

“Fear Will Push Preventive Health Business,” Trends Journal, Spring 2006.)

Trendpost: *On the low end of the consumer scale, marketers that shrink product size but provide a higher quality than their competition will develop a large market niche, build brand loyalty and increase profitability. For example, chains such as White Castle, with low-end price point products, established early 20th century success by building a reputation for high “clean food” standards at a time of widespread food borne disease scares that discouraged people from eating meat and eating out. While the hamburger chain’s image and reputation has dramatically changed over the decades, the “clean” concept that established its early success is still in vogue.*

Editor’s Note: *Once again, regardless of the business sector – transportation, food, health care, entertainment, etc. – bimodal consumer market conditions will prevail for at least a generation as the US sinks deeper into recessionary malaise. As society continues to bifurcate, the same “small is beautiful” standard can be developed in housing and autos by providing state-of-the-art efficiencies with high quality necessities, less space and the elimination of non-essential gadgets and add-ons. (See “Simplicity Hip – Funky Cool,” Trends Journal, Winter 2006.)*

CRIME PAYS: It’s a rule of thumb. As the lower rungs are removed from the ladder of success, more people with less education will lack a skill base and the tools to advance. Unable or incapable of earning a living wage, those with the least hope and the fewest opportunities will swell the ranks of career criminals.

The up-trend for crime is now underway. Nearly 17,000 people were murdered in the US in 2005, the largest percentage increase in 15 years. Up 4.8 percent nationally, homicides hit a 30-year high in Cincinnati, Philadelphia recorded its most killings in 10 years, and Orlando logged in with its most slayings ever. Seattle recorded a 25 percent increase in gun-related attacks, while overall there were 1.4 million violent crimes in 2005 ... a 2.5 percent gain (the largest percentage increase since 1991) and a 4.5 percent jump in robberies.

And 2006 started out with a bang. In the first six months, the overall number of homicides rose by 4.2 percent compared with the same period in 2005, while robberies rose nearly 10 percent.

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Yet, unlike the 1990s when gang members and those in the crack/cocaine trade killed each other over turf disputes, petty arguments, and perceived slights ... now it’s the hopeless, drugged up and ignorant 18 to 24 year olds pushing the crime trend. “The youth are clearly driving this,” said Anthony Braga, criminologist at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. “The age of these kids is going down as the years pass ... the rules of engagement have changed.”

With minorities and the poor failing to graduate high school (one third of all public school students and nearly half of all blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans will not graduate with their class), unless the education and job opportunity trend is reversed, crime conditions will worsen.

Trendpost: *Business opportunities for gated communities, personal and executive self-defense instruction, bodyguards, the prison industrial complex, alarm systems, and guns ... helped along by politicians and police screaming to “get tough on crime” ... will be growing trends throughout the decade.*

As the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, class warfare and minority resentment will continue to grow. America’s two tier justice system, in which corporate criminals that bilk the public out of billions and steal millions are given soft time while three time losers and petty drug dealers get the book thrown at them, has not escaped the attention of middle and lower criminal and non-criminal classes. And, with the belief among many minorities that Washington’s pre and post Hurricane Katrina feeble response was racially motivated, we anticipate that before the 2008 Presidential Election, race riots and violent demonstrations will be forthcoming.

Editor’s note: *Among America’s most crime prone, the 16 percent without a high school education had a median income of \$18,144. Those with diplomas earned \$25,360 a year in 2004 – about two thirds less than a college graduate ... a gap that’s grown more than 60 percent since 1975 when high paying non-skilled jobs were plentiful.*

Beyond fertilizing the climate for criminality, with only 27 percent of adults having four years of college or more and economic conditions worsening, America’s underclass – with a variety of social ills, such as poor health, drug abuse and family dysfunctions – will test the fabric of society. ■