Faith-Based Corrections as Symbolic Crusade

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on literature exploring status politics and social movements, this paper examines "faith-based" corrections initiatives as a "symbolic crusade" orchestrated by "moral entrepreneurs." The paper examines claims made by proponents of faith-based corrections and elements of faith-based legislation recently passed in Florida. Attendant with the agenda of "faith-based" corrections is a lessening of government responsibility for social welfare and an attribution of *immorality* as the ultimate cause of poverty and crime. The paper concludes with a cross-examination of these claims as compared to the academic evidence on crime causation and the ecological distribution of crime.

It is appropriate to think of reformers as crusaders because they typically believe their mission is a holy one. The prohibitionist serves as an excellent example, as does the person who wants to suppress vice and sexual delinquency or the person who wants to do away with gambling. Many moral crusades have strong humanitarian overtones. The crusader is not only interested in seeing to it that other people do what he thinks is right. He believes that if they do what he thinks is right, it will be good for them.
       -Howard Becker,
       Moral Entrepreneurs

In seeking to gain popular support for "getting tough on crime," a strategy of conservative politicians in the United States has been to associate public disorder with individual morality or character, rather than with macro-level shifts in economic well-being or opportunity (Wilson, 1996, 1999; Clear, 1997; Parenti, 1999; Beckett & Sasson, 2000). Conservative politicians, in orchestrating this perceptual change, successfully shifted public resources away from ameliorative and preventative social programs (the "welfare state") and directed them toward crime control (the "security state") (Beckett & Sasson, 2000). As Beckett & Sasson conclude:

> Thus, the moral status of the poor was changed from 'deserving' to 'undeserving,' and as a consequence, the moral foundation of the welfare state was undermined. … Notably, this transformation of the moral status of the poor was predicated on a change in the identity of the prototypical poor person from white and rural (in the imagery of the Great Depression and the war on poverty) to black and urban (in the iconography of the wars on crime and drugs) (2000, p68).

This paper identifies "faith-based" correctional initiatives as the latest conservative definition of the crime problem and as a "symbolic crusade" orchestrated by "moral entrepreneurs" (Gusfield, 1963; Becker, 1993). Attendant with the agenda of

"faith-based" corrections is a lessening of government responsibility for social welfare and an attribution of *immorality* as the ultimate cause of crime and poverty (Wilson, 1996, 1999). As such, "faith-based" programming is associated with broader calls by conservatives to lower taxes, eliminate government jobs through privatization, and promote "individual responsibility" as the best remedy for social problems. Drawing on literature exploring status politics and symbolic crusades, this paper examines claims made by proponents of faith-based corrections and specifically presents elements of faith-based legislation recently passed in Florida. The paper concludes with a cross-examination of these claims as compared to the academic evidence on crime causation and the ecological distribution of crime.

Moral Entrepreneurs & Symbolic Crusades: A Framework for Analysis

When first published in 1963, Joseph Gusfield's book on Prohibition titled *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*, became an instant classic. The book compellingly suggests that criminalization of the production and consumption of alcohol in the United States during Prohibition, was skillfully orchestrated by rural middle-class Protestants seeking to reassert their particular values over and above the increasing influence of urban, lower-class, Catholics in American culture. That is, according to Gusfield, the actual goal of Prohibition *was to elevate the status of the group promoting it* (rural, middle-class, Protestants), rather than to control the abuse of alcohol by those they suggested used too much of it (namely urban, lower middle-class, Catholics) (Vold et al, 1998, p. 229).

"Symbolic crusades" should be seen, according to Gusfield, as a kind of social drama emphasizing the role of *"status as a political interest,"* over and above any instrumental or material gain a crusading group might seek (Gusfield, 1963, p. 167). Such crusades embody attempts by "moral entrepreneurs," working on behalf of discernable groups, to elevate their own status—by characterizing the social behaviors of "others" as somehow threatening to or deviant from the dominant culture. Becker defines "moral entrepreneurs" as people seeking to preserve or elevate their own status by making it their business to identify "evils" in society "about which something ought to be done" (1963, p. 153).

