police and the category in which they are coded are also likely to vary. For example, although some crimes such as homicide and theft are consistently defined and perceived as serious across cultures (Kick and LaFree 1985; Scott and Al-Thokeb 1977), not all categories of crimes (or even subcategories of homicide and theft) are comparable cross-nationally. What is an assault? Are attempts included in the reported frequencies? At what age does a juvenile become an adult? Are data presented for reported crimes, recorded crimes, or arrests? These are fundamental questions that are not easily answered, and research has found that tests for relationships may yield divergent results depending on the database (e.g., Interpol or UNS), the crime category, and the level of analysis employed (Bennett and Lynch 1990; Huang and Wellford 1989).

Also, similar issues are likely to affect the rate at which victims report crime to the police. Given cultural variation, citizens' reporting of less serious victimizations, as well as the police response to these victimizations, probably varies considerably among nations (Lynch 1995a; Vigderhous 1978). Research in the United States has shown that reporting rates differ depending on the community's trust in the police (Biderman and Lynch 1991), and people's trust in the police likely varies throughout the world as well as within individual nations (Block 1984). Similarly, the status of women and the cultural response to sexual victimization is also likely to create differential reporting rates of rapes and

*Policing agencies also vary in their level of professionalism, efficiency, recording procedures, and ability to collect data from all jurisdictions within their respective countries, making it difficult to ensure comparability in these data across nations.*

sexual assaults (Ali Badr 1986; United Nations 1995). In fact, victimization data reveal differential reporting among nations in several crime categories, including assault, theft, and sexual offenses (van Dijk and Mayhew 1993).

*Victimization surveys can also provide more contextual information concerning the nature of the criminal event, as well as victim attributes, their fear of crime, and their experiences with and view of the criminal justice system.*

### **Victimization data**

As just discussed, researchers experience several difficulties with official data when attempting to determine the etiology of crime. Not only are these data predicated on legal, rather than behavioral, definitions of harmful actions that can vary from nation to nation, but police data are constructed and maintained for administrative, not scientific, purposes and they do not include the large number of crimes that do not come to the attention of police. In response to these difficulties, victimization surveys have been undertaken in several countries in an attempt to gain a more accurate picture of the extent of criminal behavior. These victimization surveys can also provide more contextual information concerning the nature of the criminal event, as well as victim attributes, their fear of crime, and their experiences with and view of the criminal justice system.

As with official data, researchers interested in one or a few countries should collect information from country-specific victimization surveys. Again, this ensures that the instrument is more culturally relevant and provides information to the researcher that may not be available elsewhere. Victimization surveys are a relatively new and evolving tool, however, so the availability, reliability, and validity of country-specific surveys are limited. Likewise, if the researcher wishes to compare a large set of countries, then the variation in the samples drawn, the questions asked, and the methodologies employed make country-specific surveys unwieldy. In this case, the best available instrument is ICVS, which employs a standard survey instrument with all respondents in each of the participating nations. Beyond the goals it shares with other victimization surveys, ICVS aims to (1) be sensitive to each nation's unique experience with crime while at the same time providing an appreciation for shared patterns of and problems with criminal behavior; (2) provide the administrators and policy-makers of participating countries with valuable information so they can make informed decisions; and (3) provide social scientists with an alternative source of crime data with which they can track trends and test theories of crime causation (Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate 1995).

The first ICVS was completed in 1989 and involved 17 nations, most of them developed (van Dijk, Mayhew, and Killias 1990). Subsequent surveys in 1992 and 1996 increased the number and type of nations included. In 1996, for example, several countries in transition and developing countries participated in the survey. In most developed nations, the samples are drawn from the whole country and computer-assisted telephone interviews are completed (Kangaspunta, Joutsen, and Ollus 1998). Results from these nations are weighted to make them as representative as possible. In developing countries and countries in transition, the samples are normally drawn from the largest (most often the capital) city, the households in the sample are chosen through random walk techniques, and interviews are conducted face to face. Finally, the sample size varies from country to country but with few exceptions, usually consists of at least 1,000 people. Exhibit 1 lists the countries that have participated at least once, the years they participated, the population from which the sample was drawn, and the sample size for each.

ICVS queries one respondent from each household in the sample about crimes affecting the household in general and about victimizations that he or she has personally experienced (see exhibit 2 for a list of the crimes about which each respondent is asked). The timeframe involves the 5 years leading up to the time of the interview; those respondents who report victimizations are asked to provide further details about the event. Demographic data are obtained from the respondents, and they are also asked a series of questions concerning their attitudes toward police and actions taken to protect against victimization.

