Criminology

Lecture 1

Course Overview

Part I: Crime and Its Definition

- In this section, we will talk about rules and systems of social control.

- We will define "crime" as behavioral acts that breach <u>rules</u> *sanctioned* by the **state**.

- We will see that there are many other types of rules, and that the simple legal definition may not be adequate.

Human Nature

- Are humans selfish, prone to breaking rules, and in general prone to criminality?
- Are humans prosocial, and often willing to follow social rules, and punish those who do not?
- We will look at some experimental evidence to address these interesting and important questions.

Law and Crime

- Why is watching (and not reporting) a woman getting stabbed and raped not a crime?

- Why did John Hinckley Jr. only go to a mental hospital for an attempted presidential assassination?

- We will look at how the American Criminal justice system defines crime

Part II: Nature, Measurement, and Distribution of Crime

- Measuring Crime (Uniform Crime Reports, National Crime Victimization Surveys, self-report surveys)
- Types of Crime (Property and Violent Crime, Extremism/Terrorism)
- Patterns associated with crime (age, gender, crime rates in through time and in different places)

The Age-Crime Curve
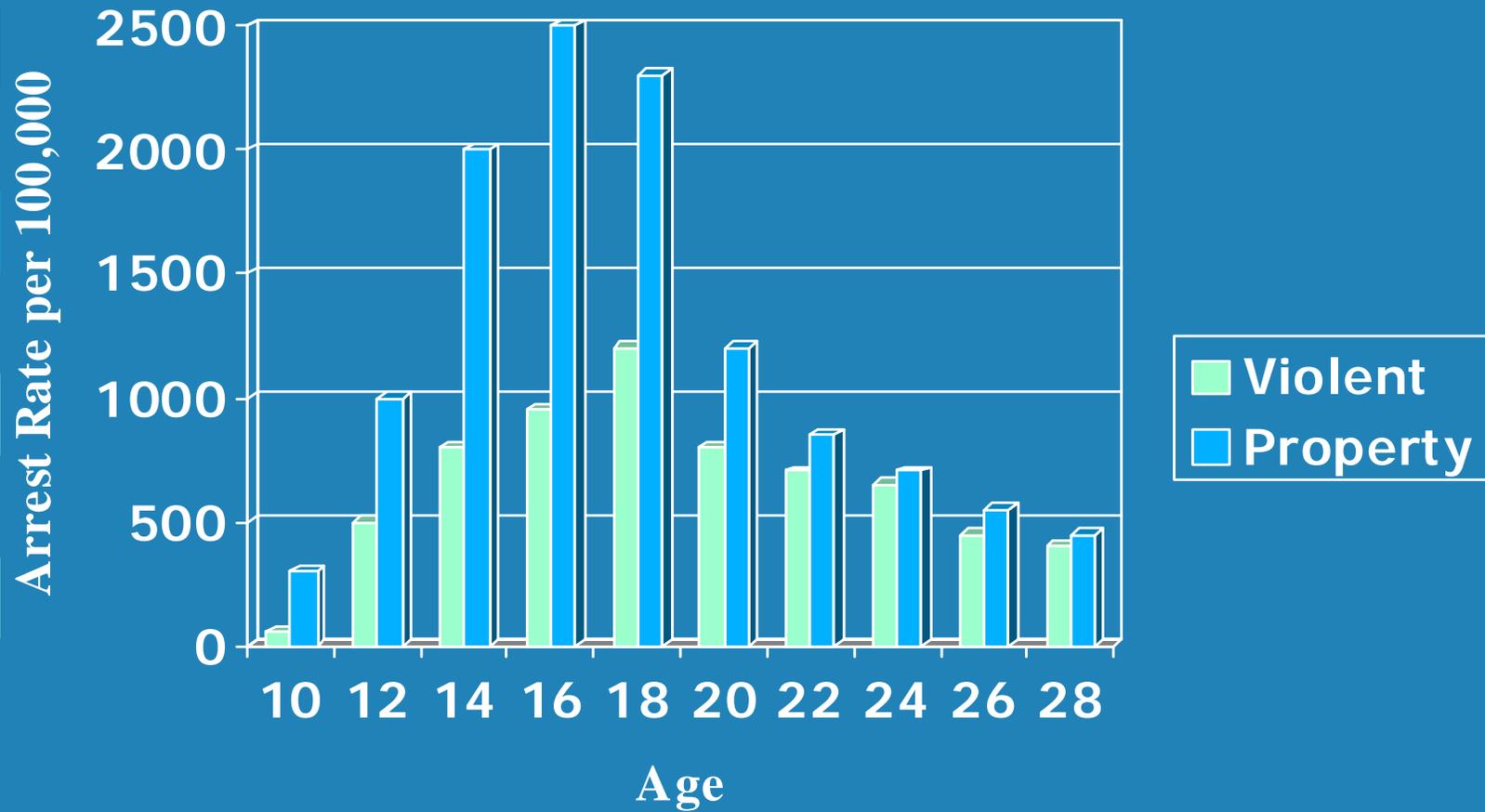
# Crime: International Perspectives

- High rates of crime in the U.S.

- What factors associated with the United States that might cause high crime rates? (culture, capitalistic economies, inequality, self-concepts) ?

Country	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Burglary
United States	6.3	34.4	165.2	862
Japan	1.1	1.5	2.7	187.9
Denmark	3.9	7.9	49.2	1925.2
Switzerland	2.6	5.4	36.2	1172.5
Russia	18	6.1	109.6	519.7
Columbia	56.3	1.4	66.9	57.9

Crime Rate in Selected Countries, 1998: Interpol Data (**Incidents per 100,000**)

Vicious Brits

% of people who were a victim of crime, once or more, in 1999:

Violent crime

Country	Value (0–5)
Australia	4.0
England & Wales	3.3
Scotland	3.1
Finland	3.0
Northern Ireland	2.5
France	2.4
Netherlands	2.2
United States	2.1
Spain†	1.7
Japan	0.4

Car theft

Country	Value (0–3)
England & Wales	2.6
Australia	2.2
France	2.0
Northern Ireland	1.5
Scotland	1.2
Netherlands	0.5
Finland	0.5
United States	0.5
Spain†	0.5
Japan	0.1

Burglary*

Country	Value (0–8)
Australia	6.7
England & Wales	5.3
United States	3.8
Netherlands	3.7
Scotland	3.0
Northern Ireland	2.6
France	2.5
Spain†	2.0
Japan	1.8
Finland	1.2

*Including attempts   †Catalonia

Source: International Crime Victims Survey, 2000

City:	Rate:	Rank:
New York, NY	9,236	48
Los Angeles, CA	9,730	40
Chicago, IL	NA	NA
Houston, TX	10,824	29
Philadelphia, PA	6,835	71
San Diego, CA	8,537	57
Dallas, TX	15,066	6
Phoenix, AZ	9,958	38
Detroit, MI	12,263	14
San Antonio, TX	12,291	13
San Jose, CA	5,364	76
Indianapolis, IN	7,357	67
San Francisco, CA	9,384	46
Baltimore, MD	11,371	19
Jacksonville, FL	10,591	31
Long Beach, CA	9,131	50
Kansas City, MO	13,198	8
Virginia Beach, VA	5,863	75
Charlotte, NC	12,643	11
Tucson, AZ	10,401	33
Albuquerque, NM	10,284	34
Atlanta, GA	18,953	1
St. Louis, MO	16,031	5
Sacramento, CA	10,098	37
Fresno, CA	12,031	17
Tulsa, OK	8,887	54
Oakland, CA	12,186	16
Honolulu CDP, HI	5,959	74
Miami, FL	18,394	2
Pittsburgh, PA	8,219	58
Cincinnati, OH	9,722	41
Minneapolis, MN	11,282	22