A consistent criticism of *Symbolic Crusade*, however, has been that it over-emphasized the importance of status as a distinct political objective and that it under-emphasized the *instrumental* nature of crusaders' activities in the public sphere (see especially Rumsbarger, 1989). As Kurt Lang wrote in his 1964 review of *Symbolic Crusade* in *American Sociological Review*: "The changing fortunes of this movement and its ideology are here interpreted in terms of status politics, a concept that came into vogue more rapidly than it could be defined" (Lang, 1964). While *class politics*, according to Gusfield, is "instrumentally oriented toward the allocation of material resources," symbolic crusades are based on *status politics,* where "it is not economic gain but the prestige of a life style that is at stake" (Lang, 1964). As Mayer Zald (1964) of the University of Chicago also states in a review appearing in *American Sociological Review:*

> Gusfield ignores the fact that many economic or class-based conflicts transform themselves into status politics. When ideologies develop to justify differential claims on the distribution of rewards, prestige and the normative order are not

long ignored. While there are differences between status politics and class

politics, the differences are not as sharp as Gusfield maintains. [1]

In sum, as subsequent critiques of Gusfield's work have revealed, moral crusades are

seldom driven solely by their purported *symbolic* objectives—they are also at heart a form

of power-politics, with both symbolic and instrumental aims (see Rouse & Unnithan, 1993;

Wallis, 1977; Levine, 1985; and especially Rumsbarger, 1989). More recent applications in

the literature on status politics have focused directly on the *instrumental* objectives of

symbolic crusades. In the most elaborate work, historian John Rumsbarger explores the

instrumentalist agenda of capitalist elites in the promotion and support of Prohibition,

characterizing the legal implementation of Prohibition as being driven primarily by

industrialist concerns over worker turnover and productivity. Indeed, Rumsbarger goes so

far as to state as his mission "to challenge as directly as possible the notion that temperance

reform was merely a status concern of the middle classes," concluding: "Without capital's

need for profit there would have been no liquor question or temperance movement as they

came to be in America" (1989, p. xix, p 188).

As Vold, Bernard, and Snipes conclude: "Since campaigns against deviance usually

result in the redistribution of benefits from some groups (the deviants) to others (the

promoters and supporters of the campaigns), it seems likely that the social solidarity

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[1] Zald continues his critique of Gusfield: "Although he admits that a
given social movement at a particular point in time may embody both
class and status elements, he still wants to argue that status politics
have a fundamentally different character from class politics—that
groups fighting to maintain their prestige are more likely to be
satisfied with and to seek symbolic victories." Zald goes on to note
that, despite this emphasis, Gusfield himself "quotes Jellineck to the
effect that during Prohibition alcohol consumption was cut in half."
Zald, therefore, concludes that even by Gusfield's account,

produced depends at least partially on the solidification of power relationships in the society" (1998, p. 230). This paper utilizes the research mentioned above to interpret the emergence of "faith-based" corrections as a symbolic crusade with both *resource* and *status* focused objectives. Here, Gusfield is worth quoting at length:

> The struggle to control the symbolic actions of government is often as bitter and as fateful as the struggle to control its tangible effects. Much of our response to political events is in terms of their dramatic, symbolic meaning. This is especially the case where elements of the status order are at issue. The distribution of prestige is partially regulated by symbolic acts of public and political figures. Such persons "act out" the drama in which one status group is degraded and another is given deference. In seeking to effect their honor and prestige in the society, a group makes demands upon governing agents to act in ways which serve to symbolize deference or to degrade the opposition whose status they challenge or who challenge theirs (1963, p.167).

The Context of Faith-Based Initiatives: Scaling Back the Welfare State

> *"…drugs are destroying more children and more families than poverty ever did."*
> -George W. Bush, May 10, 2001.
> The Rose Garden, Nomination of John Walters to direct
> Office of Drug Control Policy

While according to many indexes the American economy was at its strongest ever near the close of the 20th century (Freeman, 2001, p.23), with the lowest rates of unemployment and inflation in a generation and more people living in their own homes than ever before, another (less widely-cited) index clouded this picture of robust societal health:

"Prohibition was not all purely symbolic" in its agenda (Zald, 1964).

