Competing Perspectives on Cross-National Crime: An Evaluation of Theory and Evidence
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COMPETING PERSPECTIVES ON CROSS-NATIONAL CRIME: AN EVALUATION OF THEORY AND EVIDENCE

W. Lawrence Neuman*
Ronald J. Berger
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Cross-national studies of crime are dominated by a Durkheimian-Modernization theoretical perspective. We evaluate this perspective and present two alternatives, the Marxian-World System and Ecological-Opportunity perspectives. Each is for its theory of social change, causal explanation of criminal behavior, conceptualization of law and crime rates, and view of the relation between collective political behavior and crime. The empirical evidence is assessed and weak support is found for the dominant perspective. The article concludes by reconsidering the concepts of economic development and crime rates.

Criminologists fostered an ethnocentric bias by studying crime almost exclusively within the United States until the 1970s (see Clinard and Abbott 1973, p. 3; Shelly 1985). Consequently, current comparative crime theories are "immature" and the field is full of "ambiguity, confusion and misuse of the term 'comparative'" (Blazicek and Janeksela 1978, p. 34; see also Beirne 1983; Birkbeck 1985; Newman 1976; Szabo 1975). Most cross-national crime studies rely on a "Durkheimian-Modernization" theoretical perspective (Huggins 1985), although the perspective's hypotheses and predictions receive limited empirical support.

This article reviews the Durkheimian-Modernization perspective and considers two alternatives, the Marxian-World System and Ecological-Opportunity perspectives. The three perspectives specify different assumptions, concepts, and relationships to explain cross-national variations in crime, although each refers to similar processes of social change and causes of crime. Each perspective's logic is clarified by noting the distinctions among them, areas where competing hypotheses can be tested, and related research that should be incorporated. We examine each perspective in four areas: its theory of social change, its causal explanation of

*Direct all correspondence to: W. Lawrence Neuman, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, WI 53190

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criminal behavior, its conceptualization of law and crime rates, and its view of the relation between collective political behavior and crime. We also assess the empirical evidence, and conclude by reconsidering the concepts of economic development and crime rates.

**THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CRIME**

**Durkheimian-Modernization Perspective**

Most cross-national studies of crime rely on a Durkheimian or modernization theory of social change (see Durkheim 1933, 1950; Hinkle 1976) to explain cross-national variation in homicide or property crime rates (Cohen 1982; Clinard and Abbott 1973; Huggins 1985; Jones 1985; Shelley 1981; Vold and Bernard 1986, pp. 143–56). Despite differences in emphasis, both Durkheimian and modernization theory (DM) explain cross-national crime rates in terms of industrialization, urbanization, the division of labor, social disorganization, anomie, modern values, and cultural heterogeneity.

1. The Theory of Social Change. In modernization theory the nation state or society is the unit of analysis and all nations evolve through similar developmental stages. Third world nations acquire the characteristics of advanced industrial nations through an evolutionary process and can be ranked cross-sectionally on a traditional-modern continuum (Chirot and Hall 1982; Etzioni-Halevy 1981, pp. 33–57; Preston 1982; Roxborough 1979; Strasser and Randall 1981; Taylor 1979; Wallerstein 1979a).

   Modernization theorists stress normative patterns, belief systems, and modern values (e.g., individualism, universalism, achievement orientation) in the evolutionary change process. Changes in individual motivation and personality facilitate the entrepreneurial activity necessary for industrialization (Hagen 1962; Inkeles 1983; Inkeles and Smith 1974; Lerner 1958, 1968; Levy 1966; McClelland 1961; Parsons 1966, 1977). The diffusion of modern norms and values disrupts the equilibrium of traditional societies and breaks down the extended family, local community ties, sacred-religious institutions, traditional beliefs, and ascribed status relations. A complex division of labor weakens the collective consciousness (Liska 1981, p. 29), creates “a growing differentiation among people” (Clinard and Abbott 1973, p. 8), and enables individuals to “challenge cultural values and social rules” (Toby 1979, p. 388).

2. Key Causal Concepts: Normative Breakdown and Anomie. In the DM perspective crime is caused by a disruption or breakdown of a prior, stable normative order. The transition from traditional to modern society creates a temporary disequilibrium when modern values and norms come into contact with and disrupt older cultural patterns, weakening informal social controls and traditional normative restraints on criminal impulses. Unless new social controls and norms develop, modern individualism and the social conflict associated with growing cultural heterogeneity increase crime.

   Urbanization and rural-urban migration have a significant impact on normative patterns and criminal behavior. In urban areas, modern values are strongest and traditional norms, socializing agents, and social control mechanisms are less effec-
tive. Consequently, anomie, social disorganization, cultural heterogeneity, criminal subcultures, and juvenile delinquency are more likely to develop (Archer and Gartner 1984).

Several studies have formulated and tested specific DM hypotheses about cross-national crime rates. For example, Krohn (1978) cites Durkheim to argue that population growth increases moral density or urbanism, and consequently the division of labor and industrialism, the prime forces which weaken traditional normative restraints and cause anomie and social disorganization (i.e. crime). While Durkheim (1933) initially viewed anomie in terms of normlessness, he later extended the concept to refer to a normative system that “no longer controls people’s desire for material goods” and the ”systematic frustration” that is generated by “material desires being in excess of the ability of the system to provide those goods” (Krohn 1978, pp. 659–660; see Durkheim 1950; Etzioni-Halevy 1981, pp. 34–36; Marks 1974).


3. Law, Crime Rates and Criminal Behavior. Durkheim defines crime as an act which “...offends strong and defined states of the collective conscience...” and is universally disapproved by members of each society” (1933, pp. 73, 80). While restitutive law (civil and administrative codes) arises out of the increasingly complex division of labor, repressive law (criminal) reflects the societal consensus and defines the moral boundaries of deviant behavior (Chambliss 1976a; Hunt 1978; Lukes and Scull 1983). The DM perspective conceptualizes crime as acts subject to “repressive” sanctions, and neglects acts regulated by “restitutive” sanctions. Criminal law embodies societal consensus and “crime” is equated with official crime rates (but see Erikson 1966). The approach does not examine how political processes affect crime rates, and it adopts a pluralist theory of the state (see Alford and Friedland 1985).

4. Collective Political Behavior and Crime. In the DM perspective common crimes and collective behaviors (e.g., riots, strikes, rebellions) have similar causes (Eisenstadt 1966; Smelser 1959). Collective political behavior, like crime, results when modernization creates a disequilibrium between the societal consensus and the rate of social differentiation (Tilly 1978, pp. 16–24). Collective political behavior occurs when institutions, especially the state, fail to keep pace with modernization, or when relative deprivation is experienced by people who “sense a large gap between what they get and what they observe” (Tilly 1978, p. 22). Such behavior can be reduced if legitimate political activities increase organic solidarity (see Messner 1982).
A basis for an alternative to the DM perspective exists in a synthesis of Marxian criminology and world system theory. Marxian or “radical” criminology (Bernard 1981; Bohm 1982; Friedrichs 1980; Greenberg 1981; Lynch and Groves 1986) and world system theory (Chirot 1977; Chirot and Hall 1982; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1981; Wallerstein 1979b; see Frank 1969; O’Brien 1975; Taylor 1979; Valenzeula and Valenzeula 1978 on dependency theory) expanded during the 1970s as alternatives within criminology and the study of societal development respectively. Marxian criminology and world system theory developed independently and have yet to be synthesized, but they share fundamental assumptions and concepts. The main causal variables in the Marxian-World System (MWS) perspective are the global economy and uneven expansion of the capitalist mode of production, the international system of states, class structure and conflict, economic inequality, the class nature of the state, and the spread of new ideologies.