Regional Crime Patterns

States

■	<1%
■	1-10%
■	10-50%
■	50-90%
■	90-99%
■	>99%

0   200   Miles

N
W   E
S
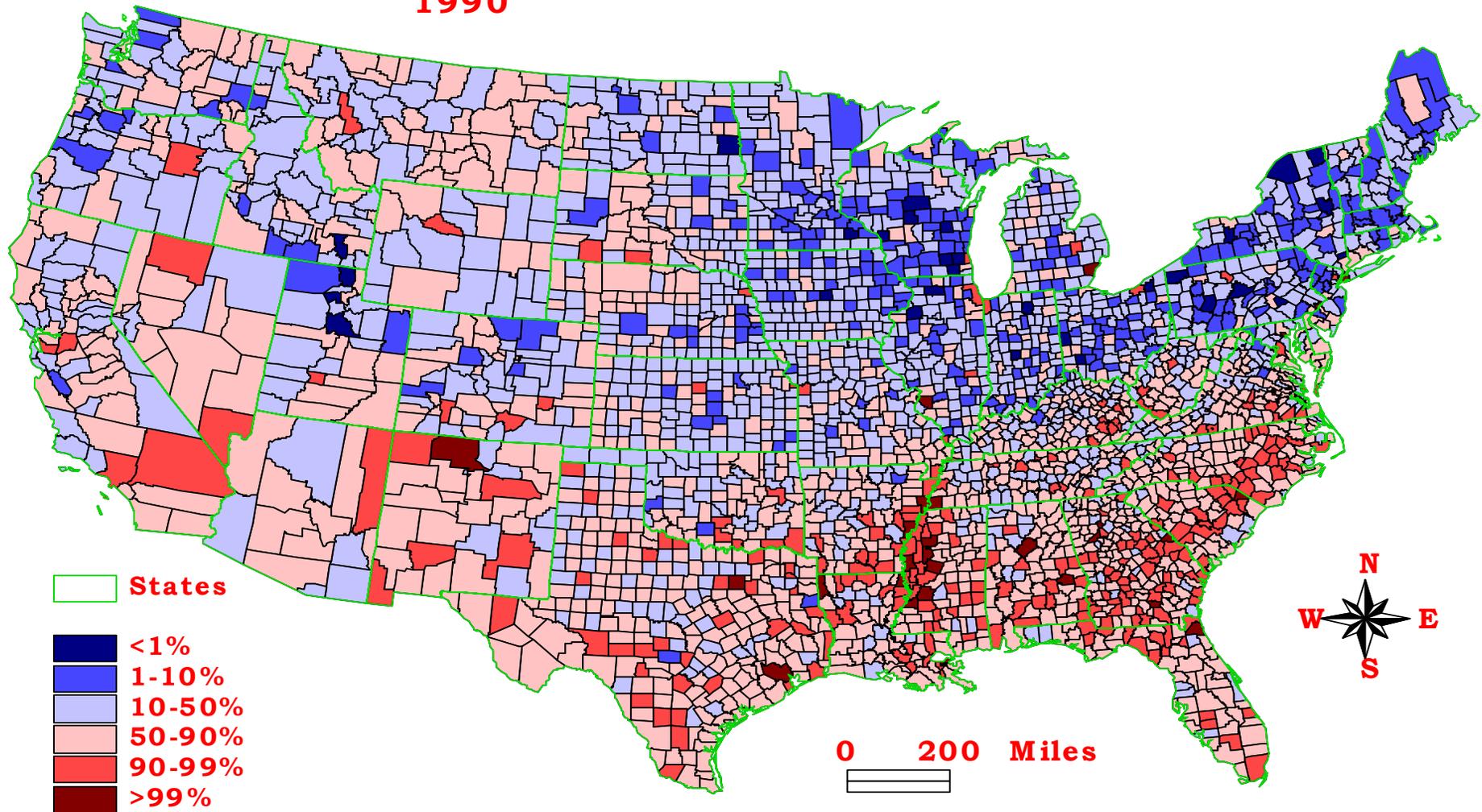
Temporal Patterns
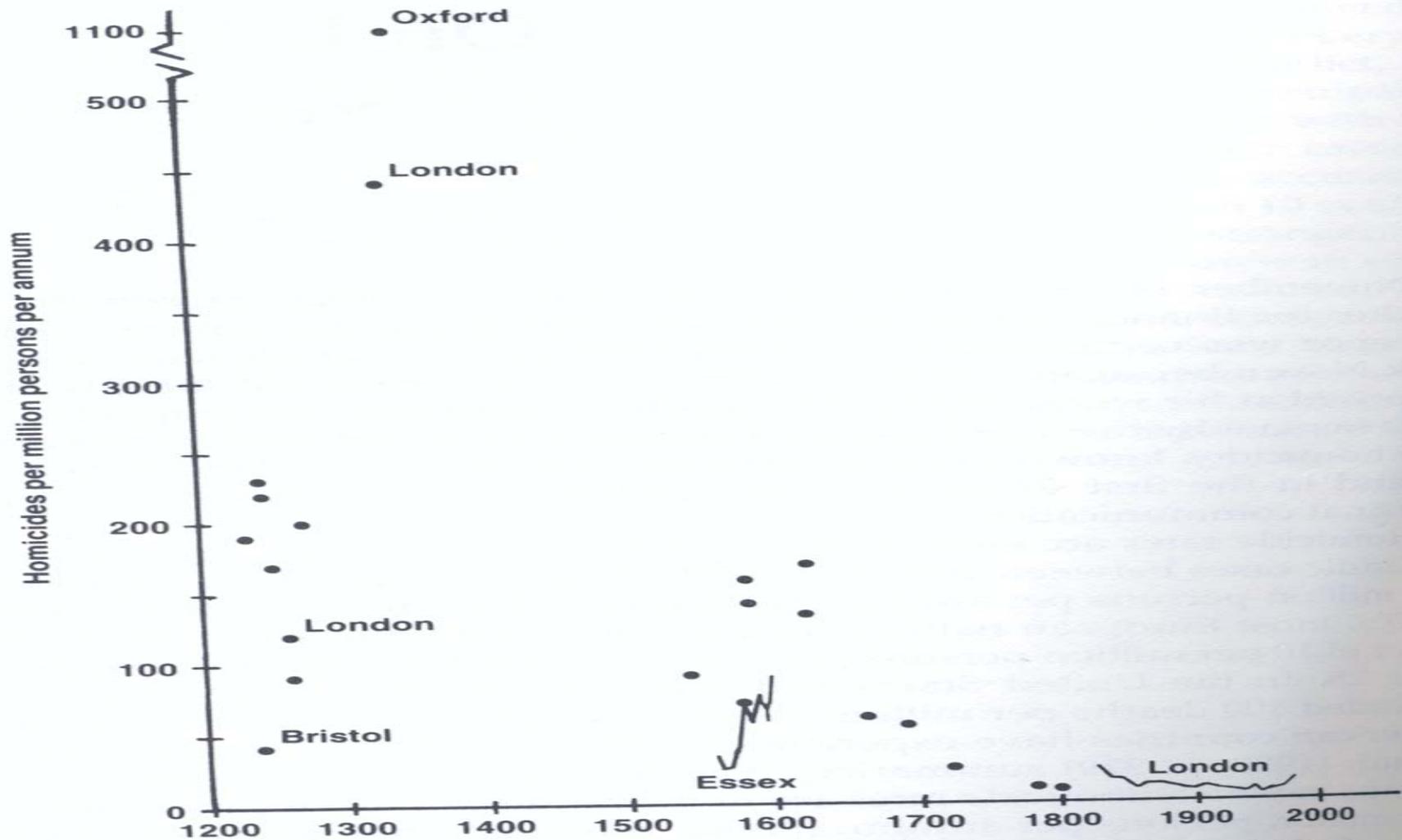
Figure 12.1. Historical changes in the homicide rate in England. Each point represents an estimated homicide rate for a city or county over a few years or decades. (Modified from Gurr, 1981.)

