

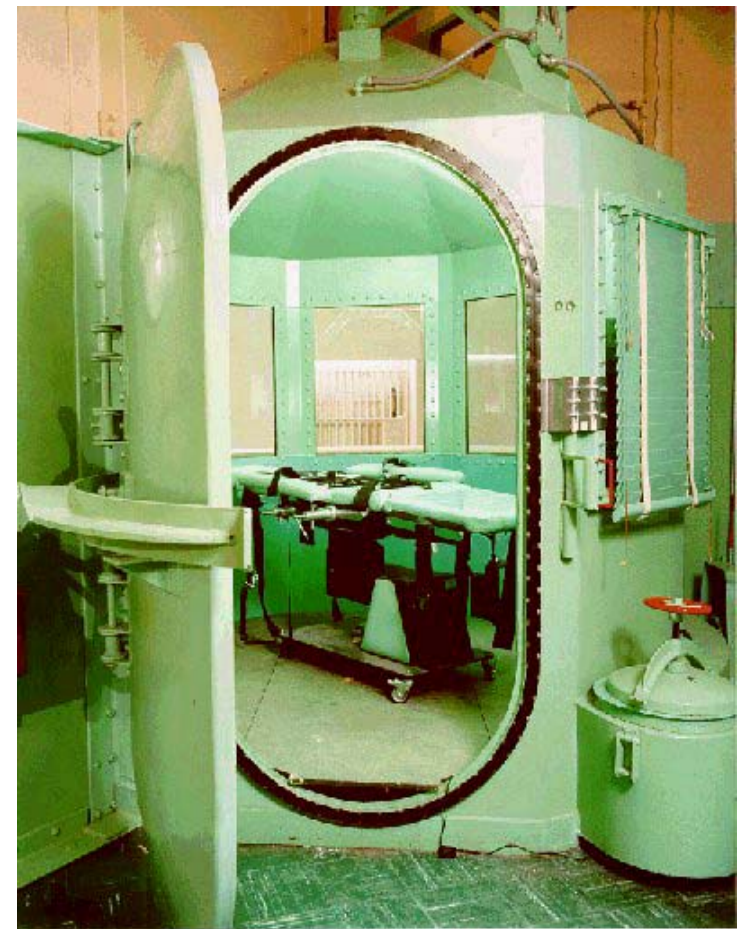
Lecture 8: Classical Theory, Deterrence Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Routine Activities Theory

I. Classical Theory

II. Modern Deterrence
Theory

III. Rational Choice
Theory

IV. Routine Activities
Theory



Part I: Classical Criminology and the Deterrence Doctrine

- Beccaria believed people want to achieve pleasure and avoid pain.
- Crime provides some pleasure, thus to deter crime one must administer some pain.



Cesare Beccaria, 1738-1794

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1833)

- British philosopher who helped popularize Beccaria's views.
- Believed that punishments are harmful, thus these must promise to prevent more evil than they create.



Beccaria's Desire to End Cruel Punishment



Classical Criminology

Decisions to violate the law are weighed against possible punishments.

To deter crime, the pain of punishment must outweigh the benefit of illegal gain.

Assumptions of Human Nature

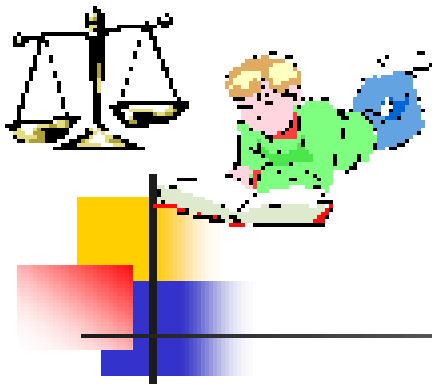
- Individuals have free will: Freedom to make personal behavioral choices unencumbered by environmental factors such as poverty or ideological beliefs.
- Individuals maximize utility (e.g., happiness, food, resources) by weighing benefits and costs of their future actions before deciding on behavior.

Classic Deterrence Theory

- Primary purpose of punishment is **deterrence** rather than vengeance.
- Severity: Punishment must be just severe enough to overcome the gain from a crime. Punishment that is too severe is unjust, and punishment that is not severe enough will not deter.
- Without proportionality, people will not be deterred from committing more serious crimes (e.g., if rape and murder both punished with death, a rapist would have little reason to refrain from killing the victim).

Classic Deterrence: Celerity and Certainty

- Celerity: swiftness with which criminal sanctions are applied after the commission of crime.
- Certainty: probability of *apprehension* and *punishment* for a crime (e.g., “There is a 1% chance I will get caught, and if so, they would never throw me in jail”)



Deterrence

- **General Deterrence**
Depends on fear of penalties; convincing potential offenders that the potential pain outweighs the potential benefits
- **Specific Deterrence**
Focuses on the individual offender to convince him or her not to repeat their delinquent activity

Absolute and Marginal Deterrence

- Absolute Deterrence: A particular punishment can deter a type of crime *completely*.
- Marginal Deterrence: A relatively more severe penalty will produce *some* reduction in crime.
- Does the state provide a significant marginal deterrent beyond that assured by informal control systems and socialization?

The Purposes of Punishment

General Deterrence - By punishing the offender we hope that others considering committing the same crime will not think it worth it

Specific Deterrence - Same as above, but with respect to the offender themselves, not other potential offenders

Incapacitation - If the offender is in jail, society is safe

Retribution - Offenders “deserve” punishment as a payment to society for their crimes

Moral Outrage - Catharsis and relief for society ... closure

Rehabilitation - May provide an opportunity to help the offender

Restitution - Offenders should compensate their victims

Part II. Modern Deterrence Theory

- Classical approach important in justice policy during the 19th century, but became of less interest to criminologists at the end of the 19th century.
- Beginning in the mid-1970s, a resurgence in interest in the classical approach. Rehabilitation approach came under attack from conservative citizens and politicians. Rational actor models from economics and political science brought to criminology.