1. The World System Theory of Change. The MWS perspective explains the past three centuries of socio-economic change in terms of historical events that spread the capitalist mode of production and social relations unevenly across the globe (Amin 1974; Smith 1984; Timberlake 1985; Wallerstein 1974, 1980). The world system is the unit of analysis, and the interrelations or inequalities among social formations are used to analyze structures and processes within and between nations (Bergesen 1980). In addition, social change is shaped by a semi-autonomous international system of states and internal political factors (Crane 1982; Evans et al. 1985; Thompson 1983).

The uneven advance of the global capitalist economy produces a world system that consists of a “core,” “periphery,” and “semi-periphery” (Wallerstein 1974). The core contains highly industrialized and prosperous social formations where capitalist relations are most advanced. The periphery contains economically dependent Third World social formations that were recently under colonial domination by core states and are now generally dominated by a “triple alliance” of national bourgeoisie, state elites, and comprador classes (Evans 1979; Walton 1982). They are less industrialized, have lower standards of living, and are the sites of recent wars and rebellions. The semi-periphery contains partially industrialized social formations that serve as an investment outlet for the core and as an economic and political “buffer” between the core and periphery.

An unequal exchange relationship has arisen between core and periphery nations. Core nations receive high profits by extracting raw materials and exploiting low cost labor from the periphery. The periphery becomes dependent on the core for manufactured goods and cultural products, and its economy is unbalanced and national resources underdeveloped. Interdependence and inequality between the core and periphery increase over time. The core needs the raw materials and high profits to maintain living standards and reproduce social relations. The periphery cannot break ties with the core because of its debt obligations and need for assistance with short-term social and economic problems (Frank 1969; Sumner 1982).

The capitalist mode of production and social relations disrupt and transform precapitalist systems of subsistence agriculture and petty commodity production as
they penetrate into peripheral areas. The opening of export markets for raw materials and agricultural products, the infusion of foreign capital and technical innovations, and the flood of low cost manufactured goods that compete with local handicrafts, combine to create a new type of economy. However, capitalist relations penetrate unevenly within societies that have different cultural and social conditions (Walton 1982, pp. 127–130), creating a social formation with enclaves of different modes of production. The specific character of a social formation depends on how the different modes of production are articulated with one another (Taylor 1979; Wolpe 1980).

2. Key Causal Concepts: Inequality and Social Class. Economic inequality and social classes are key elements in the MWS explanation of crime. The location of a social formation in the world system shapes class structure, economic conditions, political institutions, and social relations which affect crime. Local conditions and characteristics (e.g., natural resource supplies, ethnic diversity, cultural traditions) are secondary factors that influence the structure of class relations and political-legal institutions (Walton 1982).

The expansion of the capitalist mode of production creates new inequalities and gives rise to new social classes. Capitalist social relations replace precapitalist patterns of economic self-sufficiency and communal methods of dispute resolution found in rural areas. Legal mechanisms redefine property rights to facilitate capitalist expansion and help create, maintain, and control a new rural and urban proletariat (Chambliss 1976b; Dodd 1979; Shivji 1982; Sumner 1982; Van Oselen 1976). The populace’s customary use-rights to sources of economic livelihood and common land (e.g., hunting and grazing land, shipwreck salvaging) are lost, and behaviors that were legitimate are criminalized (Hahn 1982; Hay et al 1975; Linebaugh 1976; Thompson 1975). Subsistence agriculture is disrupted, and displaced rural populations are forced to migrate to the expanding cities in search of employment as wage laborers (Castells 1977; London 1987; Marx 1967 [1867]; Sumner 1982; Walton 1982). New forms of rural crime (e.g., highway robbery, social banditry) emerge in the process (Chambliss 1976b; Hobsbawm 1959, 1969; O’Malley 1980).

Urban crime is generated by the uneven expansion and contraction of the capitalist production process within and between nations (Humphries and Wallace 1980), not by anomie and social disorganization or by urbanism per se. Urban areas are places where economic marginalization and inter-class and intra-class conflict intensify (see Castells 1977; Gilbert and Gugler 1982; Hill 1977; Smith 1984). Urban social relations are characterized by new cultural beliefs and ideologies fostered by the new class system. As labor power is transformed into value through private exchange relations in commodity markets, moral obligations and concern with others’ welfare (altruism) are subordinated to individual self-interest (egoism) (Bonger 1916). Property acquisition goals predominate, and market relations define people as objects to be exploited for private gain (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1985, pp. 120-121).

The MWS perspective views inequality, poverty, and slums as inherent in the contradictions of capitalism. Patterns of uneven economic activity and employment explain variation in crime rates within the core and between the core and periphery.
(Humphries and Wallace 1980). Market relations create a surplus population of unemployed and underemployed workers which fluctuates in size according to investment patterns and the business cycle (Applebaum 1978; Marx 1967 [1867]; Spitzer 1975). Capitalists create new inequalities by withdrawing capital from some regions and investing in others as they seek greater profits by exploiting new markets.

The core-periphery relation constrains urban development in peripheral countries, and urbanism takes the form of shanty towns characterized by a shortage of housing, an absence of social services, an informal economy (e.g., street vending, petty and personal services, household production), and illegal economic activities (Birkbeck 1982; Bujra 1982; Portes and Walton 1981). The shanty town conditions are the material and cultural adaptation of the working class to its exploitation (Gilbert and Gulug 1982; Roxborough 1979, pp. 83–88).

The DM perspective predicts an homogenization of international crime rates for nations at similar levels of development, and explains anomalies (e.g. Japan, Switzerland) post hoc in cultural, historical, and geographic terms (Shelley 1981, pp. 50–52, 73–79). The MWS perspective argues that the effect of industrialization on crime depends on how modes of production articulate with one another (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1985). The capitalist mode of production can co-exist with older modes and preserve pre-existing cultural patterns that offset the negative impact of capitalist development. For example, practices of economic self-sufficiency and ideologies of community and kin associated with an earlier mode of production help absorb the surplus population and minimize the growth of predatory behavior (see Hartjen 1982). Patterns of crime like juvenile delinquency are also related to the way social institutions (e.g., family, school) articulate with economic relations.6

3. Law, Crime Rates and Criminal Behavior. The MWS perspective uses a “class perspective” on the modern state (Alford and Friedland 1985; Beirne and Quinney 1982). It defines “crime” as a socio-political concept that reflects production and power relations (Chambliss 1976b; Humphries and Greenberg 1981; Lopez-Rey 1970; Sumner 1982). The state and law are analyzed in terms of class struggle and the recomposition of classes associated with the capitalist mode of production (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1985, pp. 27–29). Western criminal law replaces precapitalist methods of dispute resolution and “self-help” criminal justice (Black 1983; Little and Sheffield 1983). Criminal behavior is reified and becomes “juridically constituted as a distinct category of reality” independent of class interests (Sumner 1982, p. 10; see Greenberg 1980; Snyder 1980).

