

Crime rate in united states and china



Criminal activities are as real in China as they are in U. S. Crime in U. S. is motivated by pursuit for American dream and American culture that encourage material wealth as a measure of personal success. The rate of crime in China has continued to increase since 1978 with the introduction of capitalism. China has experienced rapid influx of American culture and Westernization since 1978 that came with the abolishment of socialism and introduction of capitalism in favor of industrialization. Introduction of capitalism and the abolishment of communalism in China have increased the widening gap between the rich and the poor and encouraged increase in criminal activities in pursuit for material wealth. This paper identifies social and economic factors that have led to increase in crime rate in China and U. S. and seeks to establish the link in crime motivating factors for the two countries.

Crime Rate in United States and China

Crime rate in China has been on the increase since 1978, with the introduction of capitalism and rapid industrialization. China is among the countries that are experiencing rapid industrialization and massive economic growth in the world. The country has been identified as the leading exporter of goods and services in the world, accounting for 11. 3% of exports worldwide. Confounded with the increasing levels of crime in China, one would not hesitate to ask if rapidly increasing industrialization in China has played any role in accelerating levels of criminal activities in the country. Identifying factors that have led to alarming rates of criminal activities in China would make it possible to look for ways of controlling crime rate in China. This research paper discusses the causes of crime in China and in

United States; the research seeks to identify social and economic factors that contribute to criminal activities in the two countries with an aim of establishing the missing link in crime accelerating factors in the two countries and the way forward for China.

Social scientists, politicians and law enforcement agents continue to seek solutions on the best methods to eliminate crime from the society. Many members of the society condemn crime as a social evil that must be eliminated but give little attention to root causes of crime. On the contrary, Merton (1938) embraces crime as a healthy practice for the society, just like religion, schools and businesses, highlighting that a society without crime would fall apart. Merton (1938) observes that crime brings out members of society opposing criminal behavior together and it equally brings together the criminals as well as their supporters. Furthermore, the society should give room for criminals to behave contrary to expected societal norms so that non-criminals may act in ways that benefit it. Merton seems to embrace criminal activities as a means of achieving a balanced society. This however would work if there were no losses associated with crime, but the truth is far from this notion because crime is associated with numerous losses including loss of life, property and business as well as mental and emotional distress associated with crime.

The American criminologist Becker (1963) in his labeling theory regards the terms crime, deviance or punishment as labels applied through acts of power but not some natural reflection of events. He clearly points out that men make rules in the society for other men and women to follow. Contributing to Becker's labeling theory; Christine (2004) explains that the understanding of <https://assignbuster.com/crime-rate-in-united-states-and-china/>

social processes and applications of labels is a major challenge in criminology. Furthermore, understanding of labeling processes associated with crime may make it possible to minimize criminal activities by abandoning the entire process of criminalization. This assertion however undercuts the common sense views of crime and disorder and embraces the notion that crime does not exist but only acts exist, which are often given different meanings within various social frameworks. According to Christine (2004), identifying the social conditions that encourage or prevent giving these acts the meaning of being “ crime” is a significant move towards minimizing criminal activities. Based on this view, it is important to identify factors that contribute to crime and encourage criminal activities in our societies in order to come up with proactive ways of controlling crime.

Crime Rate in United States

Blumstem (2008) explains how crime has become a major issue of public concern, political discussion and major public expenditure in United States. Blumstem (2008) further observes that despite its salience, very little is known about factors driving the crime trends and the knowledge base is too little to support intelligent forecasts of the direction in which crime rates are moving. According to Hart (1961), developing a knowledge base is important for enhancing the rationality of public policies and public expenditure related to crime.

The U. S. crime statistics indicate that one robbery is committed every 49 seconds, one burglary every 10 seconds, one murder every 22 minutes and one rape each 5 minutes (Cost of Crime, 1994). Further statistics estimate

the cost of crime to be \$78 billion for the criminal justice system, \$64 billion for private protection, \$201 billion in loss of life and work, \$120 billion in crime against business, \$60 billion in stolen goods and fraud, \$40 billion from drug abuse and \$110 billion from drunk driving. The total amount of money directly linked to crime costs in United States is a stunning \$675 billion annually, in addition to psychological cost of devastated lives and loss of security (Cost of Crime, 1994).