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the American incarceration rate was at its highest ever, 682 per 100,000 (Sourcebook 1999, p. 497).[2] During the years 1980 – 2000, under the auspices of an officially-sanctioned "war on crime," the American incarceration rate roughly quadrupled and as reflected below on June 30, 1999, stood at unprecedented levels:

INSERT Sourcebook Figure 6.4 here/1999 p 502

A disproportionate number of the offenders sent to prison during this time of dramatic increase were inner-city minority males incarcerated for non-violent drug crimes (Tonry & Petersilia, 2000). This is a pattern that continues today. As Rose and Clear recently stated:

> Growth in imprisonment has disproportionately affected the poor and people of color. The residential segregation of African-Americans in urban communities means that some of their neighborhoods have suffered war-level casualties in parenting-age males during the increase of imprisonment since 1973, when far fewer African-American males were incarcerated (1998, p. 450, 451).

The warfare impulse for achieving power and social order can be traced as far back as the Crusades, a religious war fought on behalf of the Catholic Church in the 11th (1096) through 13th (1271) centuries. As Richard Fields notes:

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[2] According to U.S. Department of Justice, the incarceration rate for persons in state and Federal prisons or in local jails at the end of 1999 was 682 per 100,000 residents. The incarceration rate (per 100,000 resident population) for sentenced prisoners under jurisdiction of State correctional authorities alone on December 31, 1999 was 486.

The idea of a Crusade that pits the pure against the evil in a drama of redemption and

death is still our controlling image for dealing with difficult problems of otherness

and conflict. This image may have the advantage of rousing a dulled and apathetic

public to pay attention to the news, but it carries the deeper disadvantage of fogging

the causes of a problem by reducing its complexities to simple demons (Fields,

1991, p. 167).

Starting especially with Barry Goldwater in 1964, and later with the

administration of Richard Nixon, conservative political activists recognized the value of

"the crime problem" as a vehicle for winning votes, particularly from alienated Southern

white Democrats (Beckett, 1997; Parenti, 1999). Coming out of the turbulent 1960s,

policy changes revealing the success of this strategy, such as those put forward in the

insightfully-titled "*Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968,"* were already

apparent. As Christian Parenti sums it up: "At the heart of this new type of politics was a

very old political trope: Crime meant urban, urban meant black, and the war on crime

meant a bulwark built against the increasingly political and vocal racial 'other' by the

predominantly white state" (1999, p. 7).

In the process of orchestrating the "war on crime," conservative activists

successfully had to re-characterize crime control from being a primarily *local and

preventative* enterprise, to one necessitating Federal government involvement in a "*war*"

against individual offenders deserving of punishment. "Suddenly, the debate about crime

was galvanized into camps—the liberals and conservatives. Was a person in favor of the

criminal or the victim? Did someone believe in rehabilitation or punishment?" (Clear,

1997, p. 139). *Crime, in other words, became a moral issue, much moreso than one of policy design, economy, or law.* In this context, punishment soon became the dominant and most frequently prescribed solution, even by otherwise "liberal" politicians. As Gusfield concludes near the end of *Symbolic Crusade:* "When issues are structured in moral terms they become tests of status. In the context of cultural conflicts, the moralization of issues places the prestige of each status-bearing group at stake" (1963, p. 147). Thus, the extent to which public debate about crime was successfully reduced to moralistic tenets focused on individual responsibility, is the extent to which macro-level definitions of its causes were able to be cast off as "soft " or pathetically weak.

While past poverty and "public order" discussions focused on jobs, employment training, and worker placement, the new conservative paradigm focused on implementing wider use of punishment and reducing the size of government (Wilson, 1996, 1999; Tonry & Petersilia, 1997). Indeed, by the presidency of Ronald Reagan, conservatives were promoting "mandatory sentencing" as the greatest means of improving life in poor communities (Clear, 1997). By the 1990s, the conservative paradigm for crime and punishment was so firmly in place that incarceration rates increased *faster* during the presidency of Democrat Bill Clinton than during that of either conservative Republican Reagan or Bush (Justice Policy Institute, 2001).