In the MWS approach class relations condition officially recorded crime rates. Official statistics cannot be accepted as unbiased indicators of the level of criminal behavior or its distribution across classes. The MWS conception of crime includes human rights violations and social injuries which may not be regulated by the state or criminal law (Bohm 1982; Reiman 1984; Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1970). It sees corporate and government crime as producing harms greater than traditional crime and as a necessary part of comparative crime studies (see Braithwaite 1979a, 1984; Clinard 1978; Michalowski and Kramer 1987; Goff and Reasons 1978).

the subordinate classes is viewed as a part of the "complex and often contradictory strategies which class members adopt as personal and collective solutions to lived experiences" (O'Malley 1980, p. 182). Criminal behavior is assessed for its contribution to the development of class consciousness and political mobilization among subordinate classes (Currie 1974; Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1977).

There are three forms of subordinate class crime: accommodation or adaptation, interpersonal violence, and resistance or rebellion (see Gurr et al 1977; Michalowski 1985; Quinney 1977). Crimes of accommodation or adaptation enable individuals to materially survive on a daily basis or, in successful cases, to accumulate commodities. They include property crimes and illegal entrepreneurial activities (e.g., drug sales, gambling, prostitution). Property crimes are individualistic attempts at redistribution by the propertyless (Gilbert and Gugler 1982, p. 69), and illegal entrepreneurial activities are attempts to capitalize on markets that the state defines as illegitimate. Both are apolitical strategies that result in more intra-class than inter-class victimization (Balkan et al. 1980, pp. 73–78; Friedrichs 1983).

Crimes of interpersonal violence include murder, assault and rape, as well as intra-familial violence (see Hanmer and Stanko 1985). These behaviors are influenced by cultural traditions and ideologies (e.g., patriarchy, racism) which facilitate violent responses and identify targets for frustration (Messerschmidt 1986; Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1983). They are misdirected anger or "diffused aggression" (Blau and Blau 1982, p. 119) generated by demoralizing and alienating living conditions. Like crimes of accommodation, interpersonal violence is apolitical and results in more intra-class than inter-class victimization (Balkan et al. 1980; Quinney 1977, pp. 54–58).

Crimes of rebellion or resistance are political actions (e.g., political organizing, protests, riots, strikes) which the state defines as illegal. They represent embryonic attempts to advance subordinate class interests by increasing class consciousness or political mobilization and by bringing underlying class conflicts to the surface (see Alford and Friedland 1985, p. 23; O'Malley 1980, p. 182). The degree of class consciousness or political mobilization is hypothesized as inversely related to interpersonal violence (Mankoff 1976, p. 192) because the former are political, collective, and activist alternatives to individualistic, apolitical frustration (Balkan et al. 1980; Colvin and Pauly 1983, p. 545; Spitzer 1975). However, the conditions that foster misdirected interpersonal violence often deprive subordinate classes of the solidarity and organizational resources needed for collective political action (Blau and Blau 1982, p. 119; Iadicola 1983).

Ecological-Opportunity Perspective

A third perspective on cross-national crime synthesizes an ecological approach to social change and an opportunity theory of criminal behavior. The Ecological-Opportunity (EO) synthesis has not yet been fully elaborated (see Kick and LaFree 1985). The ecological approach originated with the early Park-Burgess Chicago school's emphasis on the interrelations between environmental conditions and population units. It is a more sophisticated and macro-version of early neighborhood or slum ecological theories (see Heitgerd and Bursik 1987; Vold and Bernard 1986, pp. 161–84). Opportunity theory argues that crime occurs in spatially and tem-
porally organized social contexts that provide "favorable" environmental conditions for the execution of criminal acts (Cantor and Land 1985; Cohen et al. 1981; Gurr et al. 1977). The EO perspective explains cross-national variation in crime by identifying societies where there is a mix of growing material resources and environments which provide increased opportunities for unsanctioned criminal behavior.

1. The Ecological Theory of Social Change. Societal evolution in the EO perspective involves the adaptation of human populations to environmental conditions, with a trend toward larger, more complex, interdependent, and technologically sophisticated social systems (Boli-Bennett 1980; Hawley 1950, 1984; Lenski and Lenski 1982; Matras 1979; Meyer 1980; Meyer and Hannan 1979). Human societies compete for material resources and are classified on the basis of the stage of evolution attained. Successful adaptation and population growth expands the resources, spatial size, information base, communication, and organizational complexity of a society.

The EO approach shares features of the other theories of social change. The EO and DM approaches are evolutionary, focus on processes of adaptation, and emphasize industrialization, urbanization, cultural diversity and population growth. The EO perspective emphasizes organic holism (Haines 1985) and technological, organizational, demographic, and material conditions instead of cultural values, normative patterns, personality factors, and psychological motivations (Meyer and Hannan 1979). The EO and MWS approaches are holistic, materialistic, relational, and emphasize hierarchical or dominance relations (Hawley 1984). The key processes in the EO perspective are the competitive struggle for resources, growth in size and complexity, information expansion, habitat control, and use of physical territory, rather than modes of production, property relations, class conflict, exploitation, and unequal exchanges among regions across the globe. The EO approach explains rural-urban migration through technological advances in productivity that create rural unemployment ("push" factor) and improved communication which increases perceptions of greater opportunities and cultural resources in the city ("pull" factor) (Hawley 1981; London 1987).

2. Key Causal Concepts: Opportunities and Guardians. The EO approach connects macro-level evolution to a micro-level explanation of crime through the concept of opportunities. Crime increases when evolutionary processes create a societal surplus which expands the quantity of material goods available to be stolen. As population mobility and cultural diversity increase, the protection and social control mechanisms provided by large, stationary kinship groups "become less adequate to protect individuals... from the adverse consequences, or indeed from the very diversity, of others" (Matras 1979, p. 59).

In the "routine activity" version of the theory, attractive "suitable targets" become increasingly vulnerable through socio-economic activities that are dispersed away from the home, reducing protection from "capable guardians" (Cohen and Felson 1979; Cohen et al. 1981). Thus, the EO approach predicts little crime in a society with active guardianship norms, a decentralized population, low youth mobility or independence, and a majority of females occupying homemaker roles rather than engaging in paid labor in the public domain (see Clinard 1978).7

The EO perspective specifies the ecological conditions which result in increased
opportunities for successful criminal acts, but it assumes, rather than explains, motivations for offender behavior. As Cohen and Felson (1979, p. 589) state, “we take criminal inclinations as given and examine the manner in which the spatio-temporal organization of social activities helps people to translate their criminal inclinations into action.” Inequality and unemployment are important insofar as they affect external guardianship and crime targets (Cantor and Land 1985; Cohen et al. 1981). The approach assumes individualistic competition where each person attempts to maximize control over scarce material and socio-symbolic (e.g., interpersonal power, prestige) resources. It also assumes the existence of a class of law-violators who seek competitive advantage against a class of law-abiding property-owners. And it relies on the utilitarian assumptions of classical criminology where people attempt to maximize opportunities and avoid punishments (see Vold and Bernard 1986, pp. 18–35).

