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## Security at the Expense of Liberty: A Test of Predictions Deriving From the Culture of Control Thesi

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**Security at the Expense of Liberty:  
A Test of Predictions Deriving From the Culture of Control Thesis**

**Abstract**

In *The Culture of Control* (2001), David Garland linked contemporary crime control policies and welfare reforms to a cultural formation that he termed the "crime complex of late modernity." According to Garland, once established, the crime complex exerts a contemporaneous effect on public views about both criminal justice and the welfare state, increasing popular support for security measures as well as more restrictive public assistance policies. Although Garland's thesis has featured prominently in scholarship on crime and punishment, few empirical studies have tested the specific predictions that underlie his arguments. To address this research gap, this study uses unique public opinion data to assess the extent to which key dimensions of the crime complex are associated with public views about criminal justice policies and welfare reforms that emphasize security and control. The results support several of the theoretical underpinnings of Garland's thesis. The authors discuss the implications of the findings for theory, research, and policy.

**Keywords:** Culture of control, public opinion, crime policy

In his 1994 *State of the Union Address*, President Clinton declared that “violent crime and the fear it provokes are crippling our society, limiting personal freedom and fraying the ties that bind us.” In the years immediately following the address, crime rates declined for all categories of offenses; indeed, by the turn of the century, they fell to a forty-year low (Blumstein and Wallman, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2002). Despite the dramatic reduction in criminal offending, the U.S. prison population continued to grow throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium (Blumstein and Beck, 1999; Sabol, West, and Cooper, 2009).

In addition to incarceration, the broader expansion of control and surveillance, which scholars had long warned was transforming the U.S. into a prison-like society (Blomberg, 1987; Marx, 1988), persisted as policymakers redoubled efforts to fight crime and increase security. Between 1994 and 2007, for example, a period during which the rate of rape and sexual assault victimizations declined by 50 percent (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997; Rand, 2008), eighteen states and the federal government enacted laws that allowed for the civil commitment of sex offenders after they completed their criminal sentences (James, Thomas, and Foley, 2008; see also Lucken and Bales, 2008).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, cities have greatly increased their use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance cameras to monitor public spaces, such as downtown districts and neighborhoods (Nieto, Johnston-Dodds, and Simmons, 2002; Welsh and Farrington, 2009). And in just the past five years, most states have considered imposing strict controls, tied directly to stereotypes associating poverty and crime, on recipients of public assistance (Budd, 2010: 751). In 2011, for example, Florida passed a bill requiring that welfare applicants submit to mandatory drug tests before receiving benefits.

In short, recent decades have witnessed a historically unprecedented shift in American crime policy, one in which punishment and security—including the extended control of such “dangerous classes” as criminals and the poor (Shelden, 2004)—have emerged as dominant themes (Mears, 2010). Not surprisingly, many scholars have attempted to explain what factors led to and have sustained this “get tough” movement (e.g., Beckett, 1997; Gottschalk, 2006; Simon, 2007). One of the most prominent and widely discussed accounts has been David

Garland's (2001) *The Culture of Control*. Garland argued that the expansion of punishment and control, and the emphasis on security, is grounded in and conditioned by a cultural formation that he termed the "crime complex of late modernity" (p. 163). In particular, his contention was that the crime complex, or institutionalized crime consciousness, leads individuals to become more attuned to the crime problem, identify strongly with crime victims, and adopt routine precautions to guard against victimization (p. 164). According to Garland, these collective sensibilities and social routines, in turn, generate among the population an indifference to the needs of offenders and, in particular, a strong desire for security and control. The key consequence, he suggested, is that the public becomes more concerned with being protected from crime than from the exercise of unrestrained state authority (p. 12), and is increasingly willing to impose strict controls on populations it considers to be dangerous or undeserving—namely, criminal offenders and welfare claimants (p. 195).

Since its introduction, Garland's thesis has generated considerable scholarly debate and influenced subsequent theoretical work focused on crime and punishment (Braithwaite, 2003; Cavender, 2004; Gottschalk, 2006; Mears, 2010; Simon, 2007; Wacquant, 2009). To date, however, only a handful of studies have evaluated his arguments empirically (e.g., Brown, 2006; Cesaroni and Doob, 2003). And to our knowledge, there have been no investigations to date of Garland's assumptions about the roles of concern about crime victims and participation in defensive routines as determinants of public views about crime policy. Studies have also yet to examine Garland's (2001) prediction that the factors that influence attitudes towards crime control also shape views about welfare regulations.