Once More With Feeling: Faith Based Corrections as Symbolic Crusade

> *I visit churches and charities serving their neighbors nearly everywhere I go in this country. And nothing is more exciting or encouraging. Every day they prove that our worst problems are not hopeless or endless. Every day they perform miracles of renewal. Wherever we can, we must expand their role and reach, without changing them or corrupting them. It is the next, bold step of welfare reform. …We must apply our conservative and free-market ideas to the job of helping real human beings.*
> *-George W. Bush, July, 22, 1999, Indianapolis, Indiana.*
> *"Governor G.W. Bush's Explanation of Compassionate Conservatism,"*
> *Afterword to Marvin Olasky's <u>Compassionate Conservatism</u>*

Inasmuch as crime has been a good issue for conservatives, it has also funneled tremendous resources into state coffers at taxpayer expense for prison construction, the hiring of more police officers, and longer prison sentences (Beckett, 1997; Petersilia, 1994). The vast majority of resources spent in the war on crime, of course, have gone to public and governmental agencies. Numerous elements of faith-based programming, however, seek to re-direct government spending away from public agencies and funnel them to private organizations outside of government. By suggesting that activities engaged in by faith-based groups (e.g. drug rehabilitation and job placement programs) produce better results than similar programs run by the government, proponents of faith-based programming rely on claims of superior performance and morality. The Preamble to Florida's recently-passed "Criminal Rehabilitation Bill"—in which the term "faith-based" appears 55 times in its 23 page text—demonstrates the characteristic agenda of conservatives over the past thirty years: to attribute social problems to personal failings and to take *government* out of the business of fixing them.[3]

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[3] The FL statute <u>requires</u> the establishment of 6 privately-run "faith-based" dorms by June 1, 2002, with a population target of 400 inmates. 400 additional inmates will be assigned to private facilities without the faith-based focus. Restrictions on the types of inmates assigned to

Whereas state government should not and cannot bear the sole burden of treating and helping those suffering from addictions and self-injurious behaviors, and, Whereas, faith-based organizations are "armies of compassion" devoted to changing individuals' hearts and lives and can offer cost-effective substance abuse treatment through the use of volunteers and other cost saving measures, and Whereas research has proven that "one-on-one" private and faith-based programming is often more effective than government programs in shaping and reclaiming lives because they are free to assert the essential connection between responsibility and human dignity; their approach is personal, not bureaucratic; their service is not primarily a function of professional background, but of individual commitment; and they inject an element of moral challenge and spiritual renewal that government cannot duplicate and Whereas, in an effort to transform lives and break the personally destructive and expensive recidivism cycle, Florida should increase the number of chaplains who strengthen volunteer participation and expand the pilot [faith-based] dormitory program that includes a voluntary faith component that supports inmates as they reenter communities…Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida.
-Preamble, 2001 Florida Criminal Rehabilitation Act
2001 Fl. ALS 110; 2001 Fla. Laws ch. 110; 2001 Fla. SB 912

Instrumental Objectives of Faith-Based Groups

Invocation of the benevolent symbols of religion, of course, is nothing new for criminal justice. Indeed, justice programming has been steeped in religious imagery from the time of the Quakers and before (see Morris & Rothman, 1995). Religious themes have frequently been mobilized by moral entrepreneurs to describe behaviors as "immoral," particularly those behaviors associated with marginalized or threatening members of the population, such as children in need of "saving" or alcohol users in need of abstinence (Platt, 1969; Gusfield, 1963).

Howard Becker writes: "The most obvious consequence of a successful crusade is the creation of a new set of rules. With the creation of a new set of rules we often find that a new set of enforcement agencies and officials is established. With the establishment of

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the programs include: no current or previous convictions for a violent offense; no current or previous convictions for drug trafficking or for the unlawful sale of a controlled substance; no current or previous

organizations of rule enforcers, the crusade becomes institutionalized" (1993, 24). As

Olasky recently suggested, the heart of the faith-based agenda embodies a set of very

instrumental goals for faith-based groups: "regulatory reform, tax code incentives for

charitable contributions, and non-discrimination in grant making" (in Carr, 2001). On the

campaign trail, Governor Bush stated: "In my first year in office…we will provide for

charity tax credits which will allow individuals to give part of what they owe in state taxes

directly to private and religious institutions fighting poverty …Individuals will choose who

conducts the war on poverty—and their support won't be filtered through layers of

government officials" (Bush, 2000).