Crime waves

Comparable scales

Property crimes

per 100,000 population

7,000
6,600
6,200
5,800
5,400
5,000
4,600
4,200

1980 82 84 86 88 90 92 94 9697*

Violent crimes

per 100,000 population

800
750
700
650
600
550
500

1980 82 84 86 88 90 92 94 9697*
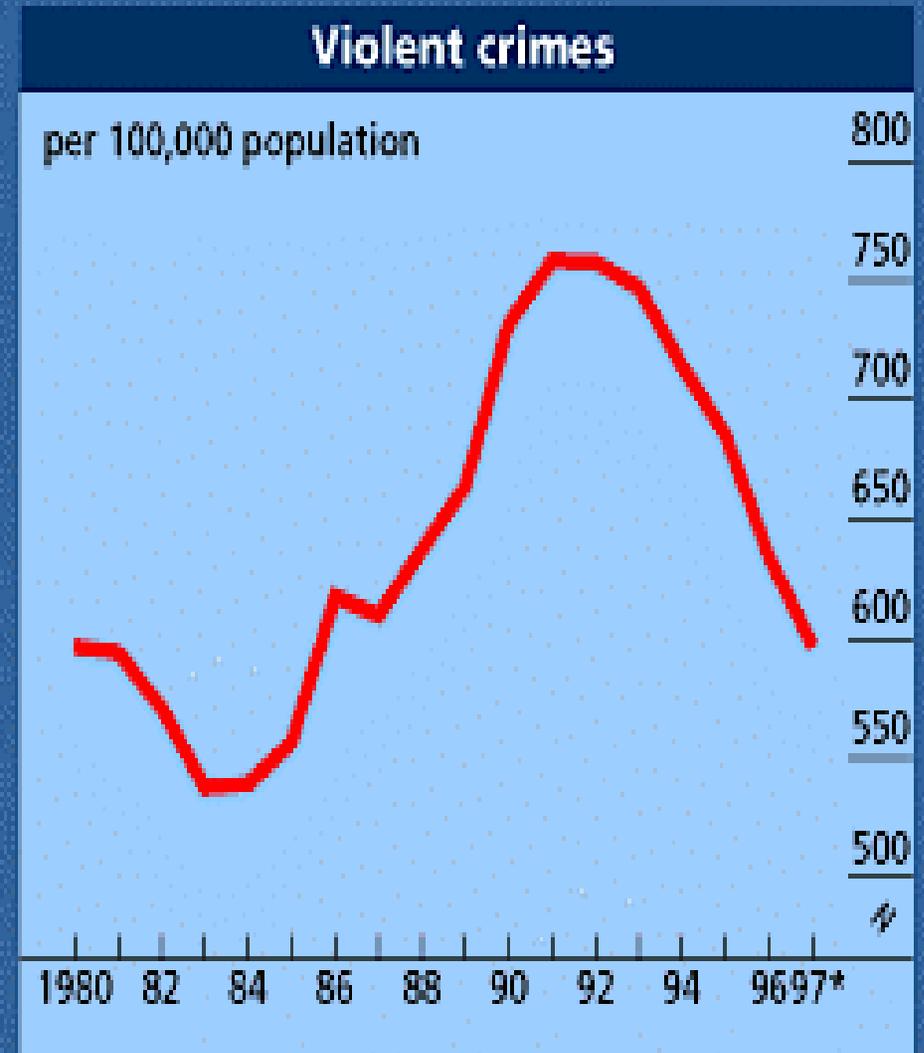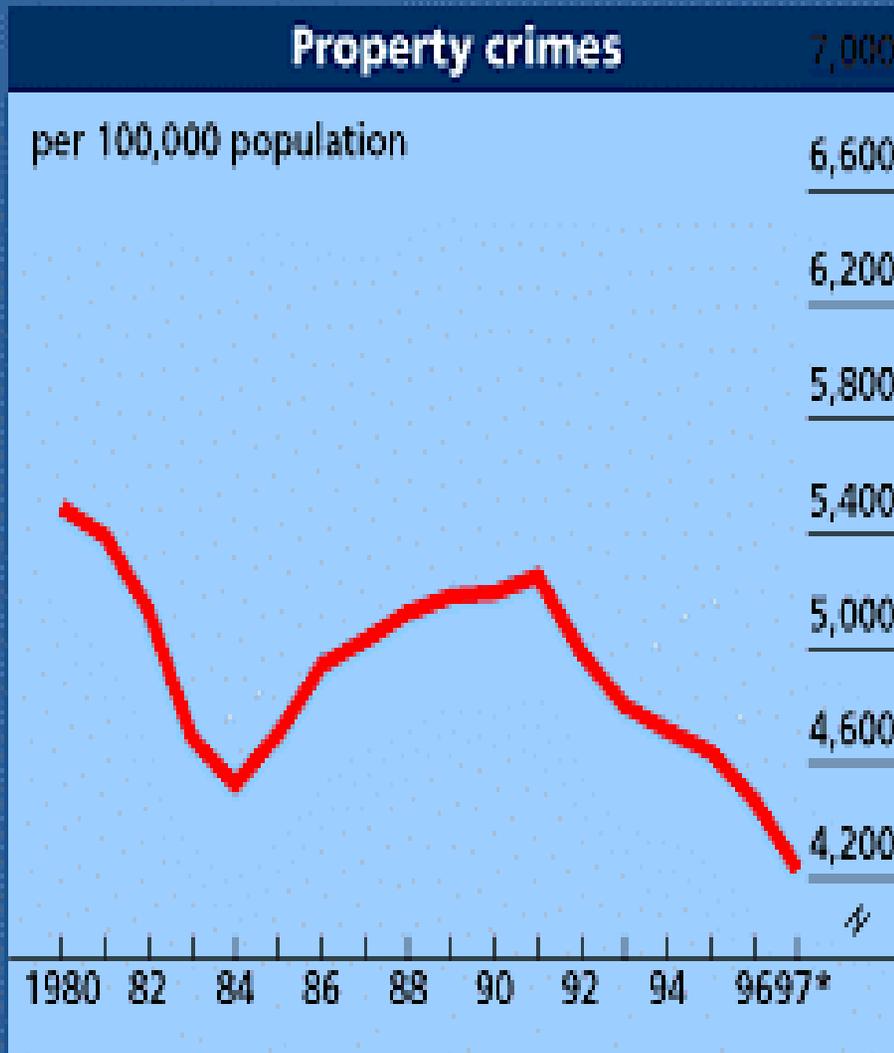
Source: US Federal Bureau of Investigation

*Preliminary

America's Plunging Crime Rate.