In his analysis, Reynolds (1990) points out that the increase in number of violent crime seems to fall and rise in tandem with teenage population. Statistics show that in 1982, 390 teens aged 13-15 were arrested for murder. This number rose to 740 a decade later. In addition, 3.3 violent crimes are committed today for each police officer in United States, an opposite of what happened 25 years ago and a clear indication that crime is on increase. In their research, Messner and Rosenfeld (2001) estimate U. S. robbery and homicide rates to be almost three times higher than the average of fifteen other developed nations that they competed with. However, despite the stunning losses incurred due to criminal activities, Reynolds (1990) in his research concluded that crime pays because most criminals are neither caught nor convicted. Out of 500,000 monthly burglaries, only 35,000 arrests are made with as little as 6,010 of those arrested being sent to jail. This only accounts for 1% effectiveness ratio in combating crime (Reynolds, 1990).

Crime Rate in China

Statistics reveal an explosion in crime in China at the turn of the millennium. Robbery cases drastically increased from 22, 266 in 1981 to 352, 216 in 2001, representing a sixteen-fold increase in 20 years. Rate of assault that remained at approximately 20, 000 cases per year between 1981 and 1988 drastically increased to 138, 100 in 2001 (Bakken, 2005). Generally, China reported 4. 75 million crimes in 2007, with illegal fund raising crimes increasing by 4. 2 percent between 2006 and 2007. In 2008, 4. 88 million crimes were committed in China, a number which is almost 9 times the total crimes committed in 1978. (Brockmann et al, 2008). These alarming crime rates are an indication that China is really a society of crime.

Economic reform in China in 1990s brought profound social change and unprecedented economic growth. Between the year 1990 and 1998, the annual China's GDP increased by 11. 9%. In addition, China's exports expanded by 16. 3% annually during this period, making China the world's third largest exporter of goods that surpassed Japan and followed only U. S. and Germany (Bakken, 2005). At the same time, total crime rate increased from 55. 91 per 100, 000 people population in 1978 to 163. 19 per 100, 000 people population in 1998 (Bakken, 2005). These statistics suggest specific links between industrialization and increasing crime rates in china. Current studies show that despite the increasing crime rates, China is the world's largest exporter of goods, the fastest growing major economy and the second largest economy after the United States. Furthermore, the government abolished communalism and introduced capitalism that encourages people to pursue material wealth as a measure of success (Brockmann et al, 2008). Consequently, Chinese started embracing the

American culture and Westernization that emphasize on material wealth as a measure of success, hence the notion “ getting rich is glorious” as people use any means to acquire wealth, including crime.

Statement of Purpose.

Crime in China is as real as it is in United States, a situation that calls for research to identify crime motivating factors and seek the way forward. This paper seeks to identify social and economic factors that contribute to criminal activities in China and U. S. and tries to establish the link in crime motivating factors between the two countries.

Hypothesis.

Motivated by rapid influx of industrialization, the salient American dream, westernization and the American culture the rate of crime in China has increased at an alarming rate since the inception of capitalism.

Methodology

People who participated in this research came from across 50 United States. Two participants aged 13 and above were drawn from each state regardless of sex, education, cultural, social and economic background. A similar approach was used to select research participants from China, whereby 2 participants were drawn from all parts of the country, with 2 participants coming from each of the 22 Provinces.

Interviews and questionnaires were administered to participants from both U. S. and China. Two questionnaires were administered to two participants

from each state, whereby the participants were asked to express their honest opinions regarding factors that researcher associated with increasing crime rate in U. S. and China. Research participants from U. S. were required to state if they strongly agree, agree or disagree that pursuit of American dream, individualism, universalism, materialism, desire for achievement and poverty had contributed to increase in crime rate in United States. Similarly, participants from China were asked if they strongly agree, agree or disagree that westernization, desire for achievement, materialism, individualism, universalism, industrialization and poverty had contributed to increased rate of crime in China.

Results and Discussion

Each independent variable was given a constant value for easy calculation and tabulation of data, with the biggest constant being given to the variable strongly agree = 3, agree = 2 and disagree = 1. Results for each crime factor were analyzed independently to obtain percentage of the sample population that strongly agreed, agreed or disagreed that crime factors given were responsible for increase in crime rate in U. S. and China. The data obtained for crime factors in United States was recorded as indicated in table 1 below.