3. Law, Crime Rates and Criminal Behavior. The EO concept of crime does not question the criminal law produced by the state’s technical-administrative apparatus. The approach emphasizes inter-organizational environments, technology, rationalization, communication systems, and centralization, which are consistent with the “managerial” approach to the modern state (Alford and Friedland 1985). The state is the source of law and is defined by its control over the population in a territory and the means of violence (Meyer 1980). The modern state grows in response to internal economic or technological requirements for greater coordinated activities and external pressures from the competitive international system of states (see Boli-Bennett 1980).

The EO approach lends itself to a policy-oriented strategy aimed at potential victims rather than offenders. It supports modifications in individual security (e.g., locks, alarms), environmental design (e.g., urban planning, building design), and life styles (e.g., leisure activities) to deter crime (see Berger and Berger 1985; Messner and Tardiff 1985; Newman 1972).

4. Collective Political Behavior and Crime. The EO perspective explains collective political behavior by the same processes that generate crime. Both take place in a structural context of competing interests and the rational calculation of costs and benefits. The assumptions and analyses are consistent with the collective behavior models of Mills and Olson (Tilly 1978, pp. 24–37) and with the competition model of ethnic group behavior (Hannan 1979; Nielsen 1985). Collective action results from the rational calculation of individual or group interest in a context of scarce resources and changing opportunities for organizational mobilization. Societal evolution both reduces the social bases for collective action and lowers organizational costs (e.g., ease of member contact along with low resource expenditure). The focus is on the uncertain and strategic interactions and the mix of costs and opportunities that result in different courses of action. During later stages of industrialization, social class becomes less important than ethnic and other social identities as a basis for collective organization (Nielsen 1985, p. 137).

CROSS-NATIONAL CRIME RATE STUDIES

In this section we assess the evidence for the key hypotheses in the empirical literature on cross-national crime rates. There are sufficient anomalies to raise
serious questions about the DM perspective's role as the dominant paradigm. Few of the MWS and EO propositions have been directly tested, although they receive scattered support. The evidence suggests increased attention to the alternative perspectives in future cross-national crime research.

Generalizations from cross-national crime rate studies must be made with extreme care because of measurement and methodological problems that stem from using official crime statistics from different nations. Most studies of cross-national crime briefly mention these issues, and they are reviewed elsewhere (Archer and Gartner 1984, pp. 1–60; Clinard and Abbott 1973, pp. 22–28; Newman 1977; Vigderhous 1978). In addition to the measurement equivalency problem, the data are collected at different time points, from different sources, and with different sets of nations. The theoretical concepts are operationalized with different empirical indicators, and the statistical analyses include divergent combinations of variables as controls. The methodological problems may account for some of the inconsistencies among studies.

We focus on quantitative cross-national studies that utilize multivariate techniques to examine violent (usually homicide) or property (usually larceny or theft) crime rates, and also consider single nation studies to help evaluate the findings. We do not evaluate the perspectives in terms of the limited research on other offenses (e.g., corporate or government crime). The review uses the results reported in the studies' tables, not just authors' verbal summaries, and is organized around six hypotheses or questions (for a summary of studies, see Table 1).

1. Are homicide and property crime produced by a single process?
2. Does industrialization increase crime?
3. Do urbanism and population growth increase crime?
4. Do modern values and cultural heterogeneity increase crime?
5. Does economic inequality increase crime?
6. Does subordinate class political mobilization decrease crime?

1. Are homicide and property crime produced by a single process? The search for a single cause of crime in cross-national studies has led researchers to overlook differences between types of crime. The DM perspective views all criminal behavior as caused by anomie and social disorganization and does not distinguish between types of crime. The MWS approach is more cautious about assigning a common cause (see Humphries and Wallace 1980), and views the form and level of crime as constrained by a social formation's location in the world system. However, the approach is not sufficiently developed to permit a precise specification of the processes causing different crimes. The EO perspective is also cautious about assuming a single cause for all crime. Although the dispersion of "routine activities" away from the home increases the availability of unprotected property for theft, it may decrease the number of potential victims for homicide (Kick and LaFree 1985).
### Table 1
Summary of Quantitative Cross-National Crime Studies*
(N = 17 studies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. All crimes result from the same process</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
<td>Hartnagel, Kick &amp; LaFree, Krohn '76,'78, Krohn &amp; Wellford, MacDonald, Wellford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Crime increases with industrialization and economic development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homicide</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>3. Crime increases with urbanism</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homicide</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4. Crime increases with modern values and cultural heterogeneity</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homicide</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studies that examined both homicide and property crimes have not found both to be caused by the same factors (Gurr et al. 1977; Hartnagel 1982; Kick and LaFree 1985; Krohn 1976, 1978; Krohn and Wellford 1977; MacDonald 1976; Wellford 1974; Wolf 1971; see Shelley, 1981). Studies that focused only on homicide (Archer and Gartner 1984; Avison and Loring 1986; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Krahn et al. 1986; Messner 1980, 1982, 1985) or only on property crime (Stack 1984) also failed to reveal a common set of causes. Similarly, single nation studies raise questions about treating the two types of crime, or even different kinds of property crime, as a
Table 1 (continued)

5. Crime increases with economic inequality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homicide</th>
<th>Property Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avison &amp; Loring, Braithwaite &amp; Braithwaite, Kick &amp; LaFree, Krohn et al, Krohn '76, MacDonald, Messner '80,'82</td>
<td>Kick &amp; LaFree, Krohn '76, '76', MacDonald, Krohn &amp; Wellford, MacDonald, Stack '84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
<td>Avison and Loring, Groves et al, Hansmann &amp; Quigley, Krohn '76, MacDonald, Stack '84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Crime decreases with subordinate class political mobilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homicide</th>
<th>Property Crime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braithwaite &amp; Braithwaite, Krohn et al</td>
<td>Krohn &amp; Wellford, MacDonald, Stack '84, Wellford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Support</td>
<td>Krohn &amp; Wellford, MacDonald, Wellford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- * = The table is limited to multiple regression studies with the nation as the unit of analysis. No support means non-significant or opposite sign coefficient, or a substantial inconsistency across equations. Krohn '76, '78, Krohn & Wellford, and Wellford do not report statistical significance.
- a = Homicide measure includes all deaths purposefully inflicted by others and the state, except those related to warfare.
- b = Population growth.
- c = Percent of population living in urban areas.
- d = Population size.
- e = Population density.
- f = Racial or ethnic heterogeneity.
- g = Linguistic heterogeneity.
- h = Religious heterogeneity.
- i = Income heterogeneity.
- j = Industrial sector heterogeneity.
- k = Unemployment or labor force participation.

single concept (Humphries and Wallace 1980; Lodhi and Tilly 1973; Quinney 1966; Shichor et al. 1979). Although a general explanatory theory is a desirable long-term goal, researchers cannot assume that homicide and property crime result from the same causal process and should specify the link between causal processes and each type of crime.