The scarcity of research on the culture of control thesis no doubt reflects the difficulty associated with testing Garland's complex hypotheses about the ways in which rapid social and economic changes during the middle decades of the twentieth century fostered collective insecurity and ultimately led to the development of today's crime complex.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there is also an important cross-sectional aspect to his thesis. Garland makes clear that the crime complex, now fully developed, has a contemporaneous effect on public opinion.<sup>3</sup> For example, he suggests

that today's cultural identification with crime victims is of continuing importance for social policy because it now constitutes one of the few remaining sources of large-scale solidarity (pp. 200-201) and functions to undermine public compassion for offenders (see, e.g., pp. 143-144). Indeed, it is the here-and-now elements of his thesis that are reflected in his concluding remarks, which warn readers that "as the crime complex reproduces itself, we face the real possibility of being locked into [a] new 'iron cage'" (p. 203-204).

Recognizing this, researchers have begun to evaluate the cross-sectional arguments outlined in his thesis (Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2009; Hogan, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2005; Johnson, 2009; Unnever and Cullen, 2010). The goal of the current study is to contribute to that literature by testing three key cross-sectional predictions that derive from Garland's arguments. We do so by analyzing public opinion data that include measures of dimensions of the crime complex and that capture individuals' views about both crime control and welfare policies. Specifically, we examine the extent to which support for victims' rights and the adoption of defensive routines to reduce victimization risk are associated with support for two prominent security-oriented crime policies and for "get tough" welfare regulations.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Popular Identification With and Concern About Crime Victims**

Garland (2001) and others (e.g., Gottschalk, 2006; Simon, 2007) have emphasized that the victims' rights movement has played a prominent role in shaping attitudes toward crime and in creating public support for tougher criminal justice policies. The particular victims' movement that prevailed in the U.S. was intertwined with law-and-order politics and involved a coupling of advocacy on behalf of victims with calls for increased punishment and control (Dubber, 2002; Elias, 1993; Gottschalk, 2006; Simon, 2007). For example, in recent decades, politicians have used public sympathy for victims and their families as a political tool for

garnering support for “get tough” legislation, and the media has increasingly engaged in “victim discourse,” focusing on personal stories of system failure over experts’ analyses of policies (Garland, 2001, p. 158, see also Dubber, 2002; Elias, 1993). Lawmakers have written and introduced laws in ways that have encouraged the public to view themselves as victims or potential victims (Simon, 2007). Implicit in many such efforts has been the notion that to prevent victimization and better serve victims, state power should supersede the rights and liberties of citizens. As Elias (1993, p. 3) has emphasized, the message has been that “to really address the victim’s plight . . . we must get tougher on crime and curb offender rights—even public rights generally: Increased police powers help victims best.”

According to Garland (2001), the result of these portrayals of crime victims is that the victim has become a “*representative character* whose experience is assumed to be common and collective, rather than individual and atypical” (p. 144; emphasis in original). In particular, he maintained that a “new collective meaning of victimhood” has emerged that involves the “vision of the victim as Everyman” and is associated with the belief that individual victims should “have a voice—making victim impact statements, being consulted about punishment and decisions about release, [and] being notified about the offender’s subsequent movements” (pp. 11-12). His contention was that the contemporary cultural significance of victimhood contributes to support for punitive, security-oriented policies (p. 144). Similar arguments have surfaced in other scholarly accounts of recent criminal justice trends. For example, Dubber (2002, pp. 4-6) has suggested that, today, victims of violent crime are “cultural icons” whose suffering “justifies the state’s usurpation of ever greater powers of investigation and control.” Similarly, Simon (2007, pp. 75-76) has argued that crime victims are now representative subjects whose “vulnerabilities and needs . . . define the appropriate conditions for government intervention.”

Although such arguments fit within Garland’s (2001) broader thesis about support for punitive, security-oriented policies, extant studies have not investigated them empirically. Indeed, we are only aware of one study to date that has included a measure of concern for victims in models predicting views about crime policies. That investigation, an evaluation of

probation officers' orientations toward juvenile justice goals, found that support for victims' rights was positively associated with officers' perceptions of the importance of both treatment and punishment in juvenile court outcomes (Ward and Kupchik, 2010). Given the dearth of research in this area, then, as well as the centrality of the presumed relationship between concern for victims and public sentiments about crime policy to Garland's (2001) work, the first hypothesis that we test is that support for victims' rights will be positively related to support for security-oriented crime policies that limit civil liberties.