Factors contributing to Crime in United States

Table 1: Showing Percentage Results for Factors Contributing to Crime in U. S.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Crime Factors

Percentage

Percentage

Percentage

American Dream

67%

30%

3%

Desire for achievement

65%

25%

10%

Individualism

64%

21%

15%

Universalism

58%

25%

17%

Materialism

63%

37%

10%

Poverty

34%

32%

34%

The results revealed that 67 % of those sampled strongly agree that pursuit for American dream has contributed to criminal activities in the U. S, 30% agree and only 3% disagreed that pursuit for American dream has contributed to crime in U. S. This brings out a total of 97% respondents who believed that pursuit for American dream was a motivating factor to increasing crime rate in the U. S.

The survey also revealed strong support for factors associated with anomie theory, derived from American culture as major causes of crime in the U. S. Participants who strongly agreed that materialism, universalism, individualism and desire for achievement had contributed to increase in crime in U. S. range between 58% and 65%. The four factors associated with American culture, namely: achievement, individualism, universalism and materialism account for 62. 5% of participants who strongly agreed that such factors contribute to criminal activities. Generally, the total percentages of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed that materialism, universalism, individualism and desire for achievement contribute to increase in crime are 89. 5% while the total percentage of those who disagreed was only 10. 5%.

Unlike the large variation in percentages for participants who supported and those who opposed that American dream, desire for achievement, individualism, universalism and materialism contributed to increased rate of crime in U. S, there was little variation in responses for participants who strongly agreed, agreed or disagreed that poverty had contributed to high crime rate in the U. S, with the percentages raging between 32% and 34%. This is an indication that although poverty may contribute to crime in U. S. American dream and Institutional Anomie theory, that assumes the existence of four distinctive values underlining the American culture, namely: achievement, individualism, universalism and materialism are the major crime motivating factors in the U. S. This is in agreement with various theoretical frameworks carried out regarding the nature of American dream and the American culture.

The American Dream.

As observed in this research, 97% of sampled population agreed that pursuit for American dream has contributed to increase in crime rate in U. S.

Distinctive American sociological patterns, particularly formula for American dream strongly emphasizes on monetary success and weakly emphasize on legitimate means of achieving success and wealth. American dream suggests that everyone in America has an equal opportunity to become monetarily successful regardless of social background, sex, race and social standing. Messner and Rosenfeld (2007) observe that high suites crime, gun and homicide crimes are a normal by-product of U. S. social institutions and cultural beliefs. They contend that cultural ethos embodied in American dream drives high rates of serious, white collar crimes and corresponding punitive social response and point out to the fact that the nature of the American dream breeds and supports the occurrence of high crime levels through its emphasis on material success. According to the salient American dream, money is everything and monetary success is emphasized as an integral measure of individual's success (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). This motivates the Americans to creatively use any available methods in striving for individual material and monetary success

Merton (1938) observes that inability of some individuals in U. S. to legally achieve monetary success leads to feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration, resulting to criminal behavior. The American dream suggests that individuals should compete with others for limited resources since there are no enough resources to ensure success for everyone. Merton (1938) points out that the pursuit for American dream has weakened institutions that create free market, economy, education, religion and family, leading to lack of balance

within the American society. Furthermore, the nature of American dream and institutional dominance in America are mutually supporting and reinforcing towards an anomie environment. Major fraud cases and business corruption cases pop up frequently as the American non-economic goals, positions and roles are devaluated relative to the ends and means of economic activity (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007).

Modern Nation and Anomie Theories.

This research shows that factors associated with American culture, namely: materialism, individualism, universalism and achievement gain 89. 5% support for contributing to increase in U. S. crime rates. Anomie theory attributes crime in U. S to individual commitment for material success, placing particular emphasis on motivations derived from the profit goal of economic institutions dominating the American culture. In their opinion, Messner and Rosenfeld (2001) argue that increase in crime rate in America can be explained by modern nation and anomie theories, which emphasize on material prosperity regardless of the method used to attain such wealth.