In addition to creating the *Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, in

August 2001, the George W. Bush White House released a report recommending changes in

the award process for discretionary grant funding from the federal government, suggesting

that faith-based organizations have suffered from *"systematic discrimination"* in gaining

access to these funds and seeking to "level the playing field," (Cooper, 2001, p. 15; White

House Report "Unlevel Playing Field," 2001, p.5). As a *Los Angeles Times* story reporting

President Bush's initial announcement of John DiIulio as the Director of the *Office of Faith-*

Based and Community Initiatives reveals, the proponents of faith-based programming have

successfully mobilized their cause: "When President Bush unveiled his long-promised plan

to give federal money to faith-based organizations that help the poor and troubled, he was

keeping one of his earliest campaign pledges to religious conservatives," (Cooper, 2001, p.

15).

As Bush campaign advisor and University of Texas journalism professor Marvin

Olasky explains in his book *Compassionate Conservatism: What It Is, What It Does, and*

conviction for a traffic offense involving injury or death.

How It Can Transform America (2000), supporters of "faith-based" programming had a specific instrumental objective—to gain religious service providers access to federal funds reserved primarily for non faith-based organizations:

> The 1950's emphasis on "attending the church of your choice" has been made fun of on theological grounds, but it was sociologically important. …In the 1960's, however, a curious interpretation of the First Amendment's religion clauses became dominant. Washington began bankrolling many programs that marginalized God and demanded that staffers and volunteers check their religion at the door. Officials froze out faith-based programs that offered spiritual as well as material help. Even licensing, the government's seal of approval, could readily be withheld from an organization whose counselors believed strongly enough in their faith to share it with strangers. Government funds could be used by religious groups, but only if they set up religion-less government look-alikes that were rarely effective. With many first-rate programs out of bounds, government often bought into the second rate (2000, p 176).

As Olasky reports in his book, which includes both a foreword and an afterword using campaign material from *Bush for President, Inc.,* a coalition of religious leaders, politicians, and social scientists coalesced around this notion of "faith-based" programming and actively developed its agenda (2000, p. 13). Early supporters of "compassionate conservatism" were fiscal conservatives such as former Representative Newt Gingrich and Senator John Ashcroft (see Olasky, 2000), noted for their willingness to shut down the Federal government rather than raise taxes (Woodward, 1996). By 1998, a prominent list of conservatives met privately with candidate Bush to develop the themes of the "faith-based" agenda including prominent Reagan-era criminologist James Q. Wilson, Bush Sr. era Drug Czar William Bennett, and future Director of the *Office of*

Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, John. J. DiIulio (Olasky, 2000, p 13).[4] It is worth pointing out at this juncture that Bush's nominee as Director of the *Office of Drug Control Policy*, John Walters, was Chief-of-Staff to the first President Bush's Drug Czar, William Bennett. Moreover, Bennett co-authored a book with DiIulio titled *Body Count: Moral Poverty and How to Win America's War Against Crime & Drugs* (1996), in which the authors label certain juvenile offenders "super predators," deserving of adult-level punishments. DiIulio was also a prominent advocate of mandatory minimum sentences (Cooper, 2001).[5]

At this early point in the development of "faith-based" programming, it would be useful to cross-examine the academic evidence surrounding the central claim of its proponents: that poverty and crime are best explained by individual lack of morality.[6]

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[4] Olasky explains the early planning phase of the initiative: "While much of the country lay freezing, Bush, on February 26, 1999, brought into Austin's warmth some of the best thinkers in the country to begin the process of developing more specifics. Bob Woodson came from Washington, James Q. Wilson from California, and John DiIulio from Princeton. Indianapolis mayor Stephen Goldsmith invited others as well and chaired the three-hour meeting… By the end of the afternoon, major directions were clear and tasks assigned. I was in charge of a religion and public policy task force designed to come up with concrete ways to aid the development of faith-based organizations" (2000, pps 13-14).