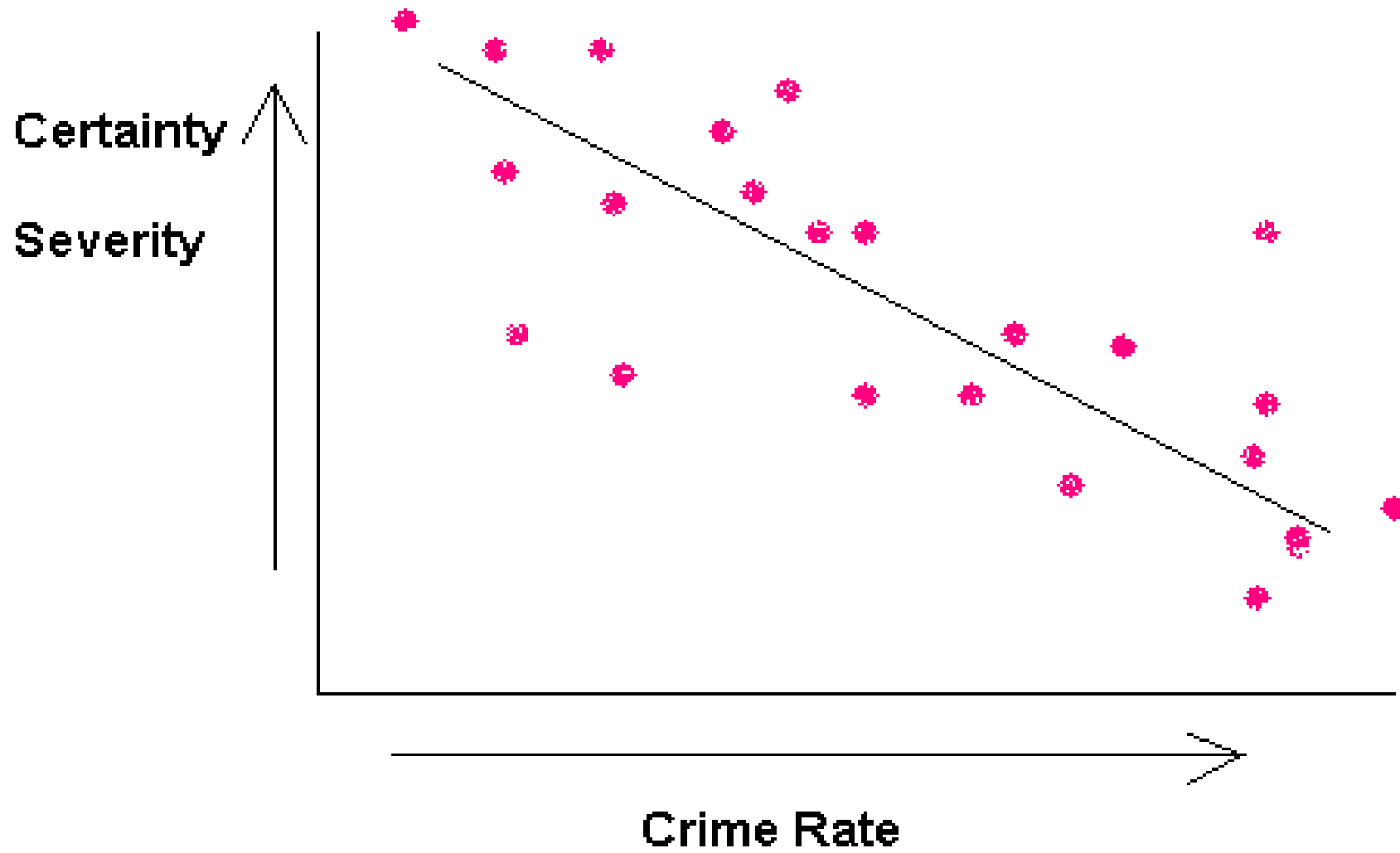
REBIRTH in the 70's and 80"s

- Martinson Report and the "nothing works" attack on rehabilitation
- Thinking About Crime by James Q. Wilson attacks view that crime is a function of external forces
- Wilson proposes a forceful reaction to crime, otherwise, those sitting on the fence will get the idea that "crime pays"

Deterrence Hypothesis

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





Objective Measures

Independent Variables:

Certainty or risk of penalty: measured by arrest rate (total arrests/total crimes) or proportion of arrested individuals prosecuted.

Severity: maximum sentence provided by law (e.g. capital punishment), proportion of convicted offenders sentenced to prison.