### **The Adoption of Defensive Routines to Reduce the Risk of Victimization**

Garland (2001), building on the work of Michel Foucault, viewed individuals' adaptive reactions to the experience of crime—namely their adoption of defensive routines—as central to the enactment of “get tough” criminal justice policies that increasingly delimited the rights and liberties enjoyed by American citizens. He observed that, in recent decades, citizens have increasingly taken steps to reduce their risk of victimization, such as installing security systems and alarms, avoiding high-crime areas (e.g., subways, parks, streets at night), purchasing firearms, and moving to the suburbs or into gated communities. Garland contended that these adaptations, in conjunction with those of communities and corporations, “provide the social basis for many of the new crime policies of recent years” (p. xi). More specifically, he suggested that private defensive routines reproduce the anxieties that trigger them, cause individuals to become frustrated and angry at having to spend time and money on self-protection, and ultimately alter attitudes toward crime and criminals (pp. 163-164). Other scholars have made similar arguments. For example, Radar (2004, p. 699) has argued that individuals' defenses against crime can affect them psychologically, by becoming constant reminders “of the potential threat of victimization that might occur if they do not continue to engage in such behaviors.”

Although not specifically addressing Garland's thesis, studies have found support for the argument that the adoption of defensive routines, often termed “avoidance behaviors” or “safety

precautions,” amplifies crime-related emotions (Ferguson and Mindel, 2007; Rountree and Land, 1996a, 1996b). For example, Liska and colleagues (1988, p. 835) determined that limiting or changing activities because of crime increased fear of crime and thus created “an escalating causal loop.” The results of a recent study showed that both avoidance (i.e., fear prevented participation in certain activities) and defensive behaviors (e.g., purchased a gun, installed burglar alarms) were reciprocally related to the fear of crime (Rader et al., 2007). Similarly, Rountree (1998) found that respondents who took safety precautions (e.g., installation of extra locks, ownership of a burglar alarm or security system) two years prior to her survey were more likely to report that they currently worried about being physically attacked and having their homes being burgled.

While extant research has shown that taking crime prevention measures may increase fear of crime, studies to date have not investigated whether such behaviors influence views about crime control. To address this research gap, we test the hypothesis that participation in defensive routines aimed at reducing the risk of victimization will be associated with greater support for security-oriented crime policies that limit civil liberties.

### **The Crime Complex and Welfare Reform**

Garland argued (2001, p. 196), as have others (Beckett and Western, 2001; Simon, 1993; Wacquant, 2009), that the same underlying factors account for punitive criminal justice policies and repressive welfare laws. For Garland, the logic is relatively straight-forward: Americans view crime and disorder as resulting from the personal choices of the poor. Accordingly, crime policies and welfare regulations are needed to punish and control this group. As Garland (2001, pp. 196-197) emphasized, today “large sections of the middle and working classes see themselves as victimized by the poor” who they view to be “members of a culturally distinct and socially threatening ‘underclass,’ in which all of the pathologies of late modern life are concentrated” (see also Gans, 1995; Reiman and Leighton, 2010). In short, to Garland (2001, p.



201), contemporary crime policies and welfare regulations “share the same assumptions, harbor the same anxieties, deploy the same stereotypes, and utilize the same recipes for the identification of risk and the allocation of blame.”

Providing some support for Garland’s arguments, prior work demonstrates a connection between actual policy responses to criminals and those to the poor (Garland, 1985; Melossi and Pavarini, 1981). Beckett and Western (2001: 55), for example, present empirical evidence showing that, at the state level, incarceration and welfare spending “have come to form a single policy regime aimed at the governance of social marginality.” Additionally, a recent investigation of public opinion on issues related to that policy regime reveals that punitive attitudes toward criminals are inversely correlated with support for welfare spending (Rubin, 2011). The research to date has not, however, evaluated Garland’s (2001) predictions about the factors associated with public views about policies designed to regulate and control welfare recipients. Accordingly, we test the following hypothesis: Support for victims’ rights and the adoption of defensive routines to reduce the risk of victimization will both be positively related to support for efforts to limit access to welfare through the imposition of “get tough” regulations on welfare recipients.