[5] DiIulio has since recanted his support for mandatory minimums and "regrets" using the term "super-predator," saying to the *Washington Post:* "I went too far. I regret describing [juvenile offenders] in such a dehumanizing way" (Morin, 2001). Attributing his change in heart to his recent conversion to Catholicism, DiIulio also stated recently in an interview with the *New York Times*: "Prevention is the only reasonable way to approach these problems" (Becker, 2001). Finally, DiIulio's resignation as Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has been attributed to his new-found ambivalence about harsh punishment and preference for assigning resources to prevention (Carr, 2001).

[6] While not the central focus of this paper, a related question is whether "religiosity" itself may be causally linked to lower crime rates. The subject of intense academic debate, researchers are seeking to "test whether the effects of religiosity on delinquency [and adult criminality] are spurious or completely indirect via social bonding, social learning, and socio-demographic variables" (Johnson et. Al, 2000a). That is, if religiosity is associated with church attendance, are the social networks and resources generated by church membership the *real* cause of lowered criminality (what Social Disorganization theorists like Hagan call human and social capital) or is the religious conversion itself the cause? Moreover, are offenders who "find religion" somehow qualitatively different than those who do not, making studies of "convict converts" subject to selection bias? Studies can be found suggesting both that religiosity does reduce some criminality (Evans et al; Johnson, et al, 2000b) and that it does not (Johnson et al, 2000a).

Crime and Social Disorganization

Perhaps the most heavily-researched theme in all of criminology is the "class-crime connection"—the notion that conditions associated with economic deprivation and poverty causally elevate levels of criminality (Seigel, 2000, p. 68). A key argument of social disorganization theory is that when localities become "unable to provide essential services, such as education, health care, and proper housing…they experience significant levels of unemployment, single parent-families, and families on welfare" (Seigel, 2001, p. 191). One way of coping with these deficiencies, social disorganization theorists argue, is through the utilization of illegal avenues of economic production, such as the drug trade (Byrne & Sampson, 1984). According to Hagan (1994), "social capital" "refers to the social skills and resources needed to effect positive change in neighborhood life" and involves a neighborhood's ability to create "capability through socially structured relations between individuals in groups" (Rose & Clear, 1999, p. 454; Hagan, 1994, p.66). "Human capital" "refers to the human skill and resources individuals need to function effectively, such as reading, writing, and reasoning ability. Human capital is the capital individuals acquire through education and training for productive purposes" (Hagan, 1994, p. 66).

Socially disorganized communities often have high rates of criminality due to the fact that the social and human capital available to residents that might help them succeed through legal avenues are limited. Moreover, as public resources are diverted toward prisons and away from public programs in education and childcare, for example, socially disadvantaged communities struggle all the more. As Rose and Clear argue:

> The macroeconomics of crime policy also damage inner-city communities by shifting government funding priorities away from those communities toward penal institutions. The harsh budgetary politics of the 1990s has corresponded to equally

harsh punitive politics in which correctional expenditures have grown by billions of dollars annually while money to support schools, supplement tuition, provide summer jobs for teens, and so forth all received cuts (1998, p. 462).

When examining the criminality of various ethnic groups in various zones of Chicago, Shaw and McKay (1969) found that criminality is most prevalent in impoverished areas with high rates of transience and deteriorating infrastructure. Ethnic communities not suffering from poverty had much lower rates of crime. As Seigel concludes, Shaw & McKay's research showed that "crime is a constant fixture in areas of poverty regardless of residents' racial or ethnic identity" (2001, p.193). In the most recent study of social disorganization and crime in Chicago, two prominent social disorganization scholars found again that "poverty was the single most important factor found to influence the level of disorder in the Chicago neighborhoods studied. It is the structural characteristics of neighborhoods, as well as neighborhood cohesion and informal social control that most affect crime" (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001, p. 4).

The faith-based platform acknowledges the importance of family and neighborhood cohesion in poor communities, however, seeks only to address it through faith-based programming even while *recognizing* social disorganization as a byproduct of "much needed" punishment:

> *America has tripled its prison population in the last 15 years. That is a necessary and effective role of government—protecting our communities from predators. But it has left a problem—an estimated 1.3 million children who have one or both parents in prison. These are forgotten children—almost six times more likely to go to prison themselves—and they should not be punished for the sins of their fathers. It is not only appropriate, it is urgent, to give grants to ministries and mentoring programs targeting these children and their families for help and support. My administration will start bringing help and hope to these other, innocent victims of crime* (G.W. Bush, 2000, p 222).