Although ICVS provides a much-needed alternative to official data and is able to uncover important information about victims and criminal events that official crime data cannot, it still faces several challenges. First, as with any victimization survey, it is likely that issues such as respondent memory decay and telescoping will present difficulties (Block 1993; Lynch 1993; Skogan 1986), especially since the interviews are not bounded and respondents are asked to recall victimizations for a timeframe of 5 years. Respondents' willingness to reveal sexual victimizations is also likely to be a delicate issue (Skogan 1981), and this willingness is likely to vary across the sample of nations based on cultural norms. In fact, Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate (1995) revealed complications with validity in measuring these types of victimization with ICVS.

Sampling issues and interviewing techniques present concerns as well. First, ICVS covers a limited, although growing, number of nations. Second, Killias (1990) argued that sample sizes of at least 5,000 are needed in most European nations given the relatively low victimization rates in these countries. The ICVS sample sizes are only a fraction of this number (see exhibit 1). Third, in most developed countries, nationwide samples are drawn, whereas in developing

**Exhibit 1. Nations participating in the International Crime Victimization Surveys**

Nation	Years of participation	Survey type	Sample size
Albania	1996	City	1,200
Argentina	1992	City	1,000
Austria	1996	National	1,507
Belarus	1997	City	999
Belgium	1989, 1992	National	2,060; 1,485
Brazil	1992	City	1,000
Bulgaria	1997	City	1,076
Canada	1989, 1992, 1996	National	2,074; 2,152; 2,134
China	1992	City	2,000
Costa Rica	1992	City	983
Croatia	1997	City	994
Czech Republic	1992, 1996	National	1,262; 1,801
Egypt	1992	City	1,000
England and Wales	1989, 1992, 1996	National	2,006; 2,001; 2,171
Estonia	1992, 1995	National	1,000; 1,173
Finland	1989, 1992, 1996	National	1,025; 1,655; 3,830
France	1989, 1996	National	1,502; 1,003
Georgia	1992, 1996	City	1,395; 1,137
Germany (West)	1989	National	5,274
Hungary	1996	City	756
India	1992	City	1,000
Indonesia	1992	Several cities	4,550
Italy	1992	National	2,024
Kyrgyzstan	1996	City	1,750
Latvia	1996	City	1,411
Lithuania	1997	National	1,176
Macedonia	1996	City	700
Malta	1997	National	1,000
Netherlands	1989, 1992, 1996	National	2,000; 2,000; 2,008
New Guinea	1992	Three cities	1,583
Northern Ireland	1989, 1996	National	2,000; 1,042
Norway	1989	National	1,009
Philippines	1992	City	1,503
Poland	1992, 1996	National	2,033; 3,483
Romania	1996	City	1,091
Russia	1992, 1996	City	1,002; 1,018



## Exhibit 1 (continued)

Nation	Years of participation	Survey type	Sample size
Scotland	1989, 1996	National	2,007; 2,194
Slovakia	1992, 1997	National, city	508; 1,105
Slovenia	1992, 1997	City, national	1,000; 2,053
South Africa	1992	City	1,000
Spain	1989, 1993, 1994	National, city, city	2,041; 1,634; 1,505
Sweden	1992, 1996	National	1,707; 1,000
Switzerland	1989, 1996	National	1,000; 1,000
Tanzania	1992	City	1,004
Tunisia	1992	City	1,150
Uganda	1992	City	1,023
Ukraine	1997	City	1,000
United States	1989, 1992, 1996	National	1,996; 1,501; 1,003
Yugoslavia	1996	City	1,094

Source: Kangaspunta, Joutsen, and Ollus 1998, 194–195; Zvekic and Alvazzi del Frate 1995.

countries and countries in transition, samples are usually drawn only from one large city. Fourth, it is well known in survey research that nonrespondents usually vary from respondents in several important aspects, including levels of victimization (Block 1993). ICVS is likely to be especially prone to this problem because response rates vary from nation to nation. Finally, interviewing techniques vary across the sample of nations included. In developed nations, computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) strategies are employed. Not only has CATI been shown to reveal a greater number of victimizations than other techniques (de Leeuw and van der Zouwen 1988), but it is also unable to reach potential respondents who do not have telephones (and who are likely to differ in their levels of victimization from those who do have telephones). Even given these problems, however, ICVS provides an alternative to official crime data and should provide valuable insight into our understanding of crime and victimization across cultures. Several scholars (see Block 1993; Lynch 1993) agree that, if used wisely, ICVS is capable of supporting cross-national comparisons.

