Three Faces of the State: Protection, Punishment and Investment

Pre-Registration Plan

Authors: Professor Jane Gingrich*, Elizabeth Pfeffer*

*University of Oxford

January 9, 2022

Project Description:

Why do wealthy democracies devote different amounts of resources to education, welfare, and punishment? Though each area has been addressed by large literatures on social policy, education and criminology, systematic interconnections among these domains emerge across advanced democracies. The different `elective affinities' across contexts in patterns of spending do not just follow mechanically from crime rates and demographic structures, but a series of policy choices to simultaneously invest in – or withdraw from investing in – different areas. Understanding the link between these policy choices and voter demands is complex. In surveys, voters tend to support spending on all three areas – crime and punishment, education and welfare – giving little leverage at understanding tradeoffs. However, recent work on the demand for social policy suggests that survey instruments using traditional unconstrained choices among respondents fail to capture the types of tradeoffs that many voters are willing to make in the ballot box. With this project, we will conduct a survey in 2 countries – the UK and Sweden – to look at the micro-foundations of tradeoffs, specifically investigating preferences for devoting resources to investment in skills, protection of income security, and expanding resources for the police and prisons. A multi-country design will allow us to probe the question of whether emerging a) cleavage structure look similar across places and b) its politicization varies.

Study Design

This survey will be fielded by Lightspeed Research Limited (Kantar) using their panel and panel partners in the UK (England and Wales only) and Sweden. We will have 1200 respondents in each country for a total of 2400 respondents. The majority of the samples will be nationally representative[1]; however, we will also oversample ethnic minorities. This is due to the significance role that ethnicity plays in the politics of criminal justice and welfare. As ethnic minorities tend to be underrepresented and/or in small numbers in survey data collection, this can affect conclusions that can be draw. In the UK, we will have a guaranteed sample of 200 ethnic minority respondents above the nationally representative sample of 1000 for England and Wales (subject to standard survey representativeness fluctuations). In Sweden, we will oversample ethnic minority respondents with a potential top up from respondents in urban areas to achieve a similar effect.

Respondents will be 18 years of age or older, will opt in to the survey via a consent form, and are free to discontinue the survey at any time. Questions also present a "don't know" response. There is no financial incentive to participate beyond what the survey firm offers. The project has been reviewed and received ethical clearance through the University of

[1] On age, gender, education, region, and ethnicity (for UK) or immigration status (for Sweden, which lacks officially collected ethnicity statistics)

Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations Ethics committee (reference #SSH_DPIR_C1A_21_021). The researchers will receive only anonymized data from Lightspeed.

Experimental Protocol

We embed an experiment at the end of the survey in the form of a budgeting exercise using sliding scales. The aim is to understand how respondents are willing to make tradeoffs between different policy priorities when primed with different social problem frames.

Specifically, towards the end of the survey , respondents will be randomized into two groups. Those in the control group will receive information about median crime rate across all local areas.

Those in the treatment group will receive the crime rate in their local authority (UK) or municipality (Sweden) in addition to the national median for comparison. The geographic location of the respondents is collected within the survey pre-experiment with other demographics, which allows us to match their location to actual local crime rates. The collected data are from 2020 and are sourced via the Office for National Statistics and Police.uk (for UK) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

Additional mediating variables collected before the experimental section will be discussed below.

The experiment will be blind. Respondents will not know that they have entered either the control or treatment group and will be randomly assigned between the following two prompts:

UK

> Control:
> Crime rates vary across different parts of Britain. Last year, the average local authority in Britain had **48.8** violent and theft offenses **per 1,000 residents**. People disagree about what types of policies might help address crime. We are going to ask you a few questions about such policies.

> Treatment:
> Crime rates vary across different parts of Britain. Last year, in your **local authority of [insert here],** there were **[INSERT]** violent and theft offenses per 1,000 residents. This is **[ABOVE/BELOW]** the rate of **48.8** for the **average local authority** in Britain. People disagree about what types of policies might help address crime. We are going to ask you a few questions about such policies.