Conclusion

> American punitiveness is not the result of higher crime rates or of a steeper increase in crime in recent years. For most serious crimes, America's rates are not the highest among Western countries, and other countries experienced equally sharp increases in crime rates during the 1970's and 1980's. The difference is attributable to crime and punishment's entanglement in American politics.
>
> > -Michael Tonry,
> > *Crime and Punishment in America*

The "temperance movement," as religious supporters of Prohibition were wont to call it, stressed uprightness and morality as the backbone ethic of its calling. Alcohol and its use became a potent marker of social status in a political economy characterized by broad social change (Gusfield, 1963). As such, alcohol consumption spoke to the moral and social status of its users, as well as to the resource-focused politics of Prohibition's adherents. As Gusfield writes:

> As the character traits of the Temperance ethic were useful to economic success, the values of character were also values in the economy. Institutions were but the proving grounds within which persons revealed character traits that brought about success or failure. Abstinence from intoxicating beverages was a sign that the person possessed the requisite character. They were positive aids to economic triumph, because the economy demanded the character that prized sobriety (1963, p. 34).

The "*immoral character*" – "*drug use*" formulation for understanding crime and poverty, of course, has not left us. Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign has also been characterized as a symbolic crusade, one that "focused on controlling alcohol and drug use, but also included moral judgements as to the causes of such behavior" (Rouse & Unnithan, 1993, p. 219). Significant amounts of social research, however, point to the

inverse causal model: that of *poverty* as the primary cause of drug abuse, and poverty as the most important variable structuring the pervasiveness of crime in the poorest communities. As Elliot Currie concludes:

> The link between drug abuse and deprivation is one of the strongest in forty years of careful research. I am not suggesting that drug abuse is confined to the poor. But the evidence consistently tells us that endemic drug use is not randomly or evenly distributed in the United States or elsewhere. The American drug problem is often portrayed as if it were classless. This classless imagery distorts the reality of hard-drug abuse and hobbles our ability to come to grips with it (1994, p. 77).

Inasmuch as "immoral" behavior has been made the focal point of the U.S. crime problem, strategies for addressing it through social programs and economic development become less politically viable. As noted above, in the United States, symbolic crusades have relied upon moralistic attributions of behavior while advancing a resource-focused policy agenda affirming the worldview of its adherents. Indeed, associating social problems with personal immorality has become the signature conservative framework for scaling back spending on social programs and acquiring political power—successfully neutralizing decades of research linking crime and drug use *first* to social disorganization and poverty, and explaining the widest-spread patterns of addiction as a function of economic deprivation.

The latest conservative definition of the crime problem may be understood to be "faith-based"—marking religiously affiliated programs worthy of funding, while characterizing those that are merely "governmental" as ineffective bureaucracy and lower in the "status order." Attendant with this attribution degrading governmentally-

sponsored programming for offenders, in favor of programs offered by "faith-based" groups themselves, have been significant changes in the rules governing allocation of resources as well as the institutionalized prominence of faith-based programs .

While concerns over separation of church and state—and the possibility that accepting money from government actually *compromises* the "faith-based" agenda of churches—have come up, they are not the focus of this paper. This paper, instead, has concerned itself with the attributions of "faith-based" legislation seeking to scale back *governmental* spending on offender rehabilitation and treatment, while funneling resources to private faith-based groups—all on the presumption that criminality is ultimately caused by a lack of morals. As such, the "faith-based" initiative described here contains both status and resource-focused elements similar to symbolic crusades of the past. As David Garland concludes:

> In designing penal policy we are not simply deciding how to deal with a group of people on the margins of society—whether to deter, reform, or incapacitate them and if so how. Nor are we simply deploying power or economic resources for penological ends. We are also and at the same time defining ourselves and our society in ways which may be quite central to our cultural and political identity (1991, p. 223).

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