Firearms death rate by race

Death rate by firearms per 100,000 U.S. population, by race, 1979-1999
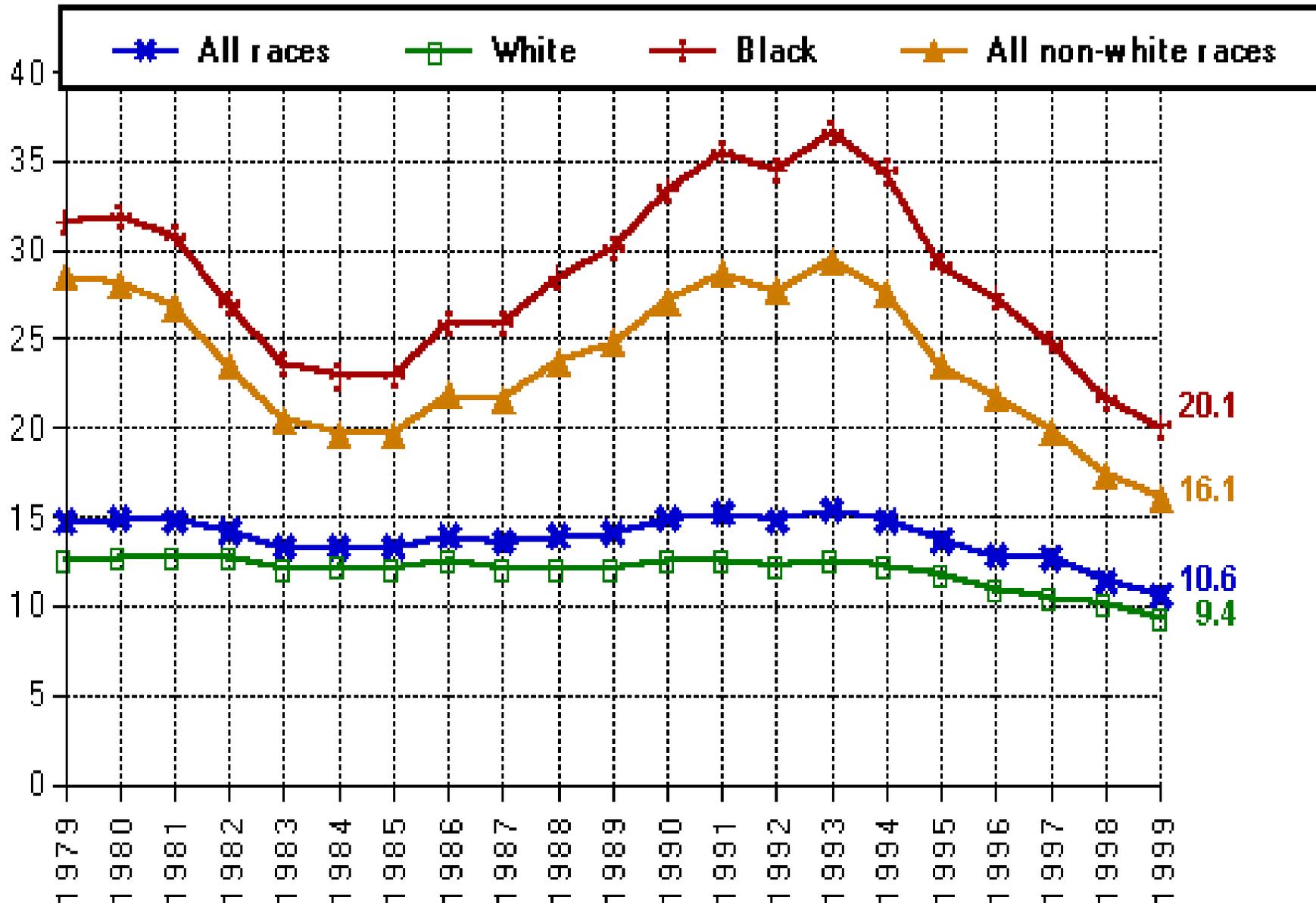
Legend: All races, White, Black, All non-white races

Final values:
- Black: 20.1
- All non-white races: 16.1
- All races: 10.6
- White: 9.4

X-axis years: 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999

Race/Ethnicity and Crime

- African Americans, Latinos, and other minorities experience high offender and victim rates.

 Is it a real *Disparity* or is it *Discrimination*?