Sweden

Control:
Crime rates vary across different parts of Sweden. Last year, the average municipality in Sweden had **37.7** violent and theft offenses **per 1 000 residents**. People disagree about what types of policies might help address crime. We are going to ask you a few questions about such policies.

Treatment:
Crime rates vary across different parts of Sweden. In the last 5 years, crime rates have risen in some parts of Sweden. Last year, in your **municipality of [insert here]**, there were **[INSERT]** violent and theft offenses **per 1 000 residents**. This is [**below/above]** the rate of **37.7** for the **average municipality** in Sweden. People disagree about what types of policies might help address crime. We are going to ask you a few questions about such policies.

Outcome Variables
Respondents are then asked a series of three questions as follows:

1/3
Imagine you had a budget you need to allocate to policies to address crime, how would you allocate it?

Respondents will complete the budget exercise utilizing a series of 4 sliders which range from 0 to 100. Selections will indicate how much they would like to spend (and thus prioritize) each policy. The options will be randomized in order. A don't know option is also presented. Respondents must have all sliders add up to 100 before proceeded. The sliders are:

Cut Taxes: 0 ------ 100

Increase spending on the police: 0 ------ 100

Increase spending on schools and apprenticeships/training for young people: 0 ------ 100

Increase cash support for low-income families:0 ------ 100

Don't know

There are additional questions post-experiment which will be used for additional tests of the hypotheses that focus more on sentencing and prisons rather than the police.

2/3
People have different ideas about the sentences which should be given to offenders. When thinking about the way **violent crimes** are currently punished, what action would you like to see the government take?"

a) Increase prison sentence length
b) Keep things about the same

c) Decrease prison sentence length
d) Institute fines or community service instead
e) DK

3/3

People have different ideas about the sentences which should be given to offenders. When thinking about the way **non**-**violent crimes** are currently punished, what action would you like to see the government take?"

a) Increase prison sentence length
b) Keep things about the same
c) Decrease prison sentence length
d) Institute fines or community service instead
e) DK

Finally, respondents in the control and treatment groups are also asked the following without the informational treatment directly listed on the question page:

Ongoing global protests for Black Lives Matter have sometimes adopted the slogan "defund the police" as a way to tackle racial injustice and reinvest in community-based programs. How familiar are you with this proposal?

- I am very familiar with the proposal
- I am somewhat familiar with the proposal
- I am not familiar with the proposal
- Don't know/prefer not to say

How much do you agree that such a policy would result in:

Higher crime rates
Increased racial equity
Safer communities
More opportunities for youth

The first question will allow us to assess whether respondents are familiar with this movement and make related analysis adjustments. The second question will again use a five point response scale.

Hypotheses

We hypothesize that priming respondents with information about crime rates will shape the tradeoffs citizens make between spending/policy priorities. There are four main groups of interest:

a) Control - those in high crime areas who are not provided with information
b) Control - those in low crime areas who are not provided with information
c) Treatment C - those in high crime areas who are primed with this information (i.e. treatment)

d) Treatment D - those in low crime areas who are primed with this information. (i.e. treatment)

Respondents may have some baseline information about crime in their area from lived experience. Our prime aims to make their local experience salient.[2] Respondents who perceive more information about local threats are, likely to respond punitively. Respondents who perceive crime as a general social problem, rather than a direct threat, are likely to respond through support for welfare and investment aimed at prevention.

