

BOOK REVIEW ON 'THE CRIME DROP IN AMERICA'

The Crime Drop in America. Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman. Ed. 2000. Cambridge University Press. 317 pages. ISBN 0521792967.

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a peak between the 1960s and 1980s. This rise and fall in crime have raised great interest from criminologists, policy makers, and politicians worldwide on why this change happened. In this book, numerous explanations for the crime drop are given.

There are many claims for the decline in crime. Some police and politicians credit the crime drop to their crime prevention initiatives. Some observers believe the downward trend in crime is as a result of prison expansion. Others look at the evidence and ascribe the crime drop not to government efforts, but some other phenomenon, such as demography, or the economy.

This book attempts to discuss the multiple causes for the drop in crime. Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman provide a great overview of crime in the four decades between the 1960s and 1990s. They point out an unexpected crime trend in the 1990s when violent crime fell sharply and steadily; particularly homicide, robbery, and youth violence. They also give a hint of possible causation to crime upturns before and crime downturns recently. In other parts of the book, many experts on crime were invited to present their essays on the reasons for the crime drop. Numerous issues and

explanations for the crime drop were raised, such as gun control, the crack cocaine market, economic shifts, homicide patterns, policing policy, demographic changes, prison expansion, etc. This book systematically gathers and discusses all of these claims and is essential reading for anyone in the field of crime or justice studies who wishes to learn from the US lessons.

The editors have comprehensively and impartially given both police officers and politicians some of the credit for the crime drop, but they have also looked at deeper and wider explanations for the rise and fall in crime. In my opinion, this book is one of the best at discussing the wide range of crime causations and the effects of crime prevention or control. In each essay explaining the crime drops, the author shows which factors were at work and what the ongoing debates were to each claim. Each essay offers a broad discussion of the topic. For example, we learn that not only are people of high-risk age an important demographic for crime, but also that marriage patterns and contraception should be taken into account as well. This is an excellent resource book for those who would

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like to learn more about crime prevention mechanisms, the positive and negative effects of crime control initiatives, economic and social forces on crime, and crime as a side effect of other things.

I recommend this book as a must-read for criminologists, police and justice officers, and politicians who are interested in the field of crime. Although the book discusses the crime phenomena of the past 20 years, it is still very relevant today. Lessons of what led to the great crime drop of the 1990s and its aftermath will give the reader a greater understanding of crime and aid in the planning of responses. By looking back at history, the authors have successfully shown that there is no simple answer to how we should respond to crime in the future.