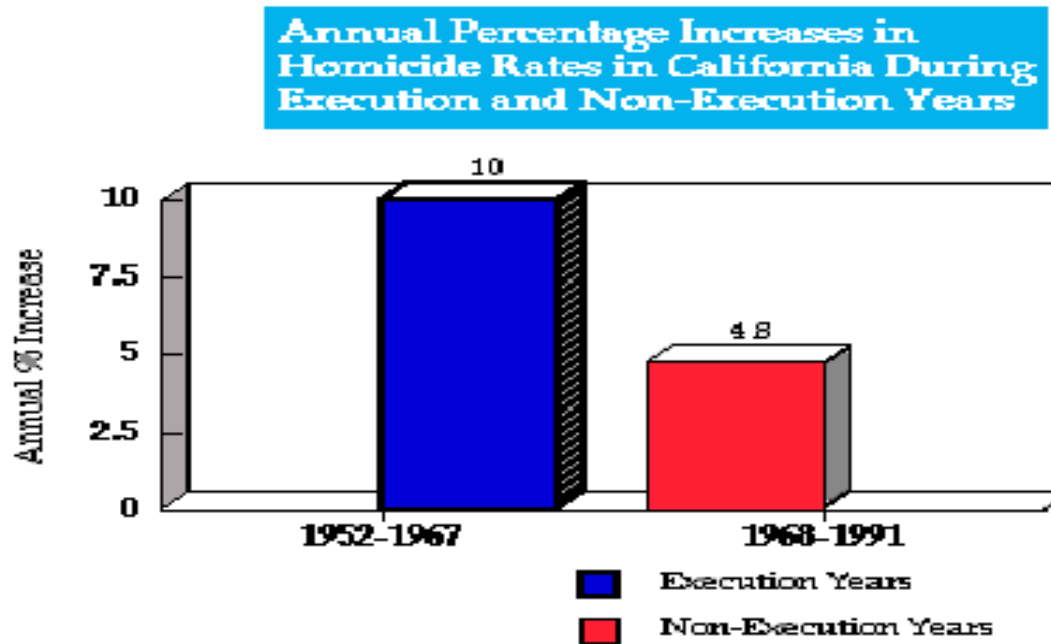
Dependent Variable:

Official crime rate known to police.

Empirical Evidence: Capital Punishment and Homicide

- Immediate Impact Studies: If capital punishment is effective, it should have greatest impact after a well publicized execution.
- Comparative Research: Compare areas (counties, states, countries) with respect to capital punishment laws and homicide rates.
- Time Series Analysis: Compare homicide rates and death penalty statutes through time.

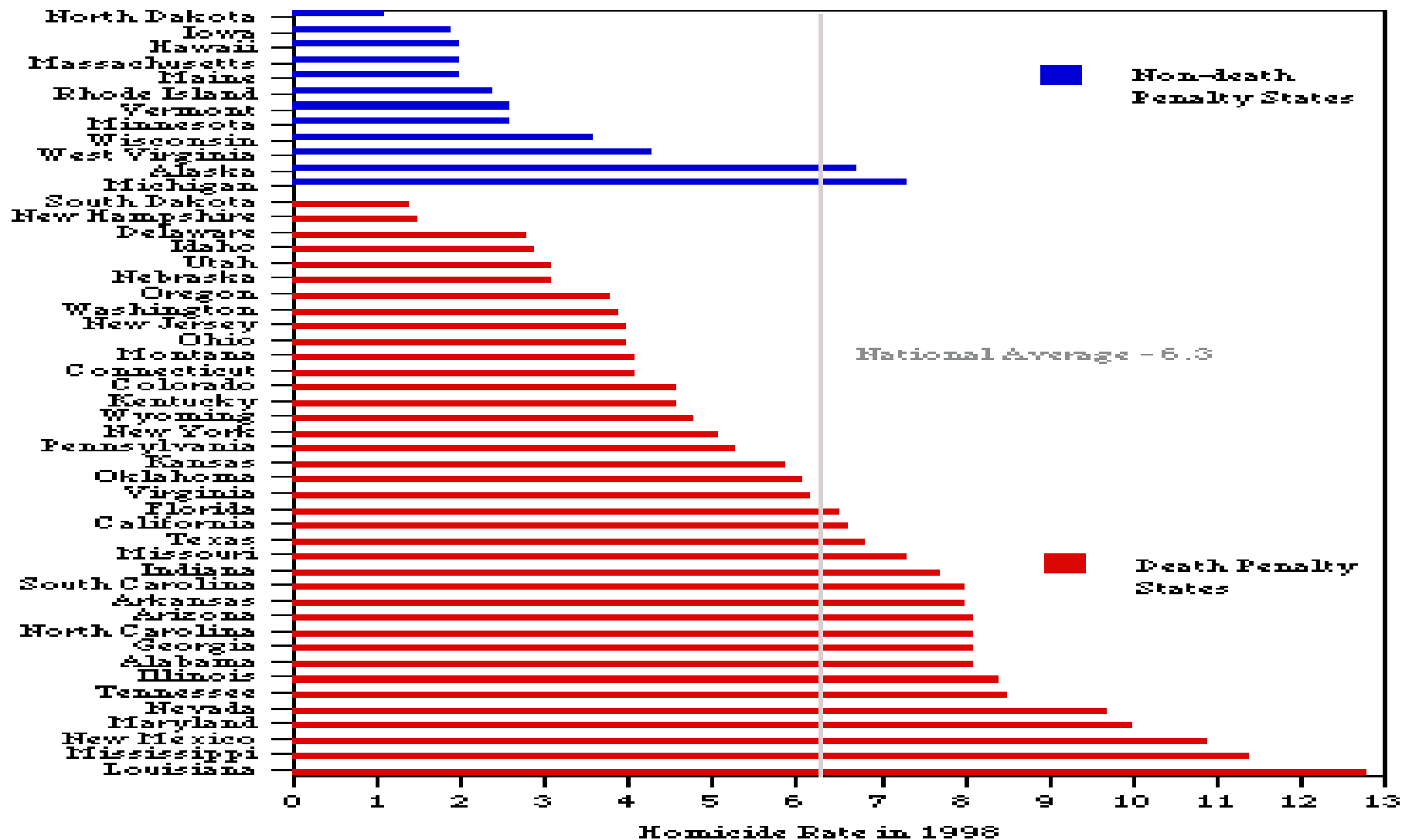
Immediate Impact Studies: Brutalization Effect: **Does Death Penalty Cause MORE homicides?**



More homicides have been found ten days after a publicized execution in California (+ .25 per execution) and in Philadelphia (+ 1.6 per execution)

Greater Annual Increase in California Homicide Rates for Years WITH executions.