Jail incarceration rates by race and ethnicity, 1990-2000

Number of jail inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents
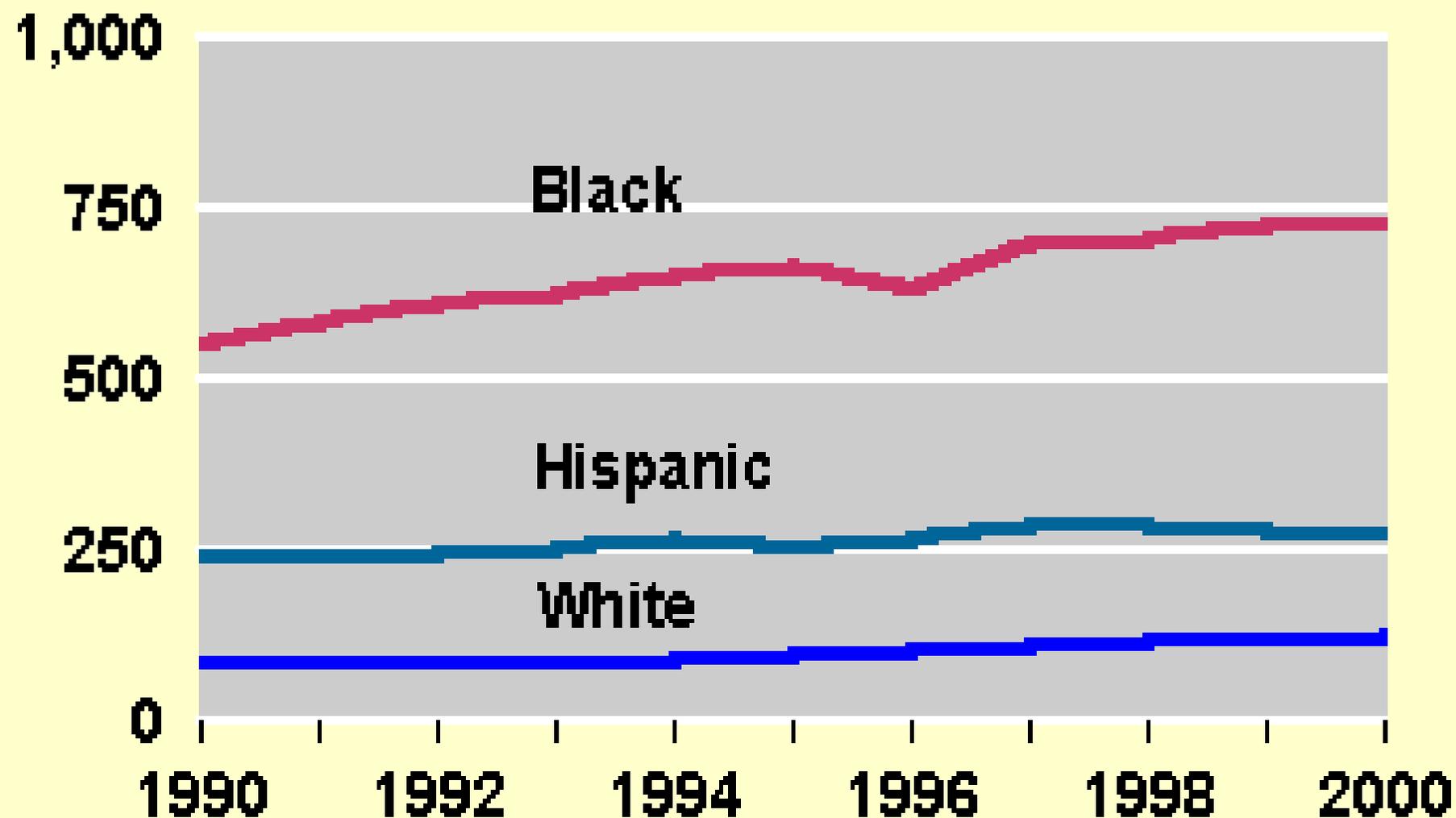
Crime: Red Flags
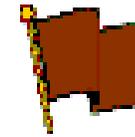
African-Americans and Hispanics trust the police and the criminal justice system less than whites

How much of the time do you think you can trust the police to do what is right for you or your community? Almost all of the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or almost none of the time?
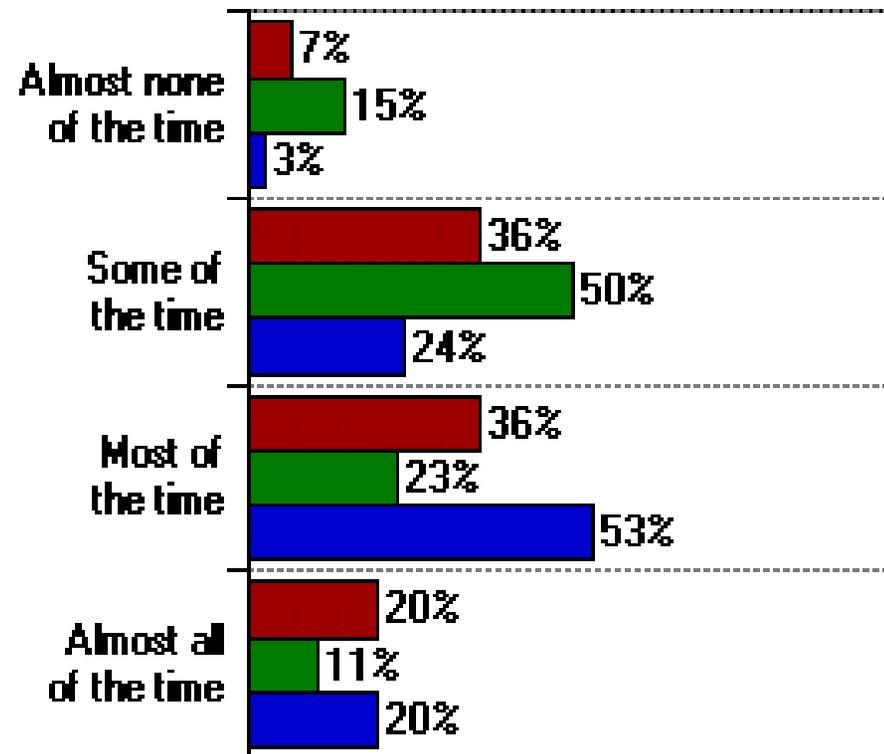
Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in the criminal justice system.

How much of the time do you think you can trust the police?

	Hispanics	African-Americans	Whites
Almost none of the time	7%	15%	3%
Some of the time	36%	50%	24%
Most of the time	36%	23%	53%
Almost all of the time	20%	11%	20%

Confidence in the criminal justice system

	African-Americans	Whites
Very little	48%	28%
Some	22%	39%
Quite a lot	8%	17%
Great deal	17%	11%

Legend: Hispanics · African-Americans · Whites
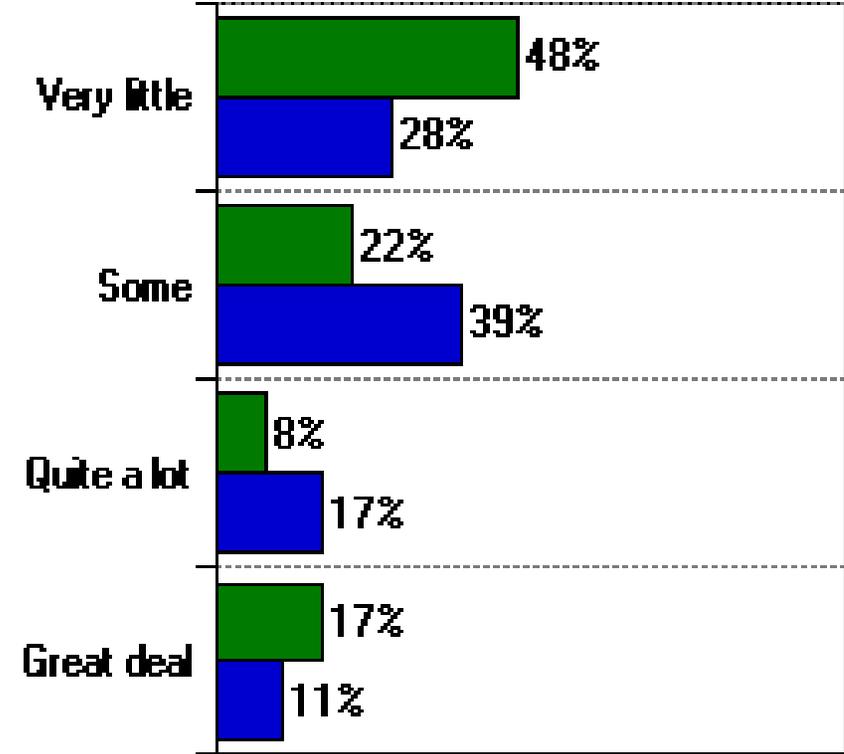
Questions

- Why do over 50% of homicides occur between family members and acquaintances?