### Health data

Another source of limited victimization data is derived from health statistics. For instance, homicide is a popular topic among comparativists for several

## Exhibit 2. Household and personal victimization in ICVS

Household victimizations	Personal victimizations
Theft of cars	Robbery
Theft from cars	Theft of personal property
Vandalism to cars	Pickpocketing
Theft of mopeds/motorcycles	Noncontact personal thefts
Theft of bicycles	Sexual incidents
Burglary with entry	Sexual assaults
Attempted burglary	Offensive behavior
	Assaults and threats
	Assaults with force
	Assaults without force (threats)

Source: Kangaspunta, Joutsen, and Ollus 1998, 190.

reasons. First, the level and causes of lethal violence are salient issues for any nation. Second, many believe homicide rates to be representative of the level of criminal violence in general (Fox and Zawitz 1998). Third, measures of homicide are commonly accepted as the most valid of all crime indicators. Even so, measurement error in homicide counts from official criminal records varies extensively from country to country. One way researchers interested in homicide handle this issue is to use mortality data.

Vital statistics agencies in most countries employ International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes to record the cause of death on each death certificate. One of ICD's external causes of death is "homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons" (World Health Organization 1996), with subcategories that include the manner of victimization, such as strangulation, poisoning, or the use of firearms or cutting instruments. If researchers wish to find this information at subnational levels, they must gain access to public health agencies within specific countries. At the national level, however, these figures are collected regularly from each country by the World Health Organization (WHO) and are available in its *World Health Statistics Annual*, which currently contains data for more than 80 nations. As shown in exhibit 3, the difference between police and mortality data may be relatively small in some countries. In the United States, for example, Rokaw, Mercy, and Smith (1990) reveal that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports annually report about 9 percent fewer homicides than mortality data from the National Center for Health Statistics; in the 1994 data presented in exhibit 3, the difference is only 5 percent. In other countries, however, discrepancies between police and mortality data may

**Exhibit 3. Comparisons of selected nations' 1994 homicide counts from Interpol, the United Nations Crime Survey, and the World Health Organization**

Nation	Interpol	UNCS	WHO
Australia	NA	196	323
Austria	88	88	94
Azerbaijan	496	499	4,620
Bulgaria	499	492	428
Canada	596	596	498
Chile	1,545	626	410
Colombia	NA	27,079	27,620
England and Wales	729	726	373
Greece	133	133	119
Israel	114	140	119
Japan	711	695	789
Kazakhstan	NA	2,664	2,985
Lithuania	NA	465	497
Nicaragua	733	549	241
Northern Ireland	104	83	100
Republic of Korea	653	577	720
Romania	NA	776	1,008
Russian Federation	29,897	29,913	47,870
Singapore	50	50	43
United States	23,310	23,330	24,547

Note: NA means data are not available. Interpol data are defined as "voluntary homicides." UNCS data are defined as "total intentional recorded homicides." WHO data are defined as "homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other persons."

Sources: Interpol 1995; United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network 1999; World Health Organization 1995, 1996.

be quite large. For example, Pridemore (1999) showed that during the 1990s, official crime data reported by the Russian Federation's Ministry of the Interior have annually recorded only about two-thirds the number of homicides reported by the Ministry of Public Health.<sup>12</sup> In the 1994 data presented in exhibit 3, this amounts to an absolute difference between the two of nearly 18,000 deaths.

One benefit of mortality data is that they likely provide a more valid representation of the level of lethal violence within a nation because they reflect medical

decisions about cause of death rather than police practices. Another advantage is that the age group<sup>13</sup> and sex of the victims are provided. This allows the researcher to recognize unusually high or low rates of violent victimization among specific age and sex categories, for example, or to test elements of different theories of victimization.

These data, however, possess problems of their own. First, the level of medical expertise of those making the decision affects their ability to determine the exact cause of death, including homicide. This varies not only from country to country, but within nations as well. In the United States, for example, the coroner is a locally elected position in some jurisdictions; in these areas, the post is open to anyone who wishes to run for the office, regardless of medical training and experience (Baden 1998). As noted by Neapolitan (1997), a second problem is that developing nations, especially those in Africa and Asia, are underrepresented in WHO reports, making it difficult to include them in cross-national analyses.<sup>14</sup> Finally, although not dependent on the recording practices of the police, the collection of mortality data is an official process and the agencies gathering this information face not only their own unique difficulties but also pressures common to any bureaucratic organization. However, overall mortality data probably provide a better measure of lethal violence than police data for most purposes, and they are commonly used for cross-national research on violence.

### *Self-report data*

As shown in the previous section, victimization surveys present an alternative approach to measuring crime and provide the researcher with information that is not available from official data. However, these surveys are usually unable to capture much information about offenders, nor can they provide insight into victimless crimes. One remedy to these informational barriers is the self-report survey, which samples the population and asks respondents to provide information concerning their own offending behavior. Survey construction and testing, sampling, and interviewing are time- and cost-intensive procedures, however, and the self-report survey is a research methodology associated with individual studies rather than an instrument used to collect data on crime, delinquency, and offenders at the national level. This means that, although the self-report is a fairly common technique around the world (especially with juveniles), differences in samples and survey questions among different studies, as well as varying cultural definitions of crime and deviance from country to country, make it difficult to use the results gained from these surveys to make cross-national comparisons.