Homicide Rates in Death Penalty and Non-death Penalty States - 1998*

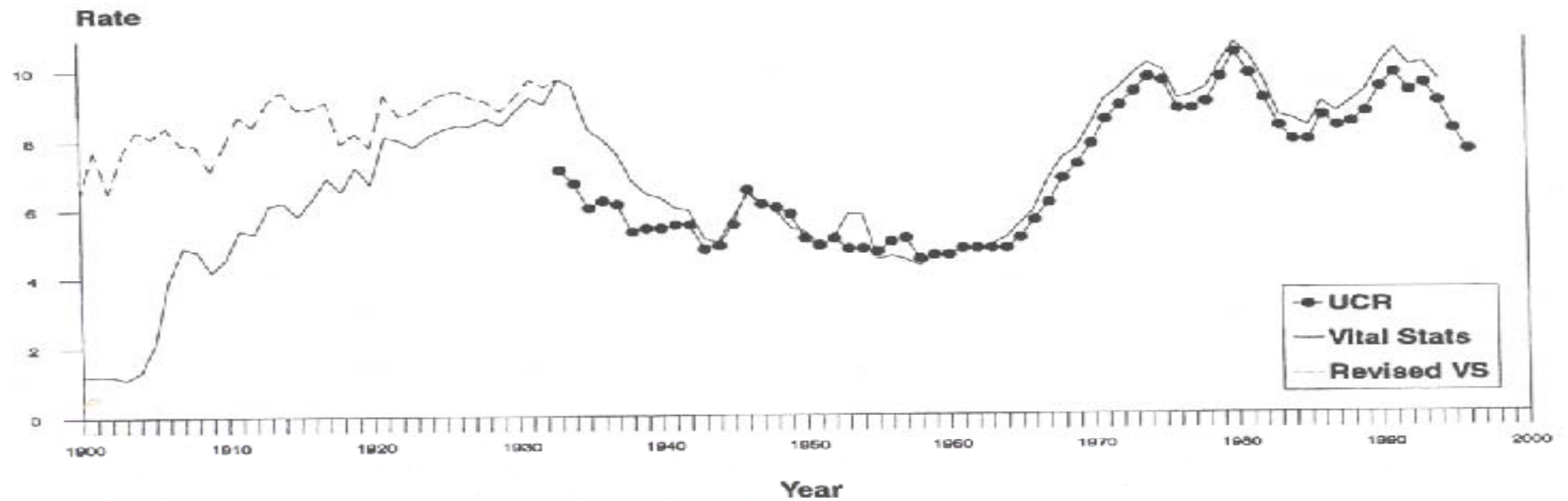
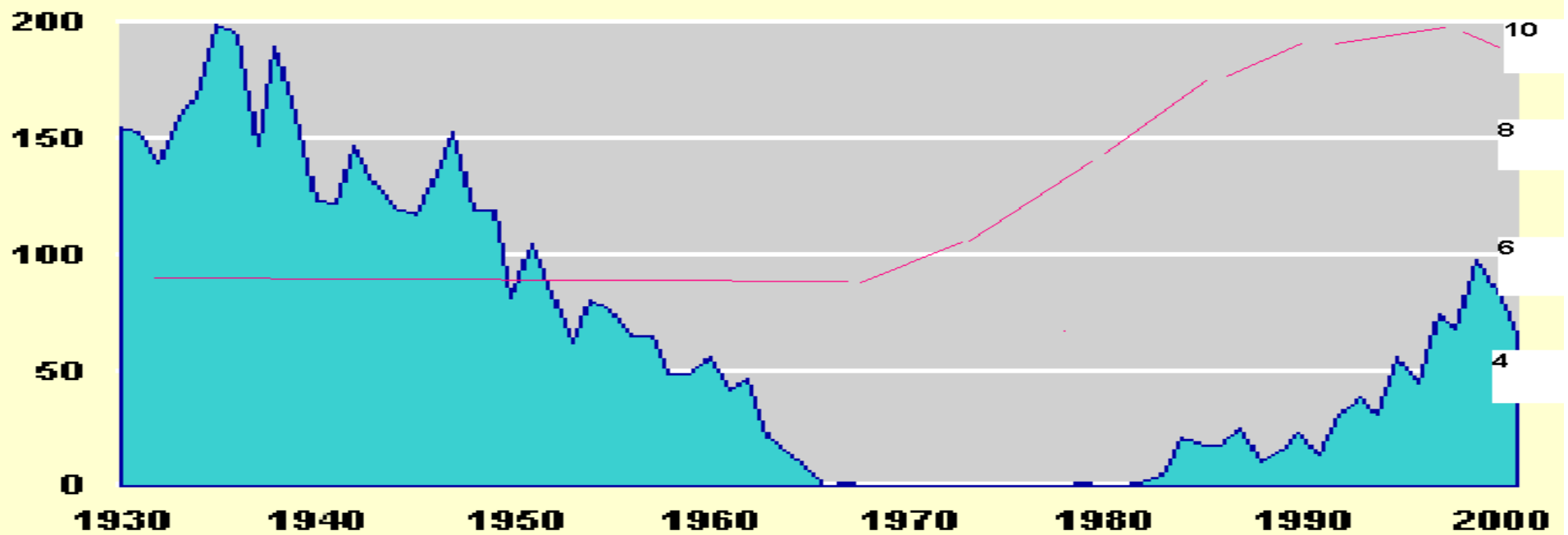


* DPIC Chart from statistics found in the FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Comparative Research

- The 5 countries with the highest homicide rates that **do not** impose the death penalty average 21.6 murders per every 100,000 people,
- The 5 countries with the highest homicide rate that **do** impose the death penalty average 41.6 murders every 100,000 people.