2. Does industrialization increase crime? All three perspectives argue that crime increases with industrialization. The DM perspective predicts a positive relationship between industrialization and crime through the intervening processes of anomie and social disorganization. The MWS approach conceptualizes industrialization in terms of the spread of the capitalist mode of production in the world system and its articulation with other modes in a social formation. In the EO approach crime
increases as industrialization decreases external social controls and creates opportunities for theft.

No studies have found significant positive effects of industrialization on homicide rates (Avison and Loring 1986; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Groves et al. 1985; Hsanzmann and Quigley 1982; Hartnagel 1982; Krahm et al. 1986; Kick and LaFree 1985; Krohn 1976, 1978; Krohn and Wellford 1977; MacDonald 1976; Messner 1980, 1982; Wellford 1974). On the other hand, the relationship between industrialization and property crime rates is less clear. Early studies found a positive relationship, but did not report statistical significance (Krohn 1976, 1978; Krohn and Wellford, 1977; Wellford 1974). Hartnagel (1982) found a significant positive relationship for female rates of theft and fraud, but not for larceny. Stack (1984) provides the strongest support for the hypothesis, but does not control for variables which may suppress the effects of industrialization. For instance, Kick and LaFree (1985) found that industrialization is positively related to theft only when the number of persons per household is omitted from the analysis. This latter variable, which is negatively related to theft, supports the EO hypothesis that a reduction in capable guardians increases crime. 9

The hypothesis that industrialization increases homicide must be questioned. It appears that factors other than industrialization per se (e.g., inequality) explain homicide. 10 No definitive conclusions about the industrialization-property crime relationship can be made at this time. These findings must be evaluated in light of the results of the other key hypotheses.

3. Does urbanism increase crime? All three perspectives hypothesize a relationship between urbanism and crime, although each conceptualizes it differently. Cross-sectional studies from the United States found a strong positive relationship between urbanism and crime rates. As Archer and Gartner (1984, p. 100) note, “The positive cross-sectional association between city size and homicide has become one of the most widely accepted maxims in the social sciences” (see Shelley 1981, p. 140).

The consensus glosses over an important distinction between urbanization and urbanity (Lodhi and Tilly 1973), concepts frequently confused in cross-national studies. Urbanization, a longitudinal concept, is the historical transformation of a given geographical space from non-urban to urban status, while urbanity, a cross-sectional concept, involves the social use of space and its population size and density at a single point in time. The DM perspective emphasizes urbanization since it more closely corresponds to the process of breaking apart a small, traditional moral order. The MWS approach focuses on urbanity since it better reflects a stage and scale of capital accumulation processes (see Shelley 1981, pp. 23–25). The EO perspective also focuses on urbanity since “routine activities” in metropolitan areas increase “suitable targets” and decrease “capable guardians.”

Studies of the relationship between urbanization and homicide have not detected a consistent pattern. Historical research on Europe have not found a uniform increase in homicide with increased urbanization (Gurr et al. 1977; Lodhi and Tilly 1973; Zehr 1976). Two cross-sectional studies which operationalized urbanization with population growth rates found a positive effect on homicide (Krahm et al. 1986; McDonald 1976), and two did not (Messner 1982; Krohn and Wellford 1977).
Archer and Gartner (1984) found no consistent longitudinal relationship between growth in city size and city homicide rates.

Cross-national studies of *homicide* which operationalized *urbanity* as the percentage of the population in urban areas or total population size consistently failed to support the hypothesis (Avison and Loring 1986; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Hartnagel 1982; Kick and LaFree 1985; Krahn et al. 1986; Krohn 1978; Krohn and Wellford 1977; MacDonald 1976; Messner 1980, 1982; Wellford 1974). Archer and Gartner (1984, p. 115) found that “…the rates of large cities were high only relative to the rates of their societies, not necessarily in any absolute or international sense.”

Population density, as distinct from population growth or size, is a related aspect of urbanity (see Webb 1972). Most theorists expect high density to be associated with high crime rates, but low crime rates are found in both high and low density societies (Clinard 1978; Shelly 1981, pp. 74–76). No studies found a significant positive relationship between population density and *homicide* rates (Avison and Loring 1986; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Krahn et al. 1986; Messner 1980, 1982). However, Krahn et al (1986) found that density intensifies the effects of inequality on homicide. Thus, while density per se is not significant, it may be an important contextual variable which conditions the effects of other variables.

The evidence for a positive relationship between urbanism and *property crime* rates is equally weak. While some historical research suggests that property crime replaces violent crime as the dominant form of criminality as *urbanization* increases (Gurr et al. 1977; Shelley 1981); Lodhi and Tilly (1973) found no relationship between urbanization and property crime in a study of nineteenth-century France. Quantitative cross-national studies found only mixed support for the relationship between *urbanity* (population in urban areas or size) and property crime (Hartnagel 1982; Kick and LaFree 1985; Krohn 1978; Krohn and Wellford 1977; McDonald 1976; Wellford 1974). Cross-national research has not examined the relationship between density and property crime. In the United States, density appears to be positively related to robbery, but not other property crimes (Booth et al. 1976; Humphries and Wallace 1980; Shichor et al. 1979).

Thus, the relationship between urbanism and either type of crime is not consistently supported by the evidence. The most compelling study used city homicide rates and found no direct relationship between urbanization or urbanity and homicide (Archer and Gartner 1984). Aggregate national data are inadequate for testing hypotheses about urban areas. Future research on the urbanism-crime relationship should use city crime rates and consider the logarithmic J-curve relationship between homicide and city size (moderate in rural areas, low in small towns, and high in larger cities) discovered in the U.S. (Archer and Gartner 1984). It should also consider using urban-rural crime ratios across nations (Gilbert and Gugler 1982) and examine the effect of different types of national urbanization processes.

Future studies should also avoid using population growth or density as proxies for urbanism because they represent distinct causal processes. Population growth changes the age-structure by increasing the proportion of young people, which can increase crime (Krahn et al. 1986). This implies the need for age-specific cross-
national crime statistics (see Archer and Gartner 1984, p. 141). Similarly, population density can create more opportunities for crime (Krahn et al. 1986). And density can affect crime because high density areas are associated with older industrial patterns and low density areas with newer corporate patterns (Humphries and Wallace 1980, pp. 183–184).

4. Do crime modern values and cultural heterogeneity increase crime? Only one of the three perspectives posits a relationship between modern values or cultural heterogeneity and crime. The DM approach argues that modern values and cultural heterogeneity increase crime because they weaken community bonds and normative constraints found in homogenous, mechanical-solidarity societies.

Messner (1982), testing the hypothesis that the value of moral individualism increases crime in the absence of new mechanisms (e.g., social equality) to achieve organic solidarity, failed to find a relationship between two measures of moral individualism (Protestant religiosity, school enrollment) and homicide. Groves et al. (1985), criticizing Messner’s interpretation of Durkheim, failed to find support for the proposition that a strong moral community (measured as 75% religious homogeneity) reduces homicide. No other studies found a relationship between religious heterogeneity and homicide (Hansmann and Quigley 1982; MacDonald 1976).