It was not until the late 1980s, in fact, that an attempt was made to construct a self-report survey that could be administered in several nations. The International Self-Report Delinquency (ISRD) study has now been through two sweeps, completing self-report surveys of juveniles in a limited number of nations<sup>15</sup> (Junger-Tas, Terlouw, and Klein 1994; Klein 1989). The sampling strategy differs from one country to the next, but a standard questionnaire, modeled on the National Youth Survey (Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton 1985), is employed. The survey obtains data about both the respondents—including sociodemographic attributes and information about family, school, and peers—and their delinquent acts, such as incidence and prevalence, contextual information about each event, and the reactions of others to the delinquent acts (Junger-Tas, Terlouw, and Klein 1994). Although a welcome addition and useful in several respects, the limited number of and similarity among the nations involved and the varying sample frames and response rates from one nation to the next make the ISRD study of limited value for sophisticated cross-national examinations of delinquent behavior. However, several nations, including a few Central and Eastern European countries in transition, have adopted the ISRD's survey instrument for their own use (Neapolitan 1997). Thus, self-report surveys at the cross-national level may eventually prove to be a valuable resource on offenders and patterns of delinquency.

## Explanatory data

There is no room here for a thorough evaluation of all the different types of explanatory data available to criminologists. There is, however, one pressing issue that must be addressed concerning these data. Perhaps *the* major detriment to the systematic gathering of knowledge about the etiology of crime across nations is the lack of careful operationalization of theoretical models and consistency in measurement models. It seems that, once criminologists have what we consider to be a valid indicator of crime, we collect any available data to employ as representations of our theoretical concepts. It is vital that all of the effort we have placed in being careful about our measurement of crime must also be directed toward the definition, operationalization, and measurement of our independent variables. This is especially the case at the cross-national level, where different national governmental and international data collection agencies are likely to calculate specific socioeconomic statistics (e.g., poverty level, unemployment, inequality) in different manners. This presents a serious threat to

*Perhaps the major detriment to the systematic gathering of knowledge about the etiology of crime across nations is the lack of careful operationalization of theoretical models and consistency in measurement models.*

our models and must be taken seriously. We must also strive to agree on the best measures of theoretical elements and use these measures in each study if possible.<sup>16</sup> If we do not, then we cannot truly compare the findings from each study nor treat them as replications of earlier work; this represents a major obstacle to a systematic understanding of crime causation across nations. Thus, stronger efforts must be made to match theoretical and measurement models when embarking on cross-national studies of crime causation.

The good news is that the accessibility, reliability, and validity of explanatory data at the cross-national level are increasing, with several sources available with which to cross-check the reliability of the information. This creates another risk, however, in that it is easy to become variable oriented in our study of crime instead of allowing theory to drive our research. Having introduced these caveats, the rest of this section briefly discusses several sources of cross-national explanatory data.

### ***Census Bureau***

The International Programs Center of the U.S. Census Bureau maintains an International Data Base (IDB) that contains useful information for criminologists on up to 227 countries throughout the world (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999). IDB is available online and is easy to access. Given the nature of the Census Bureau's mission, most of the data is demographic in nature, and the extent of the data varies for each nation, but it contains measures relevant to different theoretical approaches, especially social disorganization. Major categories of information available from IDB, together with specific variables that might be helpful in testing criminological theories or using as controls, are listed in exhibit 4.

As mentioned, this information is not only especially helpful as a source for demographic variables often used as controls, it also is helpful for possible measures of structure-level social disorganization. For example, information on migration might be used as an indicator of mobility at the national level. Percentage urban might be employed as a proxy for population density. Information on marital status and households—such as proportion of the population that is married, single, or separated or divorced, as well as single heads of households—are amenable to use as measures of family structure. Poverty rates, income measures, and employment data are available to represent the poverty element. Heterogeneity indicators are available in terms of ethnicity, religion, and language.

**Exhibit 4. Major categories and specific information relevant to criminological research provided by the U.S. Census Bureau’s International Data Base**

Data category	Information available
Population	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Total population</li> <li>2. Percentage urban</li> <li>3. Population by age, sex, and urban/rural residence</li> </ol>
Vital rates, infant mortality, and life tables	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Net migration rate</li> <li>2. Infant mortality rates by sex</li> <li>3. Life expectancies at birth by sex</li> </ol>
Migration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Estimated net number of migrants by sex, age, and urban/rural residence</li> <li>2. Migration rate by sex, age, and urban/rural residence</li> </ol>
Marital status	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Population by marital status, age, sex, and urban/rural residence</li> <li>2. Population that is single, married, and separated or divorced, in both absolute and percentage terms</li> </ol>
Ethnicity, religion, and language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Population by ethnic group and sex</li> <li>2. Population by religious group and sex</li> <li>3. Population by language and sex</li> </ol>
Literacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Population by literacy, age, sex, and urban/rural residence</li> <li>2. Female literate population in absolute and percentage terms</li> </ol>
Labor force, employment, and income	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economically active population by age, sex, and urban/rural residence</li> <li>2. Economically active population by industry and occupation</li> <li>3. Relative net income measures and poverty rates</li> </ol>
Households	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Heads of households by age, sex, and urban/rural residence</li> <li>2. Female heads of households; male heads of households</li> </ol>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999.