Executions, 1930-2001



Problem with Ehrlich's Analysis

- Ehrlich's findings in support of the deterrence hypothesis vanished when certain years (e.g., 1960s) are excluded.
- Problem with measuring *certainty* in his model. Police undercounted reported crime, and possibly over counted arrests, thus certainty of apprehension variable was biased in Ehrlich's model.

What do 67 leading criminologists believe about deterrence and capital punishment?

Over 80 % of these experts believe the existing research fails to support a deterrence justification for capital punishment.

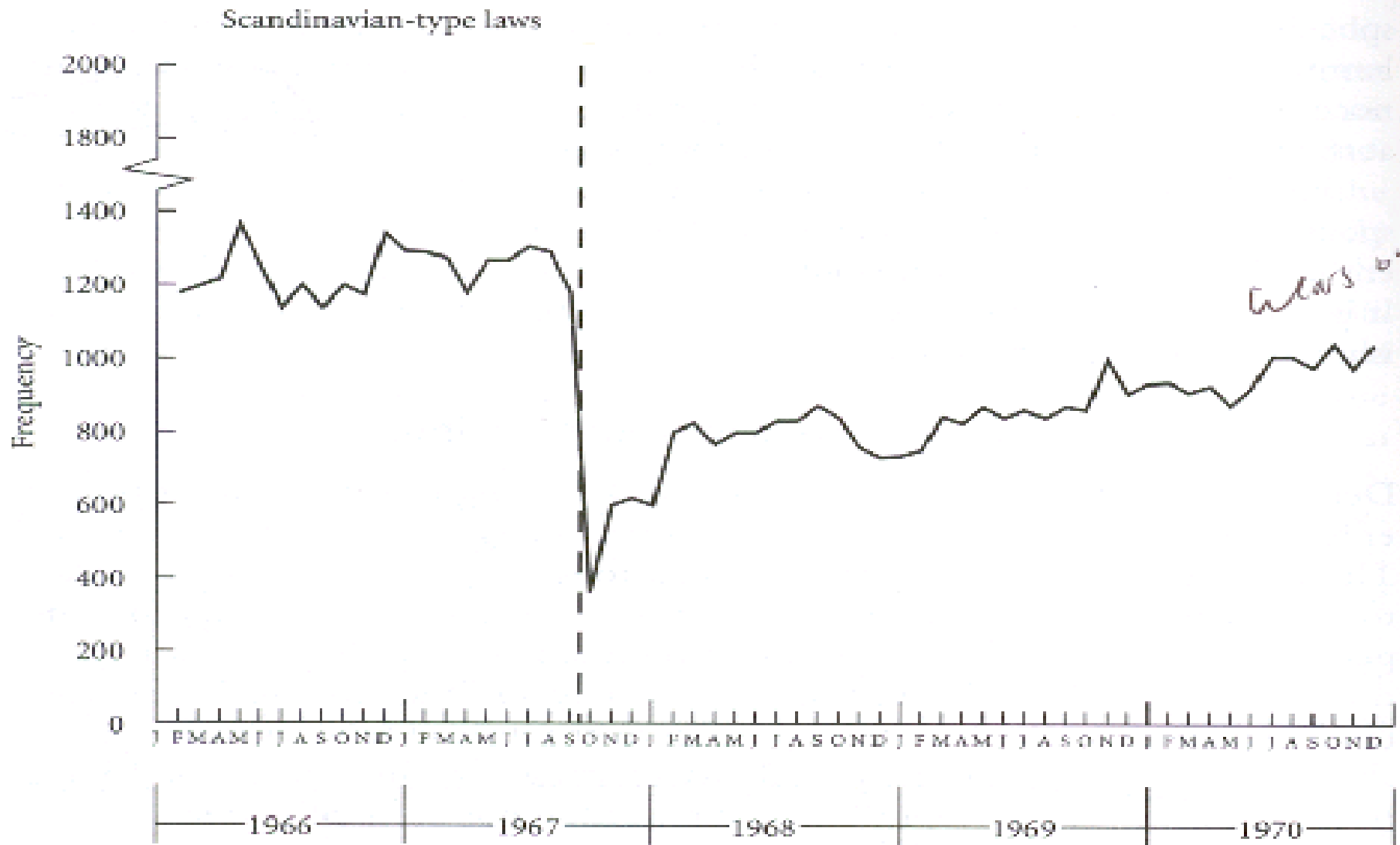
Over 75% believe that increasing the frequency of executions, or decreasing the time spent on death row before execution, would not produce a general deterrent effects.

What do the police think?

- **67% percent of all law enforcement officers do not feel capital punishment decreases the rate of homicides.**
- **82% of the nations law enforcement officials believe that criminals do not think about possible punishments when they commit a crime.**

Are Criminal Sanctions More Effective Deterrents for other Types of Crimes

- Cable TV wire splitters.
- Drinking and driving.
- Dispute-related violence (domestic violence, “honor”, “passion”)



Perceptual Measures

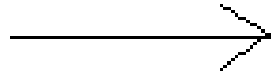
- Perception of criminal sanctions important.
- Measures an individual's perception about the risks of being apprehended and punished for a crime, and their likelihood to commit a crime.
- “How likely is it that someone like you would be arrested if they shoplifted in Target?”

Empirical Evidence for Perceptual Measures

- Hypothesis: Perceptions of criminal sanctions results in deterrence of FUTURE criminal behavior.
- Problem is that many studies are cross-sectional: Thus, self-report survey asks about an individual's perceptions of criminal sanctions NOW, but use PAST criminal acts to measure their criminality.