Institutional Anomie theory assumes the existence of four distinctive values underlining the American culture (Merton, 1938). The first value is achievement which refers to setting and accomplishing goals, being successful and increasing personal wealth. The second value is individualism, which refers to America's strong belief in personal rights and freedom. The third value is universalism, which just like the American dream encourages everyone to succeed and assumes that everyone has equal opportunities to become successful. The fourth underlying cultural value is materialism in

which success is measured by monetary rewards. In this respect, the American dream is never ending as it is always possible to acquire more money. These cultural values lead to an open widespread, competitive and anomic quest for success, which ultimately creates a cultural environment that is highly conducive to criminal behavior.

Factors contributing to Crime in China

Table 2: Showing Percentage Results for Factors Contributing to Crime in China

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Crime Factors

Percentage

Percentage

Percentage

Westernization

42%

34%

24%

Desire for achievement

67%

27%

6%

Individualism

48%

32%

20%

Universalism

34%

32%

34%

Materialism

63%

30%

7%

Industrialization

68%

31%

1%

Poverty

37%

38%

25%

Data values reveal that industrialization, desire for achievement and materialism are major causes of crime in China. Percentage participants who strongly agreed that industrialization, desire for achievement and materialism contributed to increase of crime rate in China were 68%, 67% and 63% respectively. Generally, the percentage of sampled population who strongly agreed that the four factors associated with anomie theory, namely: desire for achievement, individualism, universalism and materialism contributed to increased crime in China was 53%, while those who agreed were 30.3%, making a 83.3% total of participants who strongly agreed and those who agreed, while those who disagreed that desire for achievement, individualism, universalism and materialism contributed to increased crime rate in China were only 16.7%. Furthermore, 42% of sampled population strongly agreed that Westernization was a contributing factor to increased criminal activities in China, while 34% agreed and 24% disagreed that Westernization had contributed to increasing crime rate in China. Combining

the percentages of those who strongly agreed and those who agreed that westernization had contributed to increasing rate of crime in China gives a total of 76% of the sampled population, while only 24% disagreed that Westernization has contributed to increased crime rate in China. The data further indicates that unlike in U. S, 75% of sampled population in China agreed that poverty is a major factor contributing to increase in crime rate, while only 25% of participants disagreed that poverty positively contributed to increase in criminal activities in the country. These factors are draw support from former research and theoretical frameworks on increasing rate of crime in China.

Westernization.

Data in this research revealed that 76% of sampled population blamed westernization for increase in crime rate in China. Westernization is viewed as liberation of mind from old dogmas and mistaken understanding of Socialism. Introduced in 1978, modern capitalist economy led to Westernization in China, forcing Chinese to embrace Western values. This led to increased crime as people moved from socialism to capitalism, a system that encourages individual achievements. While economic and technological modernization are the supreme politics of the new era in China, reforms in ideology, organization, work methods and systems are seen as essential to bringing political superstructure into alignment with rapidly growing forces of production. Westernization is responsible for vast changing social and economic systems in China (Bakken, 2005). Furthermore; breakdown of traditional socialist cultural values is one of the most remarkable consequences of social reforms in China that have their origin from the West.

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The influence of Western culture has forced Chinese to pursue criminal activities in search for wealth as a measure for personal success.

Introduction of Western values in China led to death of Chinese traditions that determined people's behavior. According to Zhang and Messenr (2001), swift punishment was administered by community to those who failed to conform to traditions. However, China's social equilibrium has been disturbed by introduction of western culture that has rendered the old rules ineffective. This has resulted to conflict between the law and morals, whereby crime is viewed as a practical way of making a real living and a positive reaction to social disorganization. Western culture has taken over China emphasizing on materialism rather than socialism. Chinese now believe that getting rich is glorious and have resolved to use crime to get material wealth, hence the increased crime rates.

American Culture and Anomie.

This research reveals that 83. 3% of sampled population believed that influx of factors associated with American culture and anomie in China have contributed to increasing criminal activities. American culture and anomie theory emphasize on seeking the most efficient way to achieve economic success. Crime has been viewed as the most efficient way to achieve economic success, while beliefs, values, and commitments are casual variables which can be ignored (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007). Before the introduction of capitalism, China was governed by strong traditional cultural emphasis on collective communists' reinforcement of traditional, social and political education, whereby the government used all ideological means at all levels to strengthen the socialist's values and norms, with the society

sharing collective conscience and basic values that emphasized on common good as the only goal for all members of the society. Likewise, the interests of the community were placed above those of individuals; hence individualistic concerns with personal gains were despised (Schwendiger & Schwendiger, 1975). This made China to be an outstanding society characterized by a communitarian social life infused with altruistic values and collective goals. However, with introduction of modernization came the American culture that led to weakening of social norms. Influx of American culture into China brought Western individualistic values, as the government continued to promote cultural values that encourage entrepreneurship and personal economic advancement, replacing the slogan “to serve all” with the slogan “getting rich is glorious” (Messner and Rosenfeld, 2007).