### ***The World Health Organization***

Health data (usually in the form of mortality statistics) can be important to criminologists as both dependent and independent variables. WHO's *World Health Statistics Annual* reports mortality data for more than 80 nations,<sup>17</sup> while its electronic "WHO Mortality Database" contains data only for those nations that WHO believes provide data of good quality (WHO 1999).<sup>18</sup> These mortality data are based on cause-of-death information provided by each nation's death registration system. Cause of death is reported for each deceased person on a death certificate, according to ICD specifications, and these data are collected and aggregated to the national level before being transferred to WHO. Of most import to criminologists are homicides, infant mortality, life expectancy, and alcohol use.

First, as discussed earlier, homicide counts based on victimization data from mortality statistics are thought to be a better measure of homicidal (though not necessarily criminal) violence in a nation than police data. These data can also be disaggregated by sex and age categories, which is helpful for testing certain theories of violence.<sup>19</sup> Second, both infant mortality rates and life expectancy are considered by some to be indicators of modernization, so those interested in this approach may wish to use one or both of these in their measurement model. Third, the sociological, public health, and epidemiological literatures have found a strong and consistent correlation between measures of health (e.g., levels of infant mortality) and poverty. This has led some researchers to use this indicator as a proxy for poverty. Finally, though rarely used in criminology research, the public health and epidemiological literature often employ the rate of deaths due to cirrhosis of the liver as a measure of alcohol consumption. (These data are available from WHO.) Given the role played by alcohol in violence (both socially and psychologically and in both offenders and victims), it seems that this is a theoretically important concept and that future empirical work should at least employ this measure as a control in causal models, if not explore the relationship directly.

### ***The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund***

Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide economic data that may be useful to criminologists employing several different theoretical perspectives. First, the World Bank has an extended list of indicators of economic structure (World Bank 1999) that are available in either its *World Development Indicators* or at its Web site. Researchers interested in the modernization/development thesis may wish to consult the World Bank's measure of long-term structural change, which contains indicators of several relevant concepts, including agricultural output, economic growth and structure,



government finance, labor force and employment, money and prices, and urbanization. Other indicators of development are to be found with energy production and use, GNP per capita, and the distribution of the labor force by occupation or economic activity. Overall quality of life plays a role in several theoretical approaches, and the World Bank employs indicators in several areas to measure it, including education, energy, health, life expectancy, and mortality.

Dependency theorists might find useful theoretical elements in the World Bank's measures of aid dependency, growth consumption, investment, structure of consumption, integration with the global economy, and the "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative." The World Bank also provides data that could be helpful to those researching gender issues. The structure of the labor force and gender and education measures can be helpful when considering routine activities theories and theories based on the status of women within societies. Data on economic distress can be found in World Bank measures such as the distribution of both income and consumption, unemployment, the magnitude and depth of poverty, and purchasing power parity. Finally, basic demographic information is also provided in the form of population parameters, population dynamics, the absolute size of the urban population, and the percentage of the population living in all urban areas and in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million people.

IMF has recently taken steps to make access to its data more manageable. Their Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board has a Web site that contains economic and financial data reported to IMF from 47 countries. It is important to note that (1) data are not posted unless they subscribe to the Special Data Dissemination Standards set by IMF, and (2) statistical methodology must be documented and sources of reliability cross-checks must be identified (IMF 1999). Although much of these data are of limited use in criminological research, there are a total of 17 data categories that cover 4 sectors of the economy: the real, fiscal, financial, and external sectors. Exhibit 5 includes a list of information available from IMF that could be relevant for criminologists.

Some of these data might be helpful to criminologists, especially to those interested in world system/dependency theory, which is an approach that to this point has been difficult to test empirically. For example, the import and export of goods and services, as well as information on interest payments as a proportion of all expenditures and as the component of debt owed to foreign creditors, might provide dependency theorists with measures of capital penetration into a nation and its placement in the world economic hierarchy relative to other nations. Unfortunately, data are not available for several nations that are probably of most interest to world system theorists. However, data are available from countries in North, South, and Central America; Western, Central, and Eastern Europe; and Asia.