Studies of other types of cultural heterogeneity and homicide found inconsistent support for the hypothesis. Krohn (1978) failed to find a relationship between occupational heterogeneity or the division of labor (population distribution across different industrial categories) and anomie (the gap between social wants, measured as literacy, and social needs, measured as GNP, radios, newspapers and telephones per capita), nor a relationship between anomie and homicide. One study found an effect of linguistic heterogeneity (MacDonald 1976), and one did not (Hansmann and Quigley 1982). Two studies found a significant relationship for racial/ethnic heterogeneity (Avison and Loring 1986; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980), and two did not (Krahn et al. 1986; MacDonald 1976). Hansmann and Quigley (1982) found that income heterogeneity (Gini coefficient) suppressed the effects of other types of heterogeneity (i.e., religious, linguistic, racial/ethnic), but this variable was insignificant when controlling for other variables.

Two studies examined cultural heterogeneity and property crime, and neither found support for the relationship (see MacDonald [1976] for linguistic, religious, racial/ethnic heterogeneity; and Krohn [1978] for occupational heterogeneity). The results suggest that the concept of heterogeneity needs clarification. For example, some researchers conceptualize income inequality as a special case of heterogeneity rather than as a product of class relations. Future studies should examine how different types of heterogeneity combine to affect crime. For instance, research on U.S. SMSA’s has examined the effects of both racial heterogeneity and racial socioeconomic inequality (Blau and Blau 1982).

5. Does economic inequality increase crime? The MWS perspective identifies economic inequality as a key determinant of crime, while the DM and EO approaches see it as secondary. The MWS perspective conceptualizes economic inequality broadly as class-based inequalities in income, property, power, and so forth. Class inequalities within nations are integrally tied to inequalities between
nations. Patterns of crime and variations in crime rates are tied to processes of capitalist accumulation and to the constitution of classes within and between nations. On the other hand, the DM and EO perspectives conceptualize inequality more narrowly. The DM approach sees the effect of inequality on crime in terms of social conditions which increase anomie or relative deprivation. The EO perspective views inequality in terms of its effects on the social distribution of opportunities and risks.

The positive relationship between economic inequality (usually measured with the Gini coefficient) and homicide is the most consistent finding in the literature (Avison and Loring 1986; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980; Kick and LaFree 1985; Krahn et al. 1986; Krohn 1976; MacDonald 1976; Messner 1980, 1982). Krahn et al. (1986) found that the effect of inequality on homicide is greater under certain conditions (e.g., in more democratic nations and in nations with larger internal security forces).

Only two studies of inequality and homicide fail to support the hypothesis. Groves et al. (1985) found that the sophistication of the criminal justice apparatus (the ratio of judges to other criminal justice personnel) suppressed the effects of inequality on homicide. Hansmann and Quigley (1982) found no significant effect on homicide when they used a different measure of homicide (see Table 1, Note a) and controlled for more variables than other studies. Nevertheless, given the overall support, cross-national studies that omit a control for income inequality may produce spurious results.

In contrast to homicide, no study found a significant positive relationship between inequality and property crime. In fact, the evidence indicates that the relationship may be negative (Kick and LaFree 1985; Krohn 1976; MacDonald 1976; Stack 1984). Kick and LaFree argue that property crime is low in contexts of extreme inequality because of the absence of material goods among most of the population and the geographic distance and security arrangements of elites. However, in a more sophisticated analysis, Stack (1984) found no consistent relationship using six measures of inequality and three measures of egalitarian culture (i.e., unionization, socialist party strength, political democracy).

The cross-national research contradicts U.S. studies which found a positive relationship between inequality and property crime (Blau and Blau 1982; Carroll and Jackson 1983; Danziger and Wheeler 1976; Jacobs, 1981; Humphries and Wallace 1980; Williams 1984). Stack (1984) explains this discrepancy by unique U.S. features that condition the relationship—racial conflict, absence of class consciousness, and strong beliefs in individualism (see Shelley 1985). He suggests that the relationship may only hold under conditions of political alienation and the absence of state redistributive efforts.

Unemployment is an aspect of inequality insofar as it is unequally distributed among classes. No cross-national study found a significant positive relationship between unemployment and either homicide or property crime (Avison and Loring 1986; Krohn 1976; MacDonald 1976). However, single nation studies of the United States, Canada, England/Wales, and Sweden suggest the relationship may still be worth pursuing (Chiricos 1987; Jacobs 1981; Stack 1982). Moreover, the relationship may be sensitive to measures of unemployment (see Shiskin 1976; Sorrentino 1979) and may vary by the type of crime (Cantor and Land 1985). Unemployment may also affect guardianship patterns and crime targets (Cantor and Land 1985),
and may be both a cause of criminal behavior and a consequence of blocked employment opportunities which follow criminal labeling (Thornberry and Christenson 1984).

A related issue is the proposition that individuals from lower socioeconomic groups commit more crime. No consensus exists on the issue, but social class does not appear to be associated with criminal behavior per se. Rather, the class-crime relationship varies according to the type of crime and the frequency with which individuals commit crime. Future research should take these complexities into account and examine crimes other than homicide and property (e.g., corporate).

6. Does subordinate class political mobilization decrease crime? The MWS perspective argues that subordinate class crimes are often misdirected individualistic reactions to structural inequalities. Therefore, high levels of political mobilization and class consciousness should reduce alienation and rechannel reactions into more politically constructive directions. By contrast, neither of the other perspectives make direct claims about the relationship. The DM perspective sees political mobilization as capable of increasing organic solidarity and hence reducing crime. The EO approach argues that political mobilization may reduce crime if individuals believe they can better maximize their self-interests through political action.

There are no direct tests of the hypothesis, but some inferences can be made from studies that use various measures of political participation. Krohn and Wellford (1977) and Wellford (1974), using “political orientation” (communist, neutral, Western), and MacDonald (1976), using voter turnout and political representation, did not find a relationship for homicide or property crime. Stack (1984) did not find consistent effects of unionization, socialist party strength, or political democracy (an index of civil liberties and free elections) on property crime. However, he suggests that countries other than the United States (e.g., those higher in political mobilization and class consciousness) generate more political crime than traditional street crime. Gurr et al.’s (1977) historical study of four cities found that crime and civil disorder do not have a common cause and are not inversely related. Short (1974) observes that Chicago gang members remained politically apathetic during a period of political mobilization.

On the other hand, Krahn et al. (1986) found a positive relationship between a democracy index and homicide. Braithwaite and Braithwaite (1980) found negative effects on homicide rates from economic equality, socialist party strength and political freedom (an index of freedom of the press). Vincentnathan (1985) explains India’s low crime rate compared to the United States in terms of its caste system which encourages collective action to address economic problems. Two U.S. studies also provide qualitative evidence (e.g., interviews with law enforcement and community leaders) which suggest that crime rates declined when minority communities were mobilized into political action (Erlanger 1979; Solomon et al. 1965).