- Are most robberies planned and rational?

- What do criminologists know about the causes of terrorism?

Part III: Theory: Evaluating Theories on Four Criteria

1) Assumptions of human nature
2) Factors that cause crime
3) Empirical support
4) Implications for public policy

Deterrence Hypothesis

- Hypothesis: When the certainty, severity, and celerity of criminal sanctions are high in a population, criminal behavior will be low.

Questions

- Do criminal sanctions deter murderers?
- Are bigger males more likely to be criminals?
- Can we blame American crime on the "American Dream" ?
- Does capitalism cause crime?

Part IV: Controlling Crime: Criminal Justice Institutions and Policy

- Informal institutions – Non-state institutions (vigilante organizations, "cultures of honor")

- Political ideology (conservative and liberal)

- Guns, drugs

Informal Institutions of Social Control

Outcomes of Incarceration Policy

- Rehabilitation or Punishment???

- Three strikes and you are out!!

Ken Light / Special to MSNBC

Figure 1.A   Incarceration rates for selected nations.

Nation

Rates of incarceration per 100,000 population
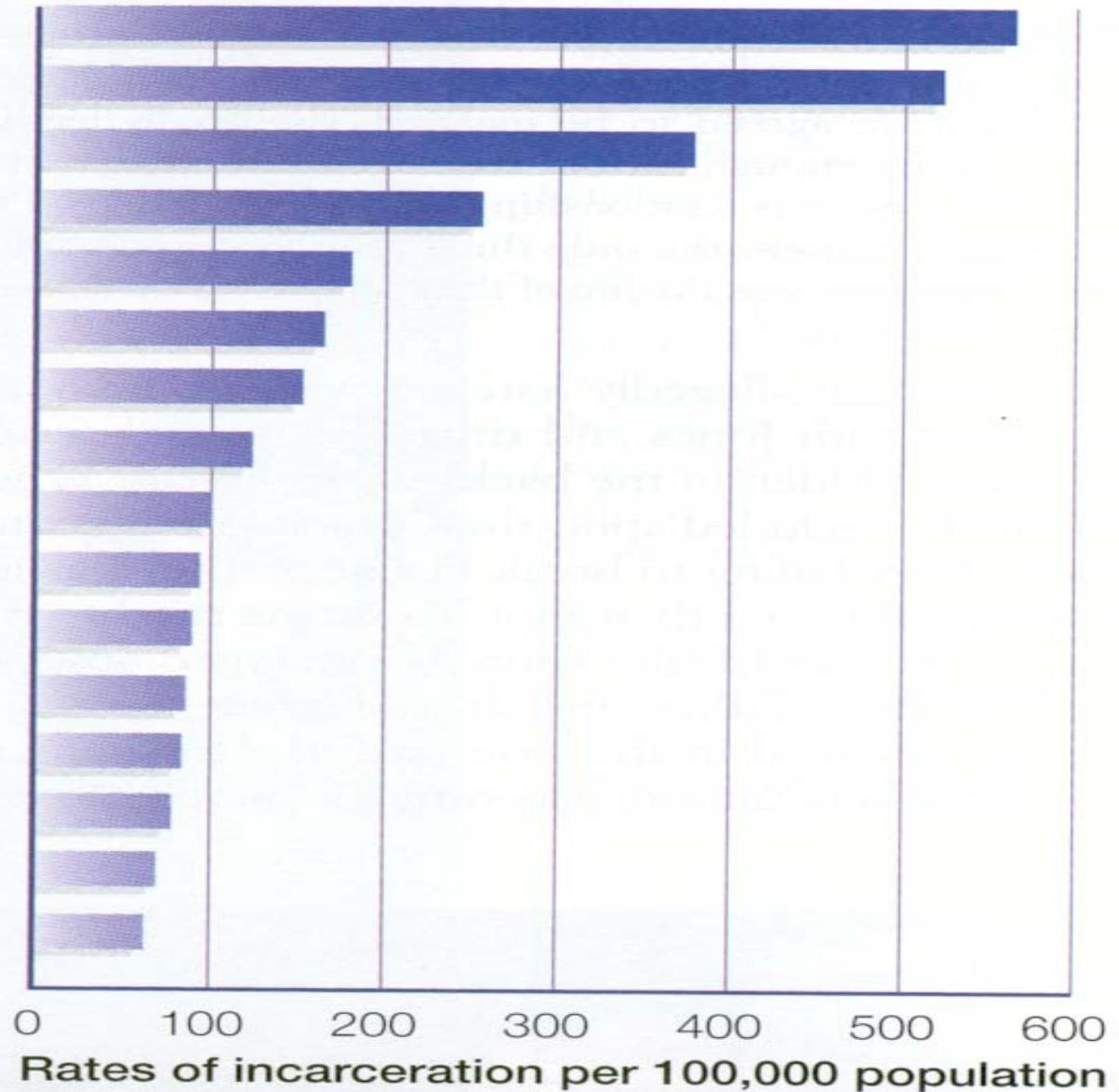
▶ Number of State and Federal Prisoners Sentenced, 1925 to 1997
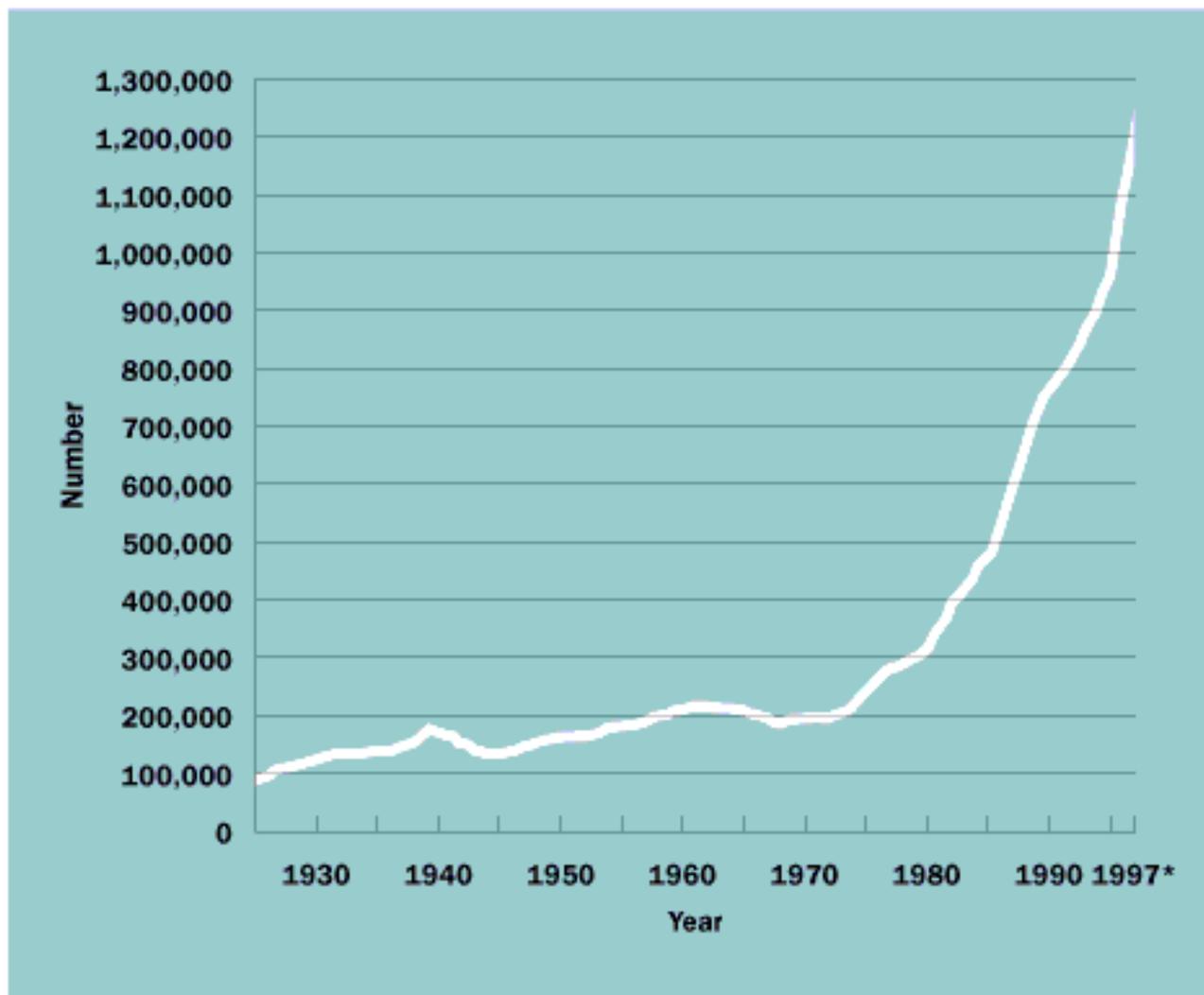
Prisoners on death row, 1953-2000
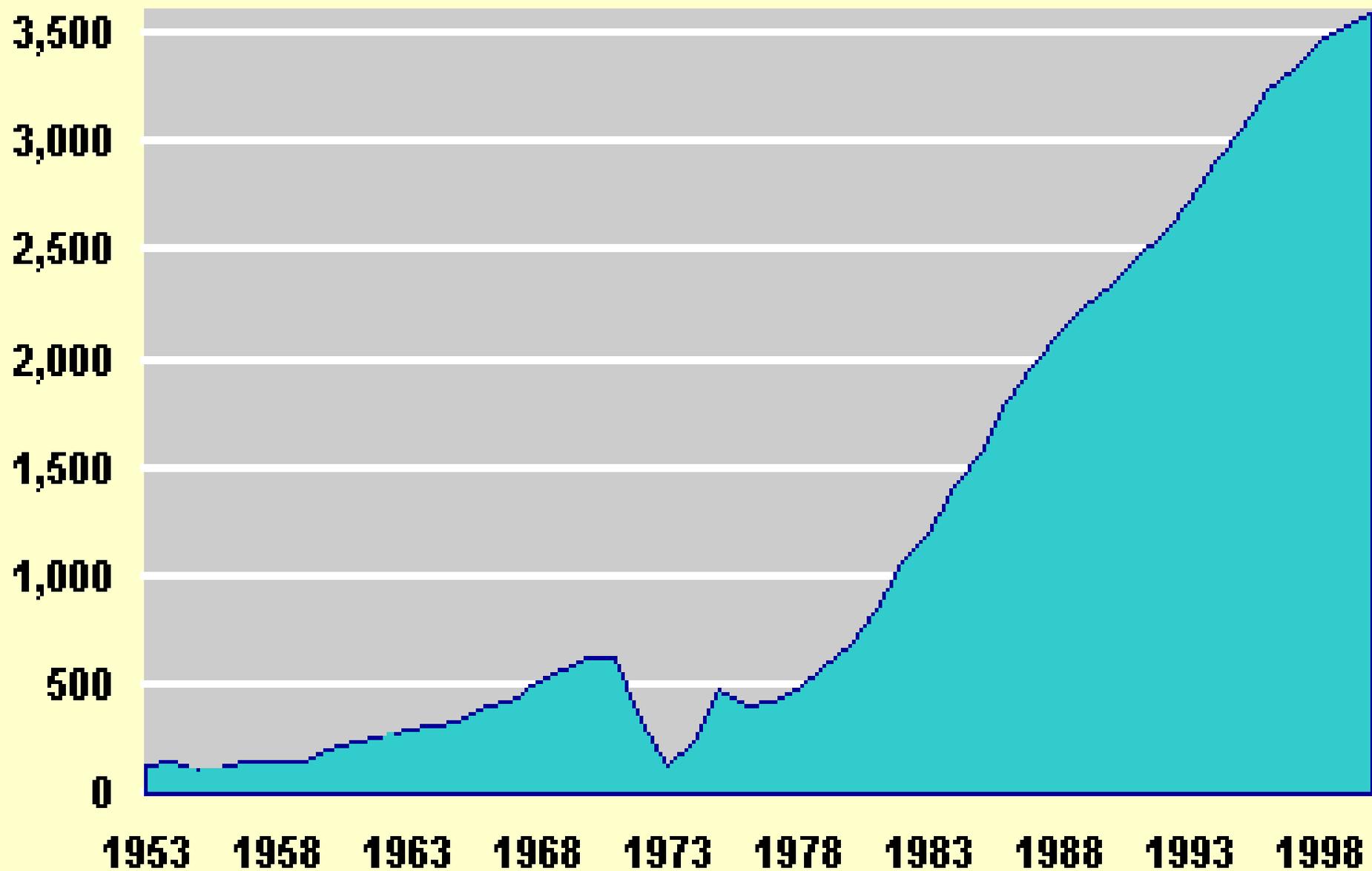
Executions

