

A Review of
The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society

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Book: *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*
Author: David Garland
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The Culture of Control leads the reader on an historical journey through the decades of the twentieth century, in order to provide a better understanding of the development of society's modern-day responses to crime. In doing so, the book is first concerned with accounts of what has happened to initiate changes in our formal and informal collective responses to crime. Specifically, this account is focused on the social, economic, and political transformations that have taken place prior to, and since the 1970s, for both, the United States and Great Britain.

More importantly, the book appears to be concerned with explaining how these historical changes have had such a significant impact on the emerging systems of crime control and social order in both nations. The resulting philosophy and practice of modern-day crime control is, in Garland's view, a direct reflection of the dominant popular culture and political ideologies of our time (p. x). In turn, because our cultural and political ideologies have changed over the course of several decades, so too have our responses to the problem of crime.

The book is organized such that the historical and social contexts underlying the modern crime control system are presented in piecemeal fashion. Garland attempts to incorporate several elements into an explanation of the modern workings of the justice system, as a whole, rather than focusing on any one agency. In doing so, he draws on the social and historical contexts of various time periods in order to explicate the changes that occurred to create and drive the modern social control system as we see it today. Thus, his examination traces the evolutionary path of the existing systems of social control in both, the United States and Great Britain.

Each of the eight chapters addresses a specific context in which to consider crime control, beginning with a comparison between older and more recent criminal justice practices. The next two chapters highlight the philosophical and practical evolution of the modern justice system from penal-welfare through penal-modernism that seemingly occurred in just a few short years. Chapter four examines specific cultural and social forces that triggered changes in our response to crime. The fifth and sixth chapters focus on the political, social, and cultural decision-making processes that were adapted to form the foundation for modern crime control policies. Finally, in his concluding chapters, Garland discusses the transformations that have resulted from this evolutionary process, the newly emerging crime control system, and the impact of these policies for the present and the foreseeable future.

Garland begins his examination of the changing organization of formal and informal controls employed by state criminal justice agencies and larger society, in general, by focusing on changes in the penal philosophy of the United States and Great Britain. His account brings to light various ideological and structural transformations that have contributed to the reversal of criminological philosophies since the 1970s.

Most notably, the first few chapters suggest that the efficacy of rehabilitation as a dominant philosophy in criminal justice was widely debated during this period, largely due to prevailing social conditions, political outcry, published reports of rehabilitation's ineffectiveness, and recent interest in punishment as a means of addressing public sentiment and rising crime rates. In this regard, fear of crime, public safety, and victim redress all began to take on prominence with the fall of the rehabilitative ideal. Garland examines the emergence of these factors as a response to deteriorating social, economic, and political support for the penal-welfare state. In essence, faith in rehabilitation seemed to be eroding from all sides.

What did emerge were new criminological and penal philosophies that sought to control the prevalence of crime through methods of social control. Taking into account the shortcomings of the penal-welfare state, the public, policymakers, and academics reorganized their philosophies to focus on means of preventing crime, protecting the public, punishing offenders, and maintaining order in society.

The book goes on to discuss how these drastic changes in the entire crime control field were shaped not only by forces directly impacting the criminal justice system, but also by larger social, economic, and political forces that began to take shape after the Second World War. In this regard, the decades following the war were marked by enormous growth and change in economic, social and political terms for both, the United States and Great Britain.

Garland attributes much of this change to technological advancements (e.g., mass media and automobile), an increasing system of social and economic stratification, ecological shifts in dwelling patterns, and transformations in the familial structure. In addition, various domestic and international crises that erupted were also factors in the changes that were to take place. All of these social forces seemingly contributed to the development of divergent political and cultural views that spawned subsequent changes to the system of social control.

In summary, the first four chapters of the book present a thorough description of the processes that culminated in the emergence of a new crime control strategy for the United States and Great Britain. However, the following two chapters detail how policymakers, governmental agencies, and criminal justice professionals responded to problems that arose from increasing crime rates and the limited capacity of the modern justice system to meet the crime-control demands of the public and politicians. Based on this view, the relative success of any crime control measure is predicated on the support that is received in public and political circles.

In these sections, Garland attempts to establish a direct link between the overall workings of the justice system and the goals of other institutions. Communities and politicians, for example, are viewed as exerting a great deal of influence over existing social control policies. In essence, the book makes the case that criminal justice agencies respond to the needs of those to

whom they are beholden by adapting their social control responses. At the same time, these same agencies mete out an expressive level of justice and crime control that, on the surface appears effective, but in reality is not. Similarly, they deny the true ineffectiveness of such strategies in favor of responding to the expectations of the public, policymakers, or their own goals.

The major conclusion that Garland appears to offer here is that formal social control responses of criminal justice institutions/agencies are dependent upon a certain degree of reciprocity with other institutions of informal social control. Criminal justice agencies are, in turn, subject to the demands placed on it by larger society, and more specifically, by politicians who enact the legislation that determines their role. This relates, in part, to the final two chapters of *The Culture of Control*.

The new criminological paradigm discussed by Garland centers around a 'culture' of crime control. Unlike the established social welfare norms of the past, the modern crime control system is driven by the public and/or political desire for more punitive measures, more control of society and offenders, and an economic style of reasoning. Thus, his major goal in the last two chapters is to explore the link between this transformed culture of control and the processes that triggered it. Namely, Garland suggests that the fundamental processes at work in the formation of the modern crime control system can largely be attributed to a cultural shift in society. As a result, the modern system of crime control and social order is an adaptive response to structural forces and the changing needs and/or goals of the public, politicians, and the criminal justice system.

The book concludes with a brief discussion of the future. In this regard, Garland points to prosperous economic times for states and the federal government, low rates of unemployment, and steadily decreasing crime rates at the beginning of the twenty-first century. He suggests, however that our society is continuing down a path towards more punitive measures, indicative of the modern system of crime control, and that this path may be more costly, especially in the long run. Thus, he questions the efficacy of our existing system of social control, much like the opponents of the penal-welfare system had back in the late twentieth century.

In sum, the book offers an interesting and comprehensive comparison between the older crime control system, dominated by the penal-welfare ideal, and the new, more adaptive, punitive system of social control that began to emerge in the 1970s. It details the processes and inner-workings of the modern crime control system in extraordinary fashion, giving accounts of justice system responses and adaptations to modern crime control problems. It also describes the implications of the current criminological philosophy and its possible consequences in the future. In truth, it seems that Garland leaves no stone unturned in his quest to explore the evolution of the modern crime control system in the United States and Great Britain.

One shortcoming of the book might be its lack of a concise structure. It is easy to get lost in the minutiae of each chapter. Though it is obvious that Garland was meticulous in writing *The Culture of Control*, it is very easy to feel a sense of disconnect with the vast amount of detail that is provided. Much of the information seems to overlap to such a degree that it would be difficult

for many, especially those not well versed in criminal justice theory or crime control literature, to gain a complete understanding of the purpose of each section.

In addition, it was disappointing that the book failed to draw more parallels between the United States and Great Britain (or other Western liberal democracies). In this regard, Garland barely touches on the similarities and differences existing between these two nations with respect to the modern system of crime control. As the book progresses, he seems to rely less on data deriving from the British system, and instead, focuses solely on the system in the United States.

Nonetheless, the book provides a thorough account of the forces that have combined to trigger the emergence of our modern crime control system. It would certainly prove useful for those interested in broadening their knowledge of the intricate processes that have collectively evolved our means of social control. Thus, interested readers or scholars from a variety of disciplines would likely benefit from Garland's examination of crime and the changing face of our collective responses to it.

Endnote

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