Primary Hypotheses

H1. Baseline argument

a. Priming those in high crime areas with information about relatively higher risks of victimization (Treatment C) is likely to expand support for punitive funding options relative to skill or welfare spending. In other words, those in Treatment group C will emphasize punishment more than the control group. The effect will be larger for those with the greatest difference from the national average.
b. Priming those in low crime areas with information about relatively lower risks of victimization (Treatment D) is likely to expand support for welfare and particularly social investment (schools) spending. Those receiving Treatment D will emphasize investment more than the control group.
c. Treatment C will lead to more support for punitive policies and less for social investment or welfare than Treatment D.
d. For purposes of H1 a-c increased preferences for police spending may also be replaced with preferences for increased criminal sentences.
e. On top of H1 a-c, preferences for violent crime sentencing will be increasingly punitive compared to those for non-violent crime sentencing as the distance from the median for the informational treatment increases.

Supporting Hypotheses

H2. Crime rate argument - actual crime rates as a moderator

Respondents in high crime areas may have higher awareness of their relative risk from crime regardless of priming. The difference in preferences between those receiving Treatment C and the control in high crime areas (i.e. group A) will be smaller than the difference between those receiving Treatment D and the control in low crime areas (i.e. group B).

H3. Inter-country institutional argument

In majoritarian systems, social/welfare and punishment benefits are more locally targeted, thus support for punitive spending in the high crime areas for should be higher in majoritarian than in proportional representation (PR) systems. In PR countries, it is more credible that

[2] This is conceptually similar to how politicians utilize information about rising crime, for example, to prime constituents in electoral contests and policymaking discussions.

welfare and social investment will be diffuse and materially impact communities as a crime-reduction method. In other words, we expect a stronger treatment effect of C in in England and Wales than in Sweden.

H4. Coalition argument – income as moderator
The rich in high crime areas will support comparatively more social/welfare spending to punishment than the rich in low crime areas. In other words, the rich in high crime areas will be more favorable toward welfare and social investment than the rich in low crime areas. Yet, among the rich in low crime areas, those who receive Treatment D will have higher support for social/welfare spending than those in the control (i.e. group B).

H5a. Racial inequality argument – ethnicity and immigration status as moderators
Black and minority ethnic respondents (immigrant respondents) will have comparatively lower levels of support for increasing police funding or sentences (higher levels of support for social spending) than White respondents (native-born respondents) within the relationships expected in H1a-e.

These relationships will be most heightened for Black and minority ethnic respondents (immigrant respondents) who have low institutional trust of police/high perceptions of unequal treatment (H6b).

H5b. Racial resentment argument – ethnicity as moderator
White British and Swedish respondents who live in heterogeneous neighborhoods will prefer more punishment spending (less social/welfare spending) than those who live in homogeneous neighborhoods.

Given priming effects, this effect will be stronger in those receiving Treatment C than in the control group and in high crime areas over low crime areas.

H5c. Immigrant resentment argument – immigration views as moderator
The effects of Treatment C on increasing punitive spending will be comparatively higher among those who are anti-immigration. The effects of Treatment D on increasing welfare and investment support will be lower amongst those with anti-immigration attitudes.

H6a. Perception argument – fear of crime as moderator
Respondents' safety perceptions will supersede the effect of information where fear of crime is high. In other words, the effect of Treatment D on increasing welfare and investment support will be lower amongst those expressing strong fear of crime. The effects of Treatment C on punitive attitudes will be higher amongst those expressing strong fear of crime.

H6b. Perception argument – institutional views as moderator
Respondents who have low trust in justice institutions such as the police will be less punitive. The effects of Treatment C on punitive attitudes will be weaker among those with low trust in justice institutions.

H6c. Youth crime argument – youth views as moderator

Respondents who are concerned about youth engagement in crime (and especially those who attribute youth crime to failing schools) will be comparatively more favorable toward education spending relative to those who are not concerned about youth engagement in crime. The effects of Treatment C on punitive attitudes will be weaker among those with high concern about youth engagement. The effects of Treatment D on welfare attitudes, and especially social investment, will be stronger among those with high concern about youth engagement.

H7a. Empathy argument - compassion as moderator
Respondents who express more concern for others and higher compassion are less likely to support punitive approaches. The effects of Treatment C on punitive attitudes will be weaker among those with high levels of compassion.