Deterrence Hypothesis for Perception Measures

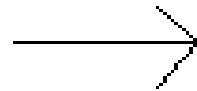
**Perception of
Criminal
Sanctions**



**Criminal or
Non-criminal
Behavior**

Experiential Effect

**Criminal or
Non-criminal
Behavior
(experience with
sanctions)**



**Perceptions of
criminal
sanctions**

Perceptions may be a consequence rather than cause!

Longitudinal Studies Preferable

- In year 1, measure an individual's perception of criminal sanctions.
- Then, in the following year, use self-report methods to see if individual was or was not involved in criminal acts.

Deterrence from Informal Controls

- With addition of variables measuring attachment and reliance on parents and peers, effect of state (formal) criminal sanctions disappears.
- Informal sanctions (shame by peers, punishments from parents) may be more important than formal sanctions from the state.



The concept of general deterrence holds that crime rates will be influenced and controlled by the threat of criminal punishment. If people fear apprehension and punishment, they will not risk breaking the law. This mock "tombstone" warning would be reminders of the consequences of their actions is an attempt to reduce the incidence of poaching through a general deterrence strategy. Would you take a chance on illegal hunting after seeing this rather graphic warning?

Part III: Rational Choice Theory

- Rational choice theory grew out of same utilitarian philosophy as deterrence. However, rational choice theory was developed by economists, and brought to criminology in the 1970s (e.g., Gary Becker, “Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach”).

Rational Choice Model

- 1.) Assume individuals desire utility (e.g. happiness, wealth, etc.).
- 2.) Operating within their means (or constraints) individuals attempt to achieve their desired goals.
- 3.) The “rational choice” is the one that obtains desired goals (e.g., the most utility) for the lowest cost.

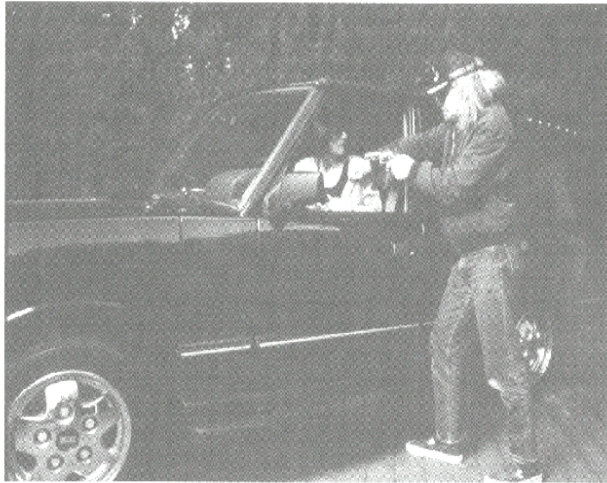
Benefits

A.) Material or monetary benefits (e.g., stolen property)

B.) Non-pecuniary benefits (psychological gains, excitement, revenge, sense of accomplishment, reputation and honor)

Costs

- 1.) Material costs (and transaction costs) associated with event (e.g., having to pay a “get away” driver).
- 2.) Psychic costs: possible feelings of guilt from committing crime, shame from friends.
- 3.) Opportunity costs: time that could be spent doing something else.
- 4.) Expected punishment costs (the main focus of deterrence theorists).



1000\$ week

Costs: 5 hours a week, 1
in 10,000 chances of
prison



Benefits: 500\$ week

Costs: 40 hours a
week, boring,

?



Pure and Partial Rationality

- **Pure rational** choice models work well for mathematical models, but do these fit well with human nature?
- Humans may often make choices that are partially rational. However, due to the complexities of life, people may rely on cultural traditions, “rules of thumb” heuristics, and social learning processes such as imitation and conformity.

Are Criminals Rational?

- Burglars: focus on potential benefits, but discount the real costs of getting caught. They are more opportunistic than strategic.
- Drug offenders: Do offenders really know the risks of prison?
- Violence: What is going through a person's mind when they have been punched in the face in a bar in front of their friends?

Does Crime Pay?

- Most crimes pay less than legitimate work.
- Profits are reduced by costs of crime.
 - E.g., legal costs, jail time, etc.
- Why do it?
 - Criminals overestimate proceeds from crime.
 - May believe legitimate work is unavailable.
 - Don't believe they will get caught this time.