### Exhibit 5. Economic data useful to criminologists available from the International Monetary Fund

Real sector	Fiscal sector	Financial sector	External sector
1. GDP in terms of major expenditure categories and productive sectors	1. Domestic and foreign financing	1. Monetary and credit conditions of the banking sector and central bank (including domestic credit broken down by general public and private categories)	1. Imports and exports of goods and services (according to IMF's <i>Balance of Payments</i> manual)
2. Employment, unemployment, and earnings	2. Interest payments as a proportion of expenditures		
3. Consumer price indexes	3. Debt by foreign and domestic components		

Source: International Monetary Fund 1999.

## Conclusion

The goal of this chapter has been to survey the field of comparative criminology to highlight the issues of theory, method, and data that characterize this type of study. We began with a consideration of basic philosophical and definitional issues as we sought to specify the boundaries of the comparative perspective as well as its main concerns. Because firm theory is essential to quality investigations, we next turned our attention to the theoretical explanations for crime that underscore comparative work, offering suggestions for improvement and elaboration along the way. To further scientific studies of crime, researchers must be prepared to translate theoretical concepts into propositions that can be tested against actual observations. This movement from theory to observation requires the criminologist to attend to issues of method and data collection. Accordingly, we considered a variety of methodological approaches to comparative studies and explored the range of dependent variables brought under scrutiny. As we have discussed, there are many available sources of data with which theoretical propositions can be assessed. Still, some theoretical constructs will not find useful indicators in available databases; this means that scholars will have to develop their own data-gathering projects or find a way to make existing data

sources more responsive to theoretical needs. We now end our review of comparative criminology with a few observations that we hope might further the pursuit of comparative work.

## **Theoretical development and testing**

The challenge for comparative criminologists is to develop theories with increased specificity while managing to construct them in such a way that they can be applied across more than one culture or nation-state. This eventually must demand that theories be developed to conceptualize societies as totalities (rather like the work only briefly begun by Parsons 1977) and that theories that manage to provide a world context in which total societies behave be further constructed. The only theory reviewed in this chapter that adopts this approach is world system theory. This theory is not well formulated to explain crime either within or across societies, largely because it was constructed by political scientists who had other interests in mind. As noted earlier, however, there is much in the research and theory of other social science disciplines that could be imported profitably into cross-national research on crime and criminal justice. We believe that theory must be taken more seriously in the context of comparative criminology. With sound theory, the construction of measurement models and the data-gathering process can be carried out in a more valid manner. While expanded and more systematic data-gathering strategies tell us how to collect observations about the world properly, these strategies tell us nothing about what to observe. We need good theory for this.

The testing of theories also depends essentially on the ability of the researcher to specify theoretical concepts and translate them into variables that can be measured. Doing this in the cross-national setting is indeed a challenge. We have noted how difficult it is to construct definitions of crime that can be applied across nations. But recent developments in cross-national data collection have helped to stem these difficulties and provide new opportunities for assessing the reliability and validity of crime data. Turning to the data solutions that have emerged in mainstream criminology in recent decades, comparative criminologists have fielded victimization surveys and self-report surveys to good effect. These approaches have allowed for the construction of behavioral definitions that bypass the legal definitions of each country. This solution must be seen as partial, however, because it does little to remedy shortcomings in the dissemination of official crime data. Improvements on this front might follow if the United Nations strengthened its diplomatic role of coordinating the collection of crime and justice information from nations. (Perhaps other international bodies could adopt the dissemination of crime data as one of their missions.)

But comparative scholars need not rely exclusively on international organizations for information of value to their investigations. We could use more primary observations by students of crime and criminal justice and more efforts to arrange secondary observations into utilitarian forms. Transparency and the World Wide Web permit construction of official databases directly by the researcher. Indeed, entire projects of official data collection could be conceived, then supported by enlightened funding agencies. Certainly, the field could stand an expansion of victimization studies and self-report studies at the international level. Besides making more systematic observations of crime and increasing the variety of crime data, we need to expand the methods of recording and representing this information. The study of criminology would benefit if observations were represented not only as numbers but also as images, sounds, and words (both printed and spoken). This would permit room for filmmaking, videography, oral history, and storytelling in the study of crime. And, with the World Wide Web and its potential to organize the dissemination of information, we have a medium that can traffic in all of these methods of representation at once.