## **Methods**

### **Data**

The data analyzed in this study come from a random telephone survey of adult (18 years or older) residents of Leon County, Florida, an area that encompasses the state capital and two state universities. The survey was conducted by the Research Network Inc., a public opinion polling firm in Tallahassee, Florida, between September and December, 2000. The timing of the survey—following years of declining crime rates, but preceding the 9/11 terrorist attacks—makes the data particularly suitable for our purposes.<sup>4</sup> In generating the sample, the researchers

used a two-stage modified Mitofsky-Waksberg design and used a five callback rule before replacement. Trained interviewers administered the survey and were monitored by supervisors who listened in on calls and called back respondents to validate 10 percent of completions. When calculated in accordance with the recommendations of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR, 2008), the response and completion rates were 37 percent and 91 percent, respectively. These rates are comparable to those obtained in other public opinion studies using telephone surveys (e.g., Hirschfield and Piquero, 2010; Huddy et al., 2005; King and Wheelock, 2007).

The final sample included 1,693 respondents. Demographically, the sample largely resembled the Leon County population. As compared to 2000 Census data for the county (in parentheses), the sample had the following characteristics: females, 59 percent (52 percent); Whites, 70 percent (66 percent); Blacks, 24 percent (29 percent); Hispanics, 2 percent (4 percent); age 65 or older, 13 percent (8 percent). The overrepresentation of females and the elderly and underrepresentation of minorities is not unusual in telephone survey research (Lavrakas, 1993).

### **Dependent Variables**

The analyses include three dependent variables. Two measures assess respondents' views of recently enacted criminal justice policies that undermine civil liberties in a manner that accords with Garland's (2001) emphasis on crime control strategies that significantly expand state power. For example, in his discussion of how the public's demand for protection from crime now eclipses its concern for protection from the state, Garland explained that "surveillance cameras have come to be a routine presence on city streets, and decisions about bail, parole or release from custody now come under intense scrutiny" (p. 12). Moreover, he emphasized that today, sex offenders often receive especially repressive sanctions, because they are seen as a particularly threatening group that must "be marked out, and either set apart or continuously

monitored” (pp. 196, 137). Accordingly, our first measure, *Hold Sex Offenders Past Sentence*, was developed from a question that asked subjects: “How do you feel about keeping persons convicted of sex crimes who are still considered dangerous in prison past the time they should have been released?” The second, *Video/Audio Tape Neighborhoods*, was derived from an item that asked respondents “How would you rate video or audio taping high-crime neighborhoods?” The response categories for both measures were 1 = strongly oppose, 2 = oppose, 3 = neutral, 4 = favor, 5 = strongly favor.<sup>5</sup>

The third dependent variable taps into public views about policies aimed at limiting access to welfare benefits or subjecting welfare claimants to non-traditional constraints. Specifically, subjects were asked “On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being strongly oppose and 5 being strongly favor, how do you feel about: (1) Mandatory drug testing to qualify for welfare; (2) Mandatory birth control for women on welfare; and (3) Women who have additional babies on welfare having to give them up for adoption.” Responses to the items were averaged to create an index, “*Get Tough*” *Welfare Regulations*, on which higher scores indicate greater support for imposing strict regulations on welfare recipients (Cronbach’s alpha = .64).<sup>6</sup> Descriptive statistics for these measures and the others discussed below are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

## **Independent Variables**

This study includes two independent variables that capture different dimensions of the crime complex. The first, *Victims’ Rights*, assesses the degree to which individuals support victims’ rights. Respondents were asked

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly oppose and 5 being strongly favor, how do you feel about providing the following to crime victims and their families their families: (1) The option to make a statement prior to the sentencing of the offender about how the

crime has affected them; (2) The option to talk to the prosecutor during any plea bargaining process; (3) The right to be notified about changes in the status of a prisoner, such as where and when they will be released; and (4) The right to be paid by the convicted offender for injuries.

Because of few respondents strongly opposed or opposed victim's rights, we recoded the responses into the following three categories: 1 = oppose, neutral, 2 = favor, 3 = strongly favor. We then averaged across the four items to create an index (Cronbach's alpha = .70).