Number of people executed in the United States, 1977-2001
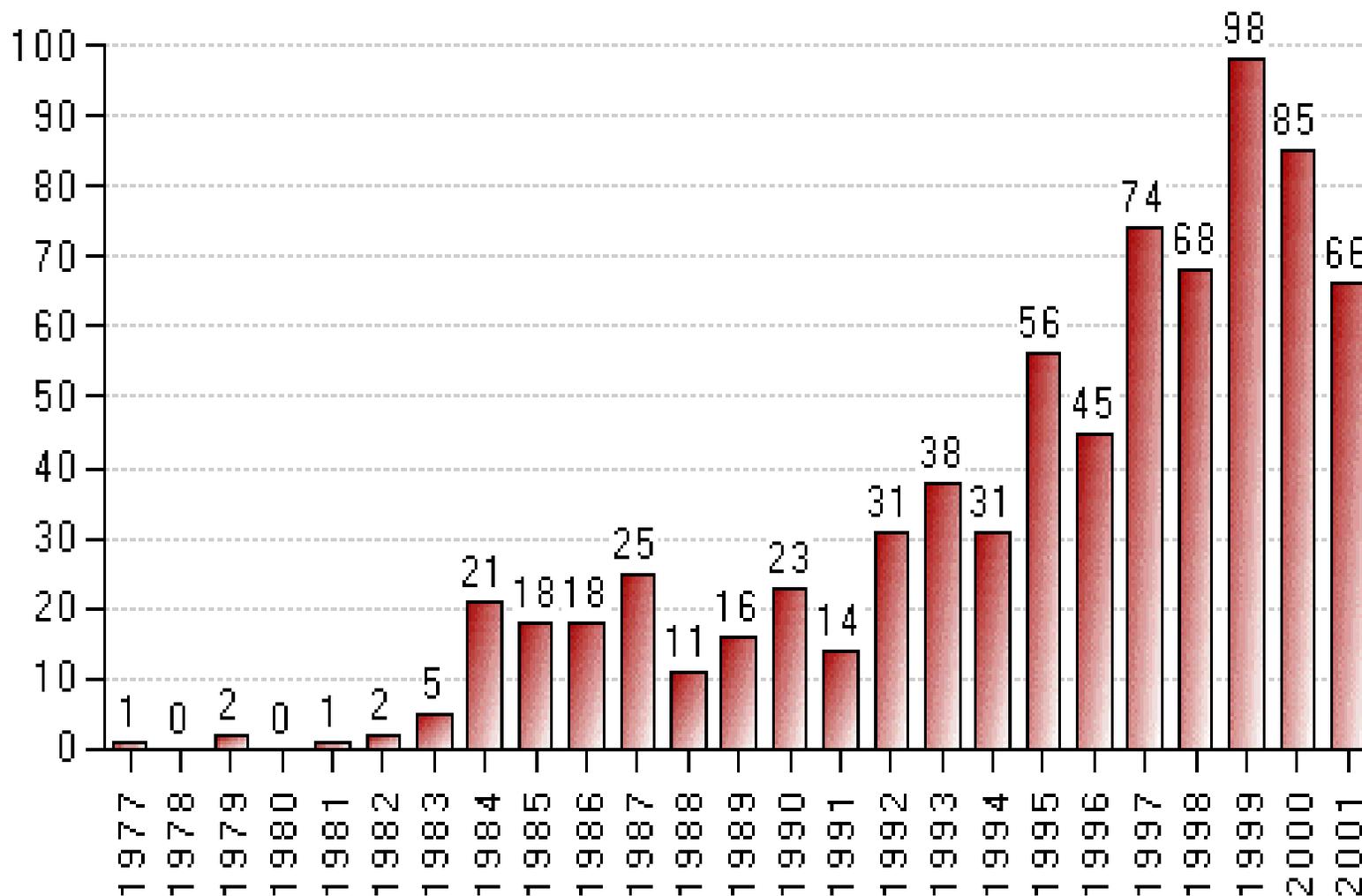
Source: "Capital Punishment 2000," January 2002, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Costs and Benefits of Incarceration

- **6% of offenders commit about half of the total crimes committed each year**.

- RAND institute: Reduce crime by 28% by locking up chronic offenders; Cost: 16,000$ for every crime

- Does this work?

Questions

- Do "three strikes laws" deter criminal behavior?

- Should we decriminalize drug use?

- What is the purpose (and effectiveness) of declaring war on crime?

Introduction to Concepts in the Field of Criminology

Part I: The Field of Criminology

Part II: What is a Crime?

Part III: How do criminologists view crime?

Part I: The Field of Criminology What is Criminology?

- Criminology is the scientific approach to the study of criminal behavior.

- Criminology is an interdisciplinary field. Although criminology's 20th century orientation has been sociological, today it can be viewed as integrated approach (e.g. biology, psychology, history, economics)

Brief History of Criminology

- Middle Ages (1200-1600) – superstition and fear of devil dominated thinking
- Classical Criminology – mid-18th century
    - Rational approach and free will
    - Relate punishment to crime
- Positivism – 19th century
    - Behavior as a result of many forces
    - First scientific approach to crime
    - Biological determinism

History of Criminology (cont)

- Sociological Criminology – 20th century
  - Impact of environment on social development and behavior
  - Crime is a failure of socialization
- Conflict Criminology – late 20th century
  - Relates economics to crime
- Now = behavior is a result of many factors that interact with environment

Criminology and Criminal Justice

- Criminology – explains the origin, extent, nature of crime in society

- Criminal Justice – evaluates agencies of social control that deal with criminal offenders (and victims)

- Theses are related topics that should be considered together (we will cover both).

Criminology and Delinquency

- Delinquency generally refers to "deviance" among young offenders (e.g. < 18 years of age)
- Juveniles receive different treatment under the American criminal justice system
- The study of the nature of younger and older offenders have used similar theories. Thus, the study of criminology and delinquency are often very similar.

Part II: What is Crime?

A Crime is a Violation of a Legal Rule

To understand the difference between legal rules and other types of rules we need to define <u>systems of social control</u>.

Systems of Social Control

- **Rules**: definitions of behavior that should be followed

- **Sanctions**: rewards and punishments

- **Actors** (enforcers)

Categorizing Rules by the Type of Actors that Enforce Them

<u>Laws</u>: Rules sanctioned by the State

<u>Societal norms</u>: Rules sanctioned by communities or citizens themselves who do not hold formal positions in the legal system

Example of Laws

- Homicide, Rape, Robbery

- Embezzlement, Theft

- Many behaviors violate our morals (e.g., not saving a drowning person) but are not violations of laws

Examples of Societal Rules (Norms)

- ATM lines

- Bathroom norms

- Eating etiquette

Problems with Legal Definition of Crime

1.) Laws vary in different places and times. If the law does not exist, is a behavior still a crime?

2.) Should deviant behavior (violating norms) be included to understand the nature of crime?

Criminology and Deviance

- Deviant Behavior – behavior that departs from social norms

- Criminal Behavior - behavior that departs from legal rules, or LAWS

- Complex relationships between deviance and crime.

How is deviance defined?

- Conflict perspective.   The norms of society reflect the interests of the rich and powerful—deviant labels are applied to people who interfere with the operation of capitalism.

  – Behaviors that threaten capitalist operations are more likely to be considered deviant

Part III: How Do Criminologists View Crime?

Different assumptions about how
laws emerge

Criminalization: How Laws Emerge

- The process whereby criminal law is selectively applied to social behavior.

- Process involves 1.) enactment of *legislation* that outlaws certain types of behavior, 2.) *monitoring and policing* of that behavior, and 3.) if detected, the *punishment* of that behavior.

What Forces Influence the Generation of Laws?

- <u>Loss and Harm</u>: People loose property or are injured.

- <u>Power and Interests</u>: Controlling some types of behavior can benefit some parts of society but not others.

- <u>Imposition of Morals</u>: Controlling Some Types of Behavior can Improve Social Life

Forces Believed to Generate Laws Influence Perspectives on Crime

- Loss and Harm: **rules emerge by consensus**

- Power and Interests: **rules emerge by conflict (the powerful impose rules to protect their interests).**

- Morals and Common Good: **rules created by "moral crusaders" (e.g., laws against pornography, prostitution, drugs)?**