Zimring Book Report

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In this study we will discuss two aspects of the Great American Crime decline of 1990s. First we will highlight the importance and exceptionality of the Great American Crime decline that took place in the US in 1990s. Then we will discuss the role of Canada in the understanding of reasons behind the Great American Crime decline.

**The Great American Crime Decline**

The crime rate in the US declined continuously for nine years in a row from 1991-2000. This decline in crime was the longest in the history of the US. This continuous decrease in the crime rate in the 1990s was a unique event and was observed in almost all categories of crime. To explore the distinctiveness of this event, we will discuss the data of some common offenses in US history. Homicide was remained a most distinctive crime in America since the beginning of 20th century. The rate of homicide was increasing since the beginning of the 1950s until the beginning of an exclusive period in the US; the decade of the 1990s. The homicide rate was 5 killings per 100,100 persons in the US in the 1950s. This crime rate of homicide increased by more than 100% within the next 40 years. In 1991, the homicide rate was more than 10 killings per 100,000 people. After 1991, this rate continuously decreased for the next 9 years in a row. In 2000, homicide rate in the US was 6 killings per 100,000 person. The data for most common crimes also displayed downward trends in the decade of the 1990s. Rape and Burglary both declined by 41% from 1992-2000. Similarly, robbery declined by 44%, auto theft by 37%, larceny by 23%, aggravated assault by 24% and homicide by 39% in that time (Zimring, 2007a). This American continuous decline in crime in 1990's urged many scholars to find out the reasons behind this pattern of crimes. We can find many studies that attempted to provide their point of view over this event.

The Great American Crime Decline was seen in almost every region of the country. This decrease in all forms of crime filled researches with curiosity because there was no direct link among these different types of crimes. There was no sudden social and cultural change that took place in the US during that time period. Now we also take a look at the crime rate in some other developed countries of the world during the same period. The data from G7 countries of 5 major crimes like homicide, robbery, burglary, auto theft, and theft depicted that the decline in the crime rate in the US was different as compared to other developed nations at that time. Other developed nations like France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom also showed some decline in the rate of crimes during the time period of 1990-2000. But the magnitude of this decline was much lower as compared to the magnitude of the decline in the crime rate in the US. Moreover, the data of some formats of crime displayed increasing trends in these countries like robbery increased by 29% in Italy, homicide increased by 34% and 9% in the UK and Japan respectively. The events of robbery also increased by the huge magnitude of 204% in Japan. The US decline in the crime rate in the 1990s was a distinctive event in the history of the US because the crime rate tended to decline for consecutive nine years in almost all formats of crime. Moreover, this decline was also an exceptional event if we compare it with the crime rate tendencies in other developed countries at that time.

**What Can We Learn from Canada?**

Canada was a country that showed a decline in the crime rate of almost all categories of crime in the 1990s. There was a great similarity between both countries concerning the decline in the rate of crime during the time of 1990-2000. Both countries showed a similar pattern, timing, and magnitude of the decline in crime. Canada and the US shared a long and open border and also have many similarities in their social and cultural norms. So, the study of crimes in Canada during that period can help a lot in understating the true nature of the great American decline in crimes. The US was a country that displayed a decline in crime rate in the seven most important categories of crime like, homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated, auto theft, larceny, and burglary. Crime data of the US and Canada displayed same pattern of crimes in both of the countries during the same period except for one category of crime, auto theft. The crimes related to auto theft increased by 26% in Canada during 1990-2000. While auto theft incidents decreased by 37% in the US during the same period. Despite the increase in the crimes related to auto theft in Canada, we can find great similarities between both countries that they shared during the 1990s. There was a very minor difference in the magnitude of the decline in crimes that both countries faced. The decrease rate in the crimes related to assault and larceny was higher in Canada as compared to the decline rate of the US. While the US performed better than Canada in the other four categories of crime like homicide, rape, robbery, and burglary. The change in crime rate was geographically dispersed in both countries and the timeline for change in crime rate was also mutually shared by the US and Canada. Homicide killing was on a declining trend in both the countries for consecutive 9 years started in 1991 (Zimring, 2007b). Both of these countries share a long and open border with many similarities in culture and society. The study of the decline in crime rate during 1990-2000 in Canada can help in the understanding of the American decline in the crime rate during the same period.

These similarities of crimes can help in identifying the true reasons behind the decline of the crimes in the US during that period. Like we cannot associate a decrease in crime in the US at that time with the increase in imprisonment, good economic condition, and an increase in the rate of police per capita. Because these three are the factors in which the US performance was quite good while Canada was far behind in these three factors. The economic condition was not good in Canada at that time and unemployment was on increasing trends. Police per capita were also decreasing in Canada. Imprisonment in the US increased by 57% during the said period while it decreased by 6% in Canada. So, if these three factors can explain the lower crime rates in the US at that time then the crime rate in Canada should be higher because Canada was not performing well on these indicators. Therefore, these three factors of economic wellbeing, police per capita and imprisonment rate cannot explain the reasons behind the great American decline in the crime rate. Besides these factors, both the US and Canada shared many similarities in their demographic characteristics. The ratio of young adults decreased in both of the countries at that time and this fact might be able to explain the American declined rates of crime.

**References**

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