The second variable, *Defensive Routines*, measures the extent to which individuals had previously adopted routine precautions to reduce their risk of victimization. The survey question asked respondents "Has the risk of crime caused you to do any of the following: (1) Purchase a weapon; (2) Install a home security system; (3) Limit the times that you go shopping; (4) Avoid certain neighborhoods; (5) Keep your car windows rolled up in certain neighborhoods; (6) Not wear jewelry, such as watches, rings, and necklaces in public." The response categories were 0 = no, 1 = yes. An index for this variable was created by summing the responses to all six items. Thus, a respondent's score on the *Defensive Routines* variable indicates the simple count of precautions against victimization that he or she has taken. This measure is nearly identical to those used in previous studies that have examined individuals' use of "safety precautions" or "prevention measures" (Rader et al., 2007; Rountree and Land, 1996a, 1996b; Wilcox et al., 2003).

### **Control Variables**

The analyses include control variables that have been used in prior research. Studies have found that political values play an integral role in shaping public opinion on criminal justice and welfare (Jacoby, 2006; Rudolph and Evans, 2005; Unnever, Cullen, and Fisher, 2007). Accordingly, we incorporate three controls for political ideology. The first, *Conservative*, indicates whether the respondent self-identified as being politically conservative (0 = moderate,

liberal, 1 = conservative). The second, *Republican*, is coded “1” if the respondent is a registered republican and “0” if he or she is not.<sup>7</sup> The third, *Community First*, measures whether the respondent values community goals more than individual freedom (0 = individual freedom, don’t know, 1 = community goals). The specific question was: “Some people support high levels of individual freedom while others are more supportive of the goals of the community. Generally, which is more important to you?”

Because our principal interest is in the effects of support for victims’ rights and the adoption of defensive routines on views about both crime policy and welfare regulations, independent of those of general concern about crime, we include two controls for crime salience. The first, *Crime Problem*, assesses an individual’s perception of the severity of the crime problem in their local community. This measure derives from responses to the following two open-ended questions: (1) “What do you consider your community’s single most urgent problem?”; (2) “Is there another problem you consider almost as important?” We combined responses to these items to construct a dummy variable that was coded “1” if a respondent gave an answer to either question that centered on the issue of crime or violence and coded “0” if he or she did not. Additionally, we engage a measure of respondents’ cognitive assessments of the risk of crime, *Victimization Risk*. This variable is measured with the survey question: “On a scale of one to ten with one being the lowest and ten being the highest, how at risk do you feel you are of being the victim of a violent crime?”

The standard demographic controls are also included in the models. These include gender (0 = male, 1 = *Female*), race (0 = non-white, 1 = *White*), age, educational attainment, total household income, marital status (0 = not married, 1 = *Married*), and whether the respondent has children (0 = no children, 1 = *Parent*).<sup>8</sup> Age was measured ordinally: 1 = 18-24, 2 = 25-34, 3 = 35-44, 4 = 45-54, 5 = 55-64, 6 = 65-74, and 7 = 75 and older. Education was measured by responses to the question: “Which of the following best describes the highest level of education that you have completed?” where: 1 = some high school, 2 = graduated high school, 3 = vocational/trade school graduate, 4 = some college, 5 = college graduate, and 6 = post graduate

work or degree. *Income* was measured with the following survey question: “Which of the following categories includes your total household income before taxes?” Response categories included: 1 = less than \$25,000, 2 = \$25, 000 to \$49,999, 3 = \$50,000 to \$74,999, 4 = \$75,000 to \$99,999, 5 = \$100,000 to \$149,999, 6 = \$150,000 to \$199,999, and 7 = \$200,000 or more.<sup>9</sup>

### **Analytic Strategy**

For each of the three dependent variables, we estimated the models using ordinary least squares regression.<sup>10</sup> Excessive multicollinearity was not a problem. The largest VIF was 1.71, and bivariate correlations between variables did not exceed 0.52 (the correlation between *Age* and *Parent*). There was, however, evidence of heteroskedasticity among the residuals. For this reason, we estimated the models using robust standard errors.<sup>11</sup>

## **Results**

We begin by first examining the extent to which the demographic and attitudinal controls can account for respondents’ support for retaining custody over sex offenders after their assigned criminal sentences have expired. Model 1 in Table 2 presents the baseline estimates for the effects of these variables on this outcome variable. The results show that four of the controls are significantly associated with attitudes toward this policy. Females, whites, persons with less educational attainment, and parents ( $p = .059$ ) are all more supportive, on average, of holding sex offenders in custody indefinitely. These effects are similar to those observed in other studies investigating views about the punishment of sex offenders (Mears et al., 2008). Together, the controls explain only six percent of the variation in views about retaining custody over sex offenders.