H7b. Empathy argument – injustice as moderator
Respondents who express more concern and perceptions of unequal treatment by the police across social groups are less likely to support punitive approaches.

H8. Consumption vs. investment argument - education as a moderator
Respondents from more educated backgrounds are more likely to support education over welfare spending. Educated respondents in Treatment D are more likely to prioritize social investment than welfare relative to less educated respondents in Treatment D. Educated respondents in Treatment C are less likely to support punitive policies than less educated respondents in Treatment C.

Analysis Plan

Prior to analysis, we will review the results of the final question of the survey, which is a manipulation check as follows:

When you think about the crime rate in your local authority [Britain]/municipality [Sweden] do you think it is:

a) Higher than in the average local authority/municipality
b) About the same as in the average local authority/municipality
c) Lower than in the average local authority/municipality
d) Don't know

Those in the treatment condition who do not pass the manipulation check may be excluded from further analyses. Don't knows will be excluded.

The analysis will seek to test the hypotheses to determine primarily the impact of the informational treatment on support for punishment (spending and sentencing), social investment and social consumption (i.e. the value of the three sliders and the responses on the sentencing questions).

For clarity, we randomize only information about local crime rates. We do not randomize residence.

To test H1, we will thus utilize a difference in difference in means approach between treatment and control and across treatments. In other words, to isolate the direct effects of the information treatment on the outcome, we will subtract out the difference in means between those in high and low crime areas who are not treated from the difference between those who are treated.

We then test H2 looking at the difference in means between the underlying "groups" based on actual residence and information.

(C-D) – (A-B)

The result of this calculation will show the impact of the priming.

We will also use a multivariate linear mixed regression model to see how respondents' preferences across the sliders interact. In regressions, we will control for variables such as gender, education, partisanship, income and ethnicity.

The other supporting hypotheses that aim to complement the primary story with information about moderating variables (i.e. country, income, ethnicity, and perceptions of immigration, crime, institutions and youth, compassion and education) will be tested through a series of t-tests at values of interest. We may also utilize regression where the moderating variable (for example, anti-immigrant attitudes) is interacted with the treatment to understand heterogenous treatment effects.

Power Calculations

Estimating a priori power is challenging given the complexities of the experimental design and the lack of pilot study. However, a recent paper study, Busemeyer & Tober (2021)[3], has a similar slider design that can provide very rough estimations of standard responses for our power calculations. In their survey, respondents complete a budgeting exercise in which two options map well onto our social investment and social consumption sliders. Given their study utilizes five rather than three sliders, our calculations here may underestimate the effects/standard deviation we may find in our study.

For an educational investment prompt, Busemeyer & Tober (2021) find a mean of 22.23 with a standard deviation of 15.36. In our study, aiming for statistical power of 80% and significance of 0.05, our total sample of 2400 across countries would be sufficient to detect a treatment effect of 1.757 or larger (a bit over one tenth of a standard deviation). In an analysis of subgroups (i.e. just one country or those in high crime vs. low crime areas), the sample of 1200 would be sufficient to detect a treatment effect of 2.301 or larger.

For a cash benefit prompt, Busemeyer & Tober (2021) find a mean of 18.25 with a standard deviation of 14.08. In our study, aiming for statistical power of 80% and significance of 0.05, our total sample of 2400 across countries would be sufficient to detect a treatment effect of 1.611 or larger (a bit over one tenth of a standard deviation). In an analysis of subgroups (i.e. just one country or those in high crime vs. low crime areas), the sample of 1200 would be

[3] Dealing with Technological Change: Social Preferences and Institutional Context

sufficient to detect a treatment effect of 2.278 or larger (about one sixth of a standard deviation).

These calculations are found using the website: https://egap.shinyapps.io/Power_Calculator/. We will seek to maximize statistical power by collapsing categories (A-D) and countries where appropriate for the hypothesis testing.