## Advancing comparative analysis

An important advance made in recent years in comparative criminology has been a growing sensitivity to the intricate details of the workings of the criminal justice systems in every country. Maybe this seems obvious, but comparative analysis was conducted mainly from a legal perspective for most of this century, preoccupied with particular nuances in legal definitions and procedures. The significance of this change in focus is considerable. The reason is that we now know that it is possible to identify the specific procedures that police and bureaucrats follow that will finally produce crime and justice statistics. The work of Langan and Farrington (1998) has demonstrated that sense can be made of official crime statistics of nations and meaningful comparisons made. This work confined itself to the comparison of two countries, but there is no substantive reason why this methodology could not be extended. The possibility for this research, however, depended on the existence of social scientists who were highly trained in social science methodology and had an intimate knowledge of their respective criminal justice systems. We should expect that there will be more and more researchers, from a wider variety of countries, who are so trained. The increased globalization we have noted in several places in this chapter will surely increase the possibility of more capable scholars coming together. Again, we suggest that an existing international body could advance the study of comparative criminology by ensuring regular meetings of scholars and researchers interested in the subject.

If asked how schools of criminology and criminal justice could advance the practice of comparative work, we offer the most obvious answer: Expand curricular offerings to support such comparative practices. But such offerings must extend beyond survey courses or a smattering of specialty seminars. Those activities will surely help the current state of affairs, but for comparative criminology to truly bear fruit and achieve its potential, we must deepen the repertoire of skills, talent, and knowledge that its practitioners command. To expand students' repertoire, schools could stress the acquisition of foreign language skills and encourage work that employs such skills. Some schools permit students to count language fluency toward methods requirements; this course of study ought to be encouraged for those with comparative interests. Multilingualism permits the comparative student to study crime and criminal justice more richly (see Moore and Fields 1996). A full palette of research methods should certainly be taught, but this course of study must be carefully balanced with a complement of theory-related classes. As a field of study, comparative criminology will be well served if its students are discouraged from grand theory and methodological inhibition and rather pointed in the direction of Mills' (1959) promise of the sociological imagination. Finally, more programs of international exchange between universities should be developed; perhaps the international divisions of the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences could facilitate the creation of such programs.

## **Data explosion**

Another significant development in the field of comparative criminology is the incredible explosion of crime and criminal justice information in the international arena. In the space of just 5 years, an enormous amount of information concerning the crime and justice situations in many countries has become readily available. Most major countries of the world now host Web sites that provide a range of statistics and criminal justice information. There are also many international bodies that provide crime and justice statistics on the Internet. Many sites also make available lists of new publications concerning crime and justice in their respective countries. Thus, it is possible not only to obtain more information than ever before, but also to obtain it more quickly, often without regard to crossing national borders.

The ready availability of data will do much to spawn new research. The United Nations database, for example, now contains more than 20 years of crime statistics, which invites researchers to undertake meta-analytical studies. However, with abundance also comes risk, and one primary risk is that these data may be used without regard to their well-known shortcomings (see Newman and

Howard 1999). It is essential that comparative studies are theoretically driven, that theoretical elements are rigorously operationalized, and that the researcher has a thorough understanding of the limitations of the specific data with which he or she is working. Just as important, it will be necessary that such studies be informed, as far as possible, by the various contexts from which these data have been extracted: by the countries and criminal justice systems that have produced them. The work of HEUNI (European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations) (Kangaspunta, Joutsen, and Ollus 1998), in which empirical work is backed up by case studies of those countries included in the analysis, appears to be one valuable solution to this perennial methodological problem.

## **Policy development**

In the modern nation-state, policies concerning crime and justice emerge after a highly complex—often adversarial—process of political exchange and bureaucratic procedure. Most such policies originate from issues or social problems that occur within nations; exceptions may be drug trafficking and other kinds of transnational crime. We are inclined to think that there is one more factor that may push or, more accurately, condition policy development: the enormous and rapidly growing availability of criminal justice information. Globalization will make it increasingly difficult for nation-states to ignore the criminal justice information of other countries. Politicians and influential bureaucrats increasingly will be forced to answer as to why their country displays crime rates, prosecution rates, incarceration rates, or rates of violence or gun ownership that are strikingly different from similar countries. Criminologists no doubt will have the opportunity to contribute to policy debates and implementation, provided their work demonstrates relevance and scientific merit.

## **Globalization and comparative studies of crime and criminal justice**

As we enter the 21st century, the field of comparative criminology is in a position to expand and become more rigorous and relevant. Globalization, which has shrunk the world and made social interdependence all the more obvious, will continue to influence the ways in which we lead and understand our lives. Moreover, the increasing mobility of the world's citizens will contribute to a greater desire on the part of these individuals to come to terms with crime and responses aimed at containing it around the globe. Building on established bodies of theory, methodologies, and data such as those described in this chapter, comparative work in crime and justice offers significant promise for the future. Armed with more refined and sophisticated theory that will be capable of

informing better data collection efforts, comparative scholars will place themselves in a position to offer meaningful critiques of international criminal justice policy. While advances in comparative criminological theory and method will not come easily or cheaply, the promise of the endeavor justifies our efforts.