The Western individualistic values embraced by China are those of American culture, encouraging individualism, personal achievement, universalism and materialism. These changes have resulted to anomie, as the existing laws are inadequate to deal with the complexities of transition to market economy and modern social life. The society has consequently achieved norm-less state, whereby achieving wealth has become the supreme end of individuals. This has led to increase in rate of crime and deviance.

Poverty.

75% of participants indicated that poverty was a crime motivating factor in China. Poverty, resulting from unequal distribution of wealth and resources as well as inadequate social security system widen income gap, resulting to great impact on crime rate. In the modern society, everyone wants to make

more money, although the poor have to pay a high cost if they legally have to achieve monetary success. In addition, pressure to achieve monetary success combined with lack of enough legal channels to do so and the human suffering faced by Chinese society drives them to a life of crime. (Xia, 2006) points out that great number of rich people in China have acquired their wealth illegally. This reduces the moral cost of committing crime besides making some illegal practices appear justified.

Conclusion

Data results and theoretical frameworks employed in this research strongly indicate that the increasing rate of crime in China is motivated by Western values imported to China from the United States. The influx of these values into China started in 1978, with the introduction of capitalism economy, whereby the government encouraged individual success and material wealth as measures of personal achievement. The drastic change of the way of life for Chinese from communalism to capitalism encouraged criminal activities in pursuit for material wealth in compliance with government's requirements for new way of life.

The pursuit for American dream in U. S. is similar to China's notion of Westernization that led to influx of American culture in China, where the slogan " getting rich is glorious" replaced social integrity and collective communal responsibility with materialism, individualism, desire for achievement and universalism, which are the principle building blocks of the American culture. Furthermore, the widening economic gap between the rich and the poor in China and U. S. ironically denies the poor equal opportunities

of acquiring wealth and achieving monetary success, while giving a wide range of opportunities for the rich to continue acquiring and accumulating wealth.

The research findings in this paper support research hypothesis that increasing rate of crime in China is motivated by rapid influx of industrialization, the salient American dream, westernization and the American culture that found their way into China with the introduction of capitalism in 1978. This therefore means that China has given up its culture in favor of the U. S. culture in order to achieve rapid industrialization, a move that has resulted to increased rate of criminal activities within the country.

Given the fact that rapid increase of criminal activities in China resulted from adopting the U. S. paradigm of capitalism in order to achieve economic growth, this research suggests creation of another paradigm to control criminal activities in China, such as adopting and strengthening of Western law as it is the case for U. S. China mainly emphasizes on informal social crime control at grass-root rather than the Western sense of law. This has become ineffective with the abolishment of socialism and the introduction of Westernization. In addition, introduction of new paradigm that aims at narrowing the widening gap between the rich and the poor as well as adopting proactive approaches to empower people from rural areas with income generating initiatives aimed at controlling influx of Chinese to urban areas could reduce the increasing rates of criminal activities in urban areas, where many people have moved to in search for employment.

Based on the findings of this research, further research could be carried out to identify the right paradigms that could be adopted by China to control increasing criminal activities, especially in urban areas and ensure that rapid industrialization works for the benefit of the entire Chinese community but not just few wealthy individuals.

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Appendix 1.

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Research Questionnaire for United States

To all Participants:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research. For each question, please tick one answer that best describes your opinion.

It has been said that desire for achievement, i. e. desire to increase personal wealth and become successful has led to increase in crime in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

It has been said that individualism, i. e. strong belief in personal rights and freedom has contributed to increased crime rate in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

It has been said that universalism, i. e. belief that everyone in the U. S has equal rights to succeed has contributed to increased crime in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

It has been said that materialism, i. e. measuring individual success by monetary rewards in U. S. has contributed to increase in crime in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

It has been said that pursuit for American dream has resulted to increase in crime rate in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

It has been said that poverty has contributed to increasing rate of crime in U. S. Do you:

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree