Violence in the United States
In the US, the rates of violent crimes have varied over time. Crime rates generally increased following the Second World War and were at the peak between 1970s and during the early 1980s, after which they declined with current crime rates being equivalent to the crime rates of 1960s (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013).

Violent crimes are classified as rape and sexual assault, robbery, murder and aggravated assault.

The United States has the highest violent crimes rates among any other developed countries. The 2012 FBI statistics indicated that the rate of violent crime was 286.9 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013).
Comparison with Other Industrialized Countries

- The following table compares the rate of violent crimes in the United States with Germany, United Kingdom (England/Wales) and Austria. Crime rates are expressed in per 100,000 population (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013).
- It is evident from the table below that the US has higher rates in murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault than Germany and the United Kingdom (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Murder</th>
<th>Rape</th>
<th>Robbery</th>
<th>Aggravated Assault</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Difficulties of Comparing Crime Rates Across Countries

Transnational comparison of crime rates is hindered by the following methodological difficulties attributed to:

- Different countries have different definitions for specific types of crime;
- Different countries have different levels of reporting and different policing traditions;
- Different countries have different political, economic and social contexts.
Difficulties of Comparing Crime Rates Across Countries. Cont’d

- Factual inequalities between countries with regard to their population size and make up;
- Problems that are specifically related to the recorded crime;
- Different operating practices in the criminal justice system
Macro-level Social and Economic Factors that Differentiate the United States from Other Countries

- Economic decline: the United States economy is declining rapidly when compared to other market economy countries. Economic growth is a predictor of crime rates.
- Unemployment: the US has an unemployment rate of 7.9%, which is extremely high for an economy whereby 12 million individuals are unemployed and many more are unable to find the type of full-time job they want.
- Housing and homelessness: homelessness is a serious issue of concern in the United States with more than 633,782 individuals being homeless; Homelessness is another predictor of crime in the United States.
- Drug and Alcohol abuse: The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) report that about 8.3% of people over 12 years are involved in using illicit drugs.
Macro-level social and economic factors that differentiate the United States from other countries

- Poverty and inequality: currently, inequality in the United States is at an all time high, with the gap existing between the richest 1% and the remaining 99% widened to unexpected levels during 2012. Recent decades has saw the increase in the risk of poverty increasing (Tibbetts, 2011).

- Availability of guns: The United States has the highest rate of gun ownership in the world with 40-45% of households owning a gun; Gun ownership is a risk factor for crime (Tibbetts, 2011).
Potential Reasons for the United States’ High Violence Rate in Comparison to Other Industrialized Countries

- The US is considered the violent country among the industrialized nations, owing to the fact that it has the highest rates of violent crimes. This can be attributed to:
  - Easy access to firearms, resulting in gun-related violence and fatalities
  - Increasing poverty and economic inequality in the United States, which contributes to monetary related crime;
  - Poor parenting in the sense that the United States is not a family-oriented society resulting in broken families characterized by fatherless families, domestic violence and parental fighting, absence of parental discipline and supervision, child rejection, parental abuse and criminal parents, which are all predictors of crime in the United States
Potential Reasons for the United States’ High Violence rate in Comparison to Other Industrialized Countries Cont’d

- Increasing school dropout rates resulting in unemployment and low income leading to high crime rates in the US;
- Highest levels of drug abuse: the United States has the highest levels of drug abuse when compared to other developed countries. Drug abuse has been linked to violent crimes in the United States.
- Community disintegration resulting in high-crime neighborhoods, violent communities, violent youth, and violent families (Tibbetts, 2011).
Social Disorganization Theory: disorganized communities lead to crimes, since informal social control collapse leads to the emergence of criminal culture. In this United States, this can be used to explain crime resulting from disintegrated families and communities. This further leads to broken families characterized by fatherless families, domestic violence and parental fighting, absence of parental discipline and supervision, child rejection, parental abuse and criminal parents.
Institutional Anomie Theory: basing on this theory, the gap existing between the American dream’s goal of achieving financial success and the opportunity to achieve this success results in structural strain. Norms tend to weaken and anomie (normlessness) leads to high rates of crime. Social institutions such as the family begin to weaken, resulting in an institutional imbalance that leads to high rates of crime.

General Strain Theory: when people are not able to achieve the success goals such as money and status, they undergo a strain pressure. Under certain circumstances, they are more likely to react to the strain pressure with crime. In the United States, situations such as homelessness and low income are likely to be dealt with by means of crime outburst (Tibbetts, 2011).
References
