Public Concern About Crime

Crime Most Important Problem

How Do We Measure Crime?
- Crimes reported to the police
  - FBI Uniform Crime Reports
  - Started in 1930s
  - Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter, Forcible Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny-Theft, Motor Vehicle Theft, and Arson
- Victimization studies
  - Started in 1970s
Crime Control

Property Crime

Per 1,000 Population


Variation in Violent Crime

- DC 17.4/1,000 (1st)
- Florida 8.0/1,000 (2nd)
- Illinois 6.4/1,000 (8th)
- Texas 5.7 (13th)
- Wisconsin 2.3/1,000 (46th)
- Minnesota 2.6/1,000 (40th)
- North Dakota 0.8/1,000 (51st)

Controlling Crime

- Deterrence
  - Punishing criminals
  - Reducing official discretion
- Protection
  - Incapacitation
  - Empowering citizens (concealed carry)
- Designing out the problem
  - Gun control
- Dealing with underlying social causes
Media and Crime

Graph 1: Nationally, crime dropped by 29% from 1990 to 1996 while network television showed an 83% increase in crime news.

Homicide Reporting

Figure 1: From 1996-1998, homicide coverage was increasing on network news by 47%, while homicides were down 32%.

Not Unique to the U.S.

Stories on Murder from January 1, 1969 to December 31, 1969
Conceptions of Crime

- Social pathologies
  - Deprivation
  - Alienation
- Individual pathologies
  - Volitional
  - Matter of personal choice
- Myth of crime and punishment
  - Punishment is an effective remedy against crime
  - Punishment expresses society’s moral disapproval

Anomie

- Emiel Durkheim, Suicide (1997)
- Anomie is a state where norms (expectations on behaviors) are confused, unclear or not present.
  - Breakdown in the rules on how people ought to behave with each other were breaking down and thus people did not know what to expect from one another.
  - “Normlessness” leads in turn to deviant behavior.
  - Anomie may a result of social change.

American Response to Crime

- Zero tolerance policies
  - “Broken windows”
  - School violence and “weapons” in school
- Punishment
  - Death penalty
  - Increased incidence of incarceration
  - Increased length of incarceration
    - “Truth in Sentencing”
    - Three (or two) strikes and your out
Impacts?

- There *has* been a decrease in crime
  - Impact of policy or of something else?
    - Economic prosperity
    - Changing demographics
- Increased imprisonment
  - Drastic growth in number incarcerated
  - U.S. has highest rate of imprisonment in the developed world
Number of Inmates in Prisons and Jails


0 500,000 1,000,000 1,500,000 2,000,000 2,500,000

America's Imprisonment Rate

Significant Events in America's Incarceration Binge
Federal Cases Only

Types of Penalties Assessed
Criminal Defendants After Conviction
1992-2002

Imprisonment Rates Around the World, 1998

Why Is the U.S. So Different

- Culture of individualism
- Popularity of crime as political issue
- Political structure
  - Populism
  - Localism
  - Lack of strong party control
- Interest group pressure
  - Prison-Industrial Complex
Capital Punishment

- Public support

[Graph showing support for the Death Penalty over time]

- Culture of violence?

Does Capital Punishment Deter?

- State by state comparisons (2001)
  - Michigan (6.7) vs. Illinois (7.9) or Ohio (4.0)
  - Iowa (1.7) vs. Nebraska (2.5) or Kansas (3.4)
  - North Dakota (1.1) vs. South Dakota (0.9)
  - Massachusetts (2.3) & Rhode Island (3.7) vs. Connecticut (3.1)
  - Maine (1.4) & Vermont (1.1) vs. New Hampshire (1.4)
  - West Virginia (2.2) vs. Pennsylvania (5.3) or Virginia (5.1)

Protection

- Decrease in crime does not reflect deterrence
- Decrease in crime does not reflect improved economic conditions
- Decrease in crime does not reflect changing demographics
- Decrease in crime DOES reflect getting the criminals off the street
Concealed Carry Issue

- www.packing.org
- Reduces crime
  - Criminals don’t know who is carrying
  - Crime has decreased in states with concealed carry laws
- Does not affect crime
  - Crime has not decreased more in concealed carry states compared to other states
- Does it increase risk of gun-related violence, accidental or otherwise?

Designing Out Crime

- English suicide by gas example
- Smarter credit cards
- Better car security/car alarms
- Legalizing drugs

Underlying Social Causes

- Quality of education
- Social safety nets
- Much crime is generational
  - Crime will wax and wane as number of people in crime-prone ages wax and wane
- Alternatives for youth
  - Recreation
  - Jobs
- Creating a stake in larger society