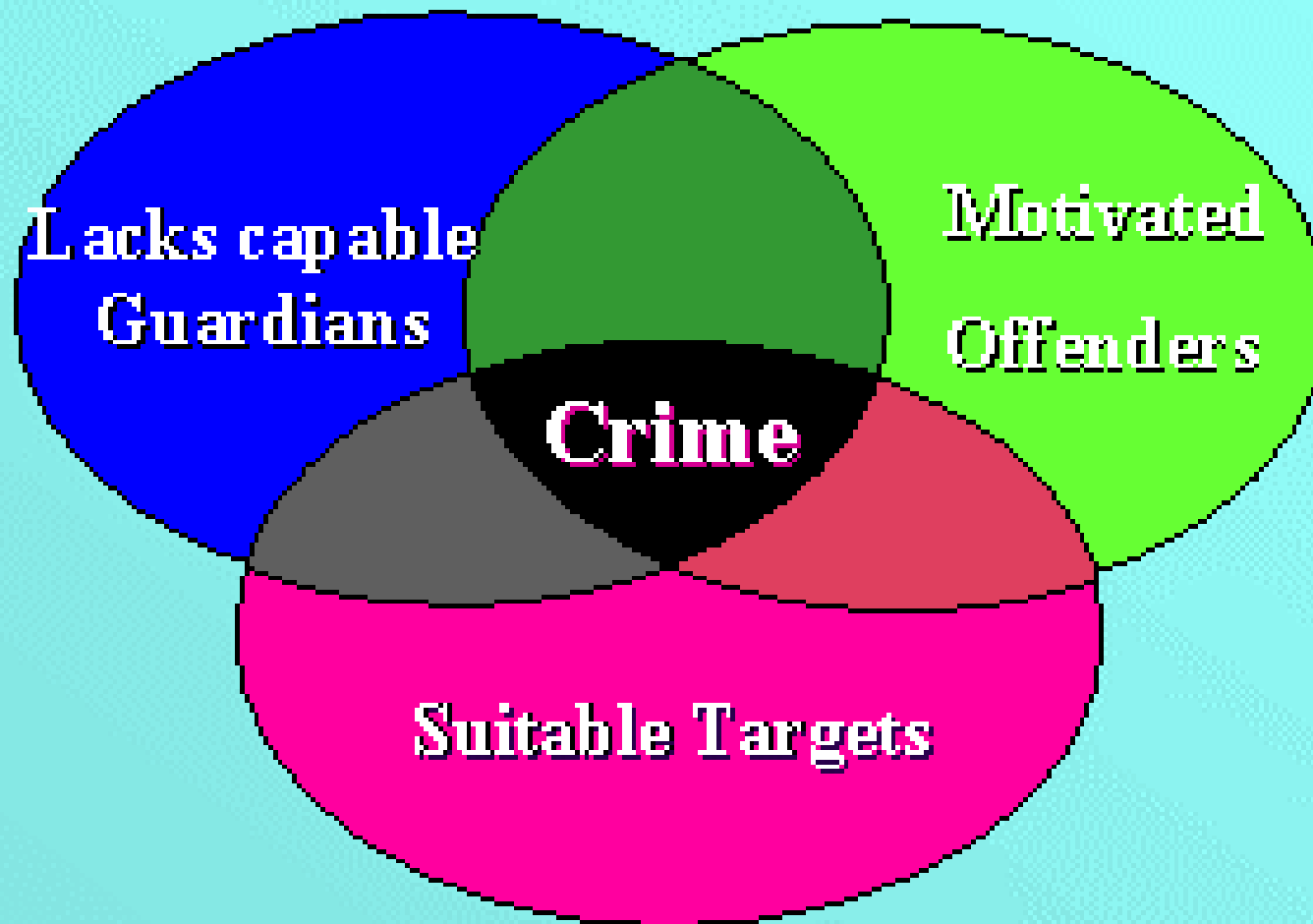


Part IV. Routine Activities Theory (RAT)

- For personal or property crime to occur, there must at the same time and place be a perpetrator, a victim, and/or an object of property.
- RAT is an intuitive theory that focuses on situations of crimes (e.g., you are more likely to be robbed in the park than in your locked apartment).



Routine Activity Theory



The interaction of three factors!

Routine Activities and Rational Choice Theory

- **Analytic Focus**
 - Routine activities takes a macro-level view
 - Spans space and time
 - Emphasizes victim behavior/decisions
 - Rational choice takes a situational view
 - Focuses on specific crime events
 - Emphasizes offender behavior/decisions
- **Complimentary Perspectives**

RAT Hypotheses

- Crime rates will increase if there are **more suitable targets** and **fewer capable guardians**.
- Specifically, an increase in things to steal (e.g., cars, TVs, radios) will make more suitable targets. Further, fewer people at home results in reduction of guardians.

Theoretical Implications

- Crime rates may change without changes in the social conditions that *motivate* crime

Empirical Validation of RAT

- Cohen and Felson focus analyses on *suitable targets* and *absent guardians* in their analysis. Motivation of offenders included in theory, but often not tested directly.
- Crime data suggests victimization rates are higher for individuals who are more likely to be exposed to strangers without guardians to protect them.

Guardianship

Burglary/Robbery Rates (per 1,000)

Age	Number in Household		Ratio
	One	Two +	
18-35	.20	.095	2.11
36-55	.161	.079	2.04
56 +	.107	.01	1.76
All Ages	.144	.081	1.78

Also, proportion of households unattended has increased over time

Source: Cohen and Felson, 1979

VARIABLES	VICTIM CATEGORY	RAPE	ROBBERY	ASSAULT	PERSONAL LARCENY W/ CONTACT
PLACE OF RESIDENCE	In or near home	63	129	572	75
	Elsewhere	119	584	1,897	1,010
VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP	Relative	7	13	158	5
	Strangers	25	349	530	366
Number of Victims	One	179	647	2,116	1,062
	Two	3	47	257	19
	Four plus	0	6	43	1
Location and Relationship	Home, stranger	61	147	345	103
	Home, Non-stranger	45	74	620	22
	Street, stranger	1,370	7,743	15,684	7,800
	Street, Non-stranger	179	735	5,777	496

Female Victimization Rates

Variables	Victim Category	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Personal Larceny W/ contact
MAJOR ACTIVITY	Employed	156	529	1,576	355
	Unemployed	798	772	5,065	461
MARITAL STATUS	Married	70	270	910	220
	Never Married	360	580	2,560	400

Large Scale Changes Explained

- **Increase in household burglary 1950-1980**
 - Proliferation of light weight consumer goods
 - Dispersion of activity away from home
- **Lower crime rates in the 1990s**
 - Shift toward electronic money
- **Crime peaks at night**
 - Guardianship is low
- **Lower risk for elderly**
 - In fewer risky situations

Proportion of Households Unattended By Anyone 14 Years or Older

Time of Day	1960 Census (%)	1971 Pop. Survey (%)	% Change
8-9 am	29	43	+ 48.9
9-10 am	29	44	+ 58
10-11 am	31	42	+ 36
11-12 am	32	41	+ 28
12-1 pm	32	41	+ 28
1-2 pm	31	43	+39
2-3 pm	33	43	+30
3-4 pm	30	33	+10
7-8 pm	20	29	+45

Trend in Consumer Goods

- Sales of consumer goods changed dramatically between 1960 and 1970 (i.e., more people buying TVs, radios, etc).
- The size and weight of these items also reduced.
- In sum, in the post WWII years there were MORE items to steal. Further, high resale items became lighter and smaller.

