What did Merton say about deviance in the U.S.?
- He argued that higher rates of deviance in the U.S., compared to countries in Europe, were due to the confluence of two factors:
  - Societal norms of wealth attainment
  - Lack of opportunities by some classes to obtain the prescribed goal through normative means.

Is it true that there is more violence in the U.S. than in other countries?
- Yes. The U.S. has some of the highest rates of violent crime in the world.
- According to Weiss, the homicide rate for men in the U.S. is higher than in any of 8 comparable nations.
- In a broader comparison, the U.S. appears to have similar homicide rates to countries such as the Bahamas, Ecuador, and Suriname.

What are the general crime trends in the U.S.?

Worldwide, who are the most common victims of homicide?
- According to Weiss, the most common victims of homicide are men between the ages of 15 and 34.
- Moreover, ethnic minority men have about three times higher rates of homicide.

What reasons account for higher homicide trends in the U.S.?
- Weiss argues that one of the major factors leading to higher rates of homicide in the U.S. is the availability of firearms.
- What other factors might contribute to the higher rates of homicide in the U.S.?
  - Work factors - it has been suggested that unemployment tends to increase the risk of criminal activity. For example, Merva and Fowles found that a 1% increase in unemployment was associated with a 7% increase in homicides and a 3% increase in other violent crimes.

What is the link between economic factors and lynchings in the south?
- Beck and Tolnay argue that after the civil war, one of the strongest predictors of anti-black violence, especially lynchings, were economic factors. (?)
- That is, as economic circumstances grew worse, anti-black violence tended to increase.
- They tied this argument to the price of cotton and showed that as the price of cotton fell, the rates of anti-black violence tended to increase.
Poverty and Violence
• Is being poor a risk factor for victimization?
• A number of different indicators have been examined in terms of linking low SES to rates of violence. These include:
  • Concentration of poverty households
  • Household crowding
  • Individual income levels

What do these studies find?
• Regardless of the measure used, living in poorer circumstances is associated with a higher risk of victimization.
• This is true for:
  • Poverty concentration
  • Household crowding
  • Income

Violence in African American communities
• In discussing crime in African American communities, Zimring and Hawkins make 2 central points:
  • African American violence is not just one part of a greater tendency of Blacks to commit crime
  • Rates of crime in the U.S. are higher than rates in other countries only because of the high crime rates for Blacks.

Violent crime vs. non-violent crime
• Violent crime rates of African Americans tend to be much higher than property crime rates.
• What is important about this idea?
  • It forces us to think about violent crime among African Americans in different terms when considering ways to alleviate those problems.

Are higher crime rates in the U.S. due only to African American rates?
• Zimring and Hawkins argue that this is not the case.
• They show that if you break down the homicide rate of 9.4 per 100,000 persons based on race, and then remove the portion of homicides due to Black violence, the homicide rate (4.8 per 100,000) still remains much higher than that of other industrial nations.

• What is important about understanding this fact?
  • We cannot make the claim that violence among African Americans is the result of unique cultural or structural processes.
  • Rather, it is a product of the American experience. As Zimring and Hawkins argue,
The contrasting and, we believe, correct assumption is that rates of violence among racial and social subpopulations, black and white, are variable over time and with changed circumstances because they grow out of the social experience of American life. In these conditions, the rates of violence experienced by various subpopulations will, in large part, be determined by their location in the American social distribution.

What are the health and mortality consequences of violence?
• Although not the leading cause of death in the U.S., violence nevertheless results in both health problems and in premature mortality.
• As was noted by Zimring and Hawkins, and others, African Americans are disproportionately affected.

Violence as a Public Health Problem
• Weiss argues that violence in the U.S. is a public health problem. (?)
  • Violence can be combated by using prevention strategies, which occur at three levels:
    • Primary: prevent violent behaviors and exposure to violence (e.g., parental training programs)
    • Secondary: diverting and intervening with programs after people have been exposed to risk factors (e.g., probation, midnight basketball).
    • Tertiary: prevention of repeated violence (rehabilitation through prison or other means)

Discussion Question
• Weiss argues that violence should be combated using public health interventions. Are these strategies a form of blaming the victim?
• What other strategies might be effective in decreasing the rates of violence in the U.S.?