

Crime and Criminal Justice Policy Issues in the U.S. (PLS 202, Dluhy)

I. Some Assumptions About the Major Factors Which Influence Crime Rates:

- *Unemployment rates are excellent predictors of overall crime rates.*
- *The actual size of the age cohort, 18-26, is significant because this is the age cohort which commits the most crime. When cohort is smaller, the rate goes down. That is why communities with a higher a median age or one with very few people in the 18-26 age category usually have lower crime rates. (James Q. Wilson)*
- *The more culturally, economically, and racially diverse an area, the higher the rate. Heterogeneity increases, not decreases crime. Diversity means dominant community norms are less clear and therefore the hardest to enforce. When community norms are absent we have a breakdown of social institutions that would otherwise mediate crime. Social institutions like churches and religious groups, sports and leisure time groups, cultural groups, self help groups, etc. often provide boundaries, norms, and social controls for deviant/criminal behavior. Anomie is the state of society in which normative standards of conduct and behavior are weak or lacking. Look at the cities with the highest crime rates. ****

II. Some Major Community Based Programs Aimed at Reducing Crime:

- *Traditional policing—911, calls for service, \$100,000 per officer and \$300,000 for a 1.0 FTE for every 24 hours. Resources flow to where the calls for service are and what the priorities are for calls. Thus, homicide gets highest priority but home alarms are low on the list. Usually most expensive alternative.*
- *Community policing—The key concept is that police officers are assigned to a neighborhood. They get to know the residents and the businesses. They are not pulled off to 911 calls in other neighborhoods. They develop a relationship with the neighborhood and help it develop prevention strategies. They continuously patrol the area and know for example when outsiders are present. Some police complain that it does not respond to calls for service and that the police officer becomes a social worker and not a crime fighter. Usually police officers working in community policing have a college degree.*
- *Crime watch—low cost alternative but organization is critical. Often neighborhoods will contract for enhanced police services by paying the city or*

hiring a private company. Otherwise neighbors need to be very pro-active. Good police departments have police provide technical assistance to these groups.

- *Close streets boarding busy through-fares. Add speed bumps.*
- *Advise citizens and businesses on preventive architecture: shutters; window height; doors; fences; walls, etc.*
- *Gated communities. Very, very popular. If streets are private, no one may enter. Otherwise people can be screened. Neighborhoods want this.*
- *Cell phones that go directly to police departments that are distributed to citizens. More cost effective than most alarm systems.*
- *Boot camps for teenagers. Good short run results, bad long run results.*
- *DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)—and other drug prevention programs for teens.*
- *“Weed and Seed” programs—These are consortia of organizations in the community which coordinate various crime prevention programs across the community. The organizations meet regularly, share information and resources, and apply for external grants.*
- *Safe Schools Counseling (Self Help)*

III. Critical Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice (top priority national, state, local?)

- *How to wisely spend money? Guns vs. Butter, Hardware vs. Software?*
- *Prisons vs. Rehabilitation, the prison industry and online degrees, the recidivism rate*
- *Racial profiling*
- *Inequitable sentencing, within and between systems*
- *Young multiple offenders, what to do? 40-50% of crimes are committed by multiple offenders*
- *“Three strikes and you are out”*
- *Programs for drug offenders, many prisons have 60-70% of their prisoners in jail on drug related charges*

Crime Rates for American Cities over 100,000 in Population, Crime Rate Per 100,000 people.

<i>1. Atlanta</i>	<i>17,132</i>
<i>2. St. Louis</i>	<i>16,290</i>
<i>3. Miami</i>	<i>15,686</i>
<i>4. Newark</i>	<i>15,608</i>
<i>5. Baton Rouge</i>	<i>14,823</i>
<i>6. Tampa</i>	<i>14,255</i>
<i>7. Hartford</i>	<i>13,477</i>
<i>8. Orlando</i>	<i>13,212</i>
<i>9. Flint (Mi)</i>	<i>12,728</i>
<i>10. Salt Lake Cty</i>	<i>12,633</i>
<i>11. Winston Salem</i>	<i>12,529</i>
<i>12. Little Rock</i>	<i>12,378</i>
<i>13. Oklahoma City</i>	<i>12,234</i>
<i>14. Macon (Ga.)</i>	<i>12,212</i>
<i>15. Tucson</i>	<i>12,210</i>
<i>16. Washington, D.C.</i>	<i>12,188</i>
<i>17. Portland</i>	<i>12,169</i>
<i>18. Detroit</i>	<i>12,072</i>