We turn next to the question of whether identification with and concern about crime victims, as measured by support for victims’ rights, and the adoption of routine precautions

against crime are associated with views about the release of sex offenders. Recall that the arguments in Garland's thesis suggest that these dimensions of the crime complex should both be positively related to support for retaining custody over such offenders. The results of Model 2 in Table 2 reveal that, as expected, both factors predict views about this policy. Individuals who more strongly support victims' rights and persons who have adopted a larger number of defensive routines to reduce their risk of victimization both hold more favorable views, on average, of retaining state control over sex offenders. Examination of the standardized coefficients also reveals that the crime complex variables are among the strongest predictors in the model. Indeed, their inclusion increases the explanatory power of the model by more than 80 percent.

Are the same relationships observed when the crime policy in question threatens the civil liberties of the general population rather than just those of offenders? To address this question, we direct our attention to sources of support for allowing authorities to video or audio tape neighborhood activities, a policy that increases supervision over offenders and non-offenders alike. The results presented in Model 3 in Table 2 show that, at least in the case of the control variables, the effects are not identical. That is, the controls are not associated in the same way with respondents' views about the policy that affects the civil liberties of sex offenders and their attitudes about the effort to increase supervision over the general public. For example, political ideology and general concerns about crime appear to play a larger role in structuring views about neighborhood surveillance than in shaping attitudes toward sex offenders. Likewise, respondents' age and marital status only have significant effects in the model predicting views about recording neighborhood activities. On the other hand, respondents' gender and race appear to matter less for their views about neighborhood surveillance than their attitudes toward sex offenders.

Given the inconsistency of the effects of the controls on the two outcome variables, evidence that the crime complex variables have consistent effects on respondents' views about both policies would be all the more supportive of Garland's arguments. Model 4 in Table 2

presents the regression coefficients for the full model predicting support for neighborhood surveillance. An inspection of the results reveals that paralleling the findings for views about retaining custody of sex offenders, both of the crime complex variables have significant positive effects on support for allowing law enforcement personnel to record neighborhood activities. That is, individuals who support victims' rights and those who have adopted a larger number of defensive routines are both more supportive, on average, of efforts to increase surveillance over the general public during their day-to-day activities in their neighborhoods. Notice also that the addition of the crime complex variables reduces the coefficients for the *Crime Problem* and *Victimization Risk* variables by 39 percent and 70 percent, respectively, suggesting that a substantial portion of the effects of these measures on views about neighborhood surveillance is indirect through concern about victims and defensive routines. Additionally, the inclusion of the crime complex variables increases the amount of explained variation by 39 percent relative to baseline model for this outcome variable (Model 3 in Table 2). To this point, then, the findings are consistent with the assumptions underlying Garland's theory.

Table 2 about here

Turning now to views about public assistance, the second portion of the analyses explores the sources of support for getting tough on welfare recipients. Model 1 in Table 3 presents the results of regressing the "*Get Tough*" *Welfare Regulations* index on the controls. The evidence indicates that whites and persons with less educational attainment both tend to be more supportive of such reforms. Somewhat unsurprisingly, political ideology also predicts attitudes toward welfare restrictions. Conservatives, registered Republicans ( $p = .066$ ), and persons who favor community goals over individual freedom are all more supportive, on average, of efforts to impose untraditional constraints on recipients of public assistance. Additionally, and providing evidence supporting Garland's more general contention that views about crime and welfare are inextricably linked together by criminal stereotypes of the poor, the two measures of concern



about crime are both associated with more favorable views about restrictive welfare policies. Indeed, the two crime salience variables, *Victimization Risk* and *Crime Problem*, comprise the second and third strongest predictors in the model (Beta = .078 and .076, respectively). The strongest predictor of views about welfare restrictions is *Education* (Beta = -.196).

We focus now on the question of whether, as Garland (2001) suggested, the dimensions of the crime complex also explain views about restricting and regulating public assistance to the poor. Model 2 in Table 3 provides the estimates of the effects of the crime complex variables on support for getting tough on welfare recipients, controlling for respondents' demographic characteristics, political beliefs, and general concerns about crime. The coefficients for the crime complex variables are both statistically significant and positive. Stronger supporters of victims' rights and individuals who have adopted a larger number of routine precautions against crime both hold more favorable views, on average, of efforts to freight public assistance to the poor with coercive regulations. Similar to the findings for views about