Target Suitability

	Amount stolen per \$100 spent
Motor vehicles and parts	\$26.44
Electronic appliances	\$6.82
Large, durable goods	\$0.08
Furniture	\$0.12

Source: Cohen and Felson, 1979

Trends in Burglary

<u>BURGLARIES</u>	1960 %	1970 %	1975 %
Residential	15.6	31.7	33.2
Residential Nighttime	24.4	25.8	30.5
Commercial	60	42.5	36.3

Statistical Results of Time-series Analysis

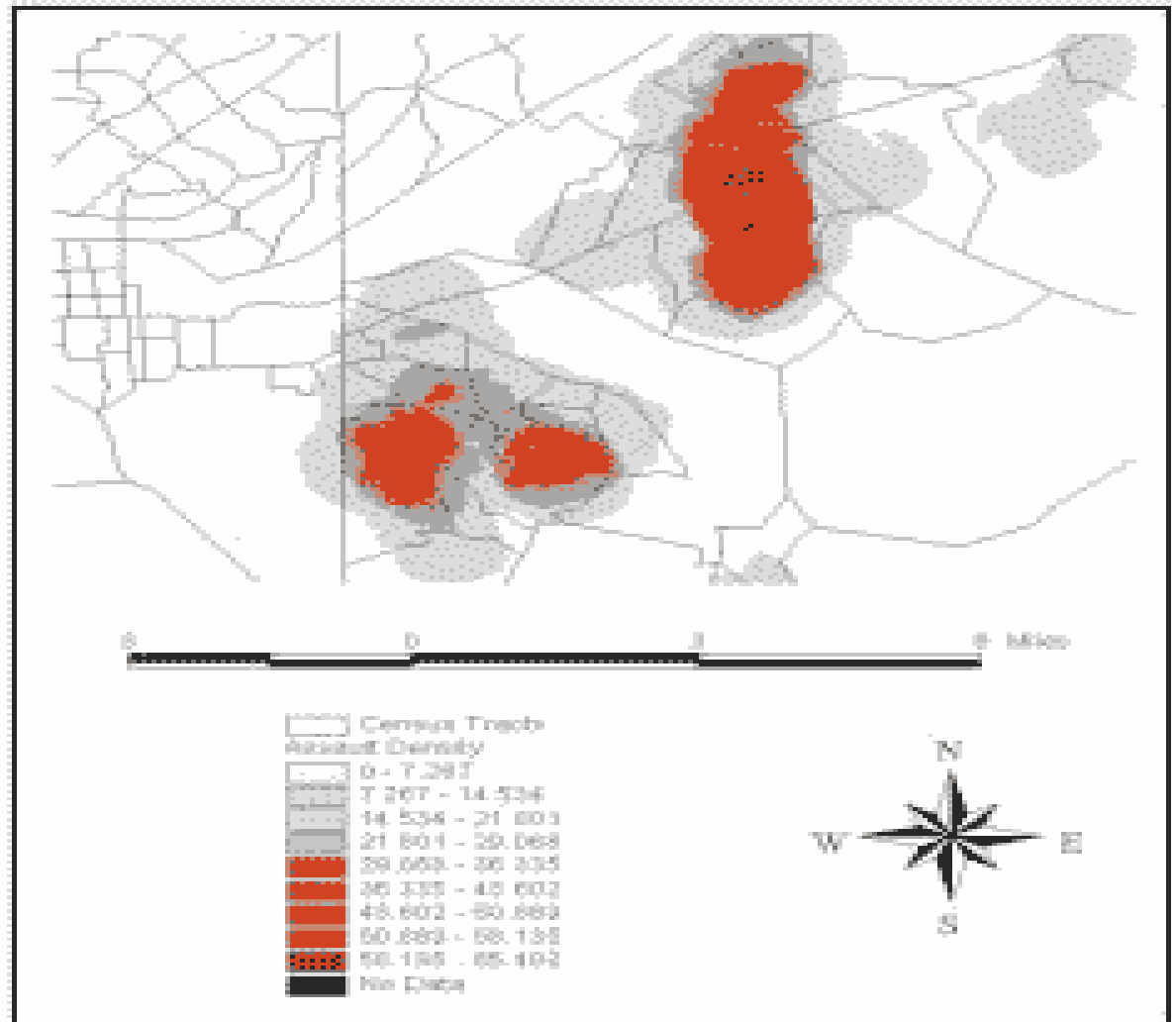
- Multivariate time series models found that from 1947 to 1974 there was a positive and significant relationship between household activity ratio and changes in crime rates.

Spatial Analysis of Crime “Hot Spots”: Are some areas more suitable for crime (i.e., suitable targets without guardians)?

Figure 1.8

A representation of the aggravated assault “surface” in part of Baltimore County, Maryland. Red and darker shading indicate higher assault densities.

Source: Keith Harries.



Other Tests of RAT

- People that leave the house more (e.g., college students) experience high victimization rates.
- Looting occurs during wars and natural disasters because guardianship is at least temporarily reduced.

Criticism of RAT

- RAT is mainly a macro theory of victimization. It tells us who is more likely to be victimized. But who are the offenders?
- There is a correlation between criminal victims and offenders, thus patterns found by RAT theorists could be misleading.

Policy Implications

- Increase surveillance (guardianship)
- Decrease target attractiveness (suitability)
- Consider the criminogenic effects of changes in routine activities
- **Education** about the risks of being a crime victim. Do college students realize that they have high victimization risks?