The evidence for an inverse relationship between crime and political mobilization is weak. However, political mobilization (e.g., riots, demonstrations) stimulates state redistributive efforts, which may reduce crime. Braithwaite’s cross-national research (1979b, pp. 205–208) found a negative relationship between government spending for redistributive social programs (which offset inequality) and homicide. Several U.S. studies found that protests and riots resulted in increased welfare and police expenditures (Betz 1974; Hicks and Swank 1983; Issac and Kelly 1981;
Jennings 1979; Mueller 1978; Piven and Cloward 1971, 1977; Schram and Turbett 1983; Welch 1975; but see Albritton 1979). In turn, welfare expenditures reduced property and personal crime net of inequality and unemployment (DeFronzo 1983), although police expenditures increased political surveillance and official crime rates (Greenwood 1973; Jacobs 1979; McPheters and Stronge 1974). Future cross-national research should explore the proposition that state redistribution efforts act as an intervening variable between political mobilization and crime.

RECONSIDERING KEY CONCEPTS

The empirical evidence indicates weak support for propositions from each of the three theoretical perspectives. Although the DM approach has been the dominant paradigm, support for it is no stronger than for the alternatives. In order to advance comparative criminology, the field should be integrated with research on economic development and crime rates in general.

Economic Development and Inequality

Comparative criminologists have used economic development and inequality as exogenous variables and have not capitalized on comparative studies which treat them as endogenous within a complex system of other factors. A plethora of empirical research has examined the effect on economic growth rates and inequality of a nation’s position in the world economy, its dependence on raw material exports, and its domestic economy’s penetration by foreign multinationals. The basic finding of this research is that a peripheral nation’s dependency on raw material exports and foreign investment slows long term economic growth and increases inequality.18

Other research has explored the linkages between international dependency relations, domestic institutional mechanisms, and domestic income inequality (Jacobs 1982). Important intervening factors include rapid population growth (Nolan and White 1983), “overurbanization” (industrialization lags behind urbanization) (Kentor 1981; Timberlake and Kentor 1983; London 1987), and the uneven rate of development among economic sectors and the overdevelopment of the tertiary sector (Evans and Timberlake 1980; Fiala 1983; Jaffee and Stokes 1986). In addition, economic development and inequality are linked to the degree of political democracy or the ideology of parties in power (Bollen 1980, 1983; Bollen and Grandjean 1981; Bollen and Jackman 1985; Stack and Zimmerman 1982).

Crime Rates

Comparative criminologists acknowledge problems with using official crime statistics. Most focus on the measurement equivalency issue which is often viewed as a technical problem resolvable through the use of trans-cultural crime categories and better record-keeping (Wolfgang 1967). However, more serious conceptual issues are involved.

Some argue that crime statistics are of little value in measuring “actual” criminal behavior. They view them as the product of organizational contingencies, discre-
tionary decisions of law enforcement personnel, police-citizen interactions, and complainants attitudes toward public social control (Black 1970; Kitsuse and Ci-courel 1963; Reiss 1971). Crime statistics cannot capture differences in cultural and subjective meanings, making generalizations across cultures or historical periods difficult (Beirne 1983; Birkbeck 1985; Stone 1981). “Crime” can also be conceptualized as social control involving conflict management, dispute resolution, or self-help (Black 1976, 1983).

We believe that studies using official crime statistics can help clarify conceptual issues about the relationship between macro-level processes and crime. However, such research must be interpreted with caution and should take into account how socio-political actors and institutions produce crime rates. It may be wiser to view officially reported crime rates as measuring “criminalization” rather than actual criminal behavior.

It is difficult to measure criminal behavior separately from criminalization. In addition, a systematic bias is introduced if factors associated with criminal behavior (e.g., inequality, cultural heterogeneity, political mobilization) also affect the operation of the state and criminal justice system. Moreover, the capacity to collect statistics itself is related to the level of economic development. Thus, the observed relationship between a variable and crime rates can reflect the relation between the variable and administrative processes instead of, or in addition to, its relation to criminal behavior. Evidence for this type of spuriousness from U.S. studies shows that the impact of inequality or poverty on the size of police forces and their use of deadly force is as great as the impact on crime (Jackson and Carroll 1981; Jacobs 1979; Jacobs and Britt 1979; Loftin and McDowall, 1982; Williams and Drake 1980). Alternative measures of crime (e.g., victimization surveys) to supplement police statistics help reduce this problem (see Humphries and Wallace 1980), but different measures can produce different results (Booth et al. 1977; Cohen and Land 1984; Cohen and Lichbach 1982).

Another aspect of criminalization is the inclusion of activities not traditionally labeled as crime. Political systems include or exclude different types of behaviors as crime. Studies which explain a wider range of crime (e.g., political resistance, corporate and government crime, intra-familial violence) may avoid biases introduced by a limitation on traditional crimes.

Studies of political violence and state repression illustrate the advantages of a broadened definition of crime and suggest how political-economic factors affect crime. Political violence is likely when economic inequality is combined with moderately repressive regimes, but not with highly repressive or democratic regimes (Muller 1985; see Bradshaw 1985). Similarly, economic inequality is associated with regimes that expel social groups, and expulsion is a major determinant of political protest (as opposed to violence) (Williams and Timberlake 1984; but see Weede 1981). Furthermore, initial multinational penetration is associated with anti-democratic regimes (Bollen 1983), but once such regimes are in place foreign investment does not increase repression (Timberlake and Williams 1984). Since multinational penetration increases economic inequality (Bornscher et al. 1978; Bornscher and Ballmer-Cao 1979; Bornscher and Hoby 1981), and inequality increases both traditional (e.g., homicide) and nontraditional (e.g., political violence) crime, future studies should examine the relationship that exists between multinational penetration, inequality, and type of regime.
CONCLUSION

We question the continued dominance of the DM perspective in comparative criminology and believe that the alternatives explain the empirical findings as well. We have outlined three perspectives and suggested ways to reconsider key concepts that need to be addressed in future work. However, the alternatives require further refinement and extension. Fully developed theories need to offer hypotheses for testing, account for the inconsistent findings in previous studies, consider a broad range of criminal behaviors, incorporate political factors into the analysis, and address methodological and conceptual issues.

Comparative criminology needs redirection. In addition to reconceptualizing key concepts, methodological issues of sample composition and measurement which plague all quantitative cross-national research must be confronted (see Bollen and Jackman 1985; Shalev 1983). More attention needs to be given to avoiding bias in sample selection. Samples should be designed to represent all regions of the globe (see note 8). Although data availability necessarily influences sampling, the set of countries that are included may affect the results far more than has previously been recognized. Another concern is the appropriate unit of analysis. Most current studies use the nation-state as the unit of analysis, yet a larger (e.g., continents) or smaller unit (e.g., cities), or urban-rural crime ratios may be more appropriate. The ecological fallacy is a real danger because data collected at an aggregate level are used to explain individual criminal behavior. National-level data may obscure between-unit variation that might reveal causal processes occurring on a local level (see Chiricos 1987). Future efforts will also need to resolve disagreements over causal ordering of variables (see Carroll and Jackson 1983; Cohen and Felson 1979) and utilize a common set of controls. Moreover, non-linear relationships found in other cross-national research (Bollen and Jackman 1985; Stack 1984; Weede 1980, 1981) should also be considered in comparative crime theories.

Each theoretical perspective on comparative crime has strengths and limitations at different levels of analysis. The strength of the MWS approach lies in its use of world system and political factors to explain broad patterns of crime (both traditional and nontraditional) within and between nations. However, it is less concerned about criminal behavior per se because it views crime as merely one manifestation of capitalist social relations. Its focus on macro-level historical processes thus limits its ability to explain crime at the level of individual behavior. The strength of the EO perspective lies in its focus on the criminal act itself and in its ability to specify the micro-level setting associated with crime, i.e., the patterns in specific situations that immediately precede in space and time the actual execution of crime. Although it explains where, when, and how crime occurs, it assumes individual motivation and thus does not explain why people commit crime. The strength of the DM perspective lies in its emphasis on the internalized moral/normative structures which translate macro-level cultural processes into individuals' motivation to commit crime. The DM approach's neglect of political-economic and micro-ecological factors, and its lack of support in empirical studies, limit its ability to serve as the general framework for future research.

Comparative criminology is currently plagued by a hiatus between theory and...
research. The different levels of theoretical explanation need to be explored with data that simultaneously employ variables at the structural/contextual and individual levels (Simcha-Fagan and Schwartz 1986). Such data is not likely to become available for many countries. Regardless, quantitative studies must be complemented by in-depth historical research in order to examine the specific processes occurring within nations. Quantitative cross-national studies with aggregate data remain appropriate to evaluate the alternative perspectives, but it is important to be explicit about the “metatheoretical” assumptions underlying such research. Otherwise, studies proliferate with exercises of verification and falsification of numerous middle-range theories without a cumulative development of theoretical knowledge.

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NOTES

1. Modernization affects juveniles by weakening family social controls. It creates a period of extended adolescence which separates youth from the adult world of work and lessens the influence of adult role relationships that reinforce dominant norms. Prolonged schooling increases both lower and middle class youths’ dependence upon peers and permits socialization to peer groups with deviant norms (Friday and Hage 1981; Shelley 1981).

2. The relative deprivation explanation of crime (Vold and Bernard 1986, pp. 138–141) is a middle range theory that is often interpreted in terms of modernization theory (see Shelley 1981, pp. 10–13).

3. See Chase-Dunn (1980), Chirot (1977), and Wallerstein (1982) for discussions of the position of “socialist states” in the world system.

4. Marxian theories of penal practices see changes in business conditions and labor supply as affecting the type and intensity of punishment and the use of incarcerated populations as an economic resource (Adamson 1984; Rusche and Kirchheimer 1968 [1939]).

5. The coercion and conformity to external authority that occurs in the workplace is reproduced in the working class family (Colvin and Pauly 1983). This family control structure weakens parent-child bonds and deprives children of close family ties. Once placed in a similar control structure at school, youth join delinquent peer groups and participate in illegitimate opportunity structures.

Extended years of schooling and youth’s deteriorated labor market position marginalize juveniles in all social classes (Greenberg 1977), although parental resources that provide “absorption mechanisms” (e.g., boarding schools, counseling, trips abroad, inherited property) offset the negative impact of marginalization (Schwendinger and Schwendinger 1976). Middle class delinquents are also able to avoid detection and their activities are less likely to be labeled as crime (Chambliss 1973). Others see working class delinquency and youth subculture as resistance to dominant class values (Gottdiener 1985; Humphries 1981).

6. Welfare state programs may be a “legitimate” alternative to “illegitimate” redistributive strategies that are labeled as property crime (Piven and Cloward 1970, 1977).

7. The EO approach explains juvenile delinquency as an outcome of the same processes that produce other crime (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983), i.e., opportunities to obtain suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians. Therefore, unsupervised and mobile
youth would be expected to commit more crime (see Gove and Crutchfield 1982; Jensen and Eve 1976).

8. Studies vary considerably in sample size, ranging from 24 (Krohn 1976) to 75 nations (Wellford 1974), and some fail to provide a list of nations included (Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Krohn 1976; Wellford 1974). Regardless of sample size, studies vary significantly in the composition of countries and the representation of different regions. For example, Avison and Loring (1986; N = 32) include no countries from Africa or the Middle East, while 34% of the sample in Krahm et al (1986; N = 65) is taken from these two regions. Some studies contain a heavy western bias (about 40% of sample) (Avison and Loring 1986; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 1980; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Krohn 1978; MacDonald 1976; Messner 1985). Only a few studies include any Eastern European nations (Avison and Loring 1986; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Groves et al. 1985; Hartnagel 1982; Kick and LaFree 1985).

9. Industrialization is usually measured by G.N.P. per capita. Other measures include energy consumption and G.D.P. per capita, and composite indices of development.

10. MacDonald (1976) found a nonsignificant positive relationship between GNP and property crime when controlling for the percentage of the population living in urban areas. Messner (1986) found a significant positive relationship between economic development and the ratio of property crime to homicides.

11. Kick and LaFree (1985) find support for an alternative hypothesis that industrialization decreases homicide among intimates because it reduces the number of persons (i.e., potential victims) per household. In a study of Manhattan, Messner and Tariff (1985) found that factors which keep people in the home are related to homicides that occur in or near the home.

12. Messner (1986) found an insignificant positive effect of the percentage of population living in urban areas on the ratio of property crime to homicide.

13. MacDonald (1976) found a positive relationship between school enrollment and property crime, but none between school enrollment and homicide or between higher education and property crime. Conklin and Simpson (1985) and Groves et al. (1985) also found no relationship between school enrollment and homicide. Hartnagel (1982) did not find relationships between female educational achievement and female homicide or property crime.

14. Messner (1986) found no effect of ethnolinguistic heterogeneity and an insignificant negative effect of occupational heterogeneity on the ratio of property crime to homicide.

15. Age distribution is another form of cultural heterogeneity. Support for the relationship between measures of the youthful population and homicide is mixed (Avison and Loring 1986; Conklin and Simpson 1985; Hansmann and Quigley 1982; Krahm et al. 1986). Also, Messner (1985) found that the percent of unmarried females in the population was positively related to female homicide, but that the percent of unmarried males was not related to male homicide. He argued that female homicide is due to “structural strain” created by the unfulfilled female goal of acquiring a husband (but he ignores the male’s goal of acquiring a wife). See Hartnagel (1982) for other variables tested on females.

16. Messner (1985) found inequality to be related to male, but not female, homicide. He also (1986) found equality associated with the ratio of property crime to homicide.


18. Research in this area includes Bornschier and Ballmer-Cao (1979), Bornschier and Hoby (1981), Bornschier et al. (1978), Chase-Dunn (1975); Delacroix (1977), Delacroix and Ragin (1981), Rubinson (1979), and Snyder and Kick (1979). Criticism of this research (Jackman 1980; Weede 1980) was taken into account by later works (Bornschier 1981; Nolan 1983; Perchel 1985; Stack and Zimmerman 1982; Stokes and Jaffee 1982; but see Jaffee 1985).
19. See Bayley (1985) on national differences regarding the volume and character of situations handled by the police.

20. See Meier (1985) for discussions of integrating theoretical levels of analysis. London (1987) suggests that points of theoretical convergence between the ecological and world system (or political economic) theories of social change should be addressed.

REFERENCES


Competing Perspectives on Cross-National Crime