## Notes

1. To conserve space, the theoretical discussion is highly abridged. We strongly suggest that readers refer to the original sources for a thorough description of each theory.
2. We employ the categorical designations grand theories and “structural theories” as generic terms used to describe the subtypes of theories discussed here.
3. It should be noted that Shelley (1981), while retaining the notion that social and economic change have a definite impact on crime, later recanted her earlier contention that all nations experience the same phases of development in the same order and at the same pace. Further, she stated that industrialization and urbanization are not always and necessarily accompanied by political and social modernization.
4. An alternative theoretical explanation is Rushton’s (1990, 1995) biological image of crime causation. He contends that constitutional differences between races explain the variation in levels of violence among nations. That is, Rushton argues that variations in genetic predisposition toward violent behavior account for presumably higher rates of violence in African countries, relatively intermediate rates in Caucasian nations, and low rates in Asian countries.
5. Studies that attempt either to include cultural measures or explain empirical differences via cultural variation include Parker’s (1998) examination of how cultural drinking patterns may affect homicide rates and Neapolitan’s (1994) work, which suggests a cultural explanation—due to its colonial past—for the high homicide rates in Latin America. However, the former uses only per capita alcohol consumption, and the latter regional location, as measures of shared culture.
6. This is especially the case because people of different cultures seem to have similar basic definitions of behaviors that are commonly accepted as criminal (Kick and LaFree 1985; Newman 1976) and because research has shown general agreement on the perceived seriousness of harmful behavior across cultures (Evans and Scott 1984; Scott and Al-Thokeb 1977).
7. Another measure of inequality is the Robin Hood index (also referred to as the Pietra ratio). This index is defined as that part of the overall income that would need to be transferred from those with above-average incomes to those with below-average incomes to achieve an equal distribution. Although found in the economic (see Atkinson and Micklewright 1992) and epidemiological literature (see Kennedy, Kawachi, and Prothrow-Stith 1996; Walberg et al. 1998), criminologists have yet to employ this measure of inequality in their research on cross-national crime.

8. Race/ethnic status is also a widely accepted correlate. In cross-national work, however, it is commonly used as a measure of heterogeneity—thus representing a hypothesized causal relationship, not simply an atheoretical correlate—and thus is not discussed in this section.
9. See Gelles (1987) and Korbin (1987) for a discussion of the methodological impediments encountered in cross-national and cross-cultural research on family violence.
10. For groundbreaking work in this area, see Johnson's (1999) survey of domestic violence around the world.
11. Each nation is also asked to provide the age range of its definition of juveniles. Because these definitions differ from country to country, and because each uses its own definition of juvenile when responding to the Interpol questionnaire, this category is not directly comparable across countries.
12. It should also be noted here that Russia, along with several other countries, includes attempts in the homicide category of official crime data.
13. These age groups are: 0, 1–4, 5–14, 15–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 65–74, and 75 and older.
14. This is not solely the fault of WHO, but also of those nations that fail to respond to the questionnaire or reliably collect this information. Even where data for these nations are available, their inclusion presents problems for cross-national comparisons. For example, variation in the level and availability of emergency medical services among nations might mean the difference between a homicide and an assault. Thus, the same violent event can easily produce two entirely divergent outcomes depending on where it occurs, meaning that the number of homicides in part may be the result not simply of the level of potentially lethal violence but of the level and availability of emergency medical services as well.
15. Countries participating in the first round of surveys included Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom (including England, Wales, and Northern Ireland), and the United States (Junger-Tas, Terlouw, and Klein 1994).
16. To highlight only one example, the Gini coefficient employed more often than any other measure of inequality, although justification is rarely supplied for its use over a number of other possible indicators. Also, several of the studies published in the 1970s and 1980s relied on inequality data that were 10 to 20 years old. Further, the theoretical concept of inequality is based on the assumption that an unequal distribution of resources not only is perceived by individuals, but they also feel it to be an injustice and are angered enough by these inequities to resort to crime as an expression of their frustration. This social-psychological process in no way is captured by a measure of the distribution of income. Finally, because income inequality and poverty (or average income) are in actuality two functions of the same distribution, they are usually highly correlated.



If both measures are included in multivariate analysis, the resulting multicollinearity is likely to produce an unstable model, which can bias the coefficients as well as make it virtually impossible to separate the effects of inequality from those of poverty.

17. Much of these data are also available from the United States' National Center for Health Statistics (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1999).

18. According to WHO, "Good quality information requires that death registration be near universal, that the cause of death be reported routinely on the death record, and that it be determined by a qualified observer according to the *International Classification of Diseases*" (1999, 1).

19. Although not provided by WHO, if researchers approach agencies within specific nations, they may be able to disaggregate even further on the basis of area, ethnicity, and type of victimization (e.g., gunshot, stabbing, strangulation, poisoning).

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