

Homicide Across Nations

One of the first large comparative research projects undertaken in criminology was the development of the Comparative Crime Data File (CCDF), which was created by Archer and Gartner (1984). The authors articulated the need for comparative research in the field succinctly:

The need for cross-national comparisons seems particularly acute for research on crime and violence since national differences on these phenomena are of a remarkable magnitude. In some societies, homicide is an hourly, highly visible, and therefore somewhat unexceptional cause of death. In other nations, homicides are so infrequent that, when they do occur, they receive national attention and lasting notoriety. (p. 4)

The CCDF was launched in 1984, with extensive crime data from 110 nations and 44 major international cities covering the period from approximately 1900 to 1970, and has been regularly updated ever since. In their work, Archer and Gartner (1984) examined many research questions using the CCDF. One of these questions is related to the idea that war might increase the level of homicide within the nations once the war ends. There are several theoretical models that speculate about the possible effects of wars on later (postwar) violence within a nation. For example, the social solidarity model posits a wartime *decrease* in violence because of the increase in social solidarity among a nation's citizenry. At a more individual level, the violent veteran model predicts that postwar levels of violence within a nation will *increase* as a result of the violent acts of returning war veterans. At a societal level, the legitimization of violence model postulates that during a war, a society reverses its prohibitions against killing and instead honors acts of violence that would be regarded as murderous in peacetime. This social approval or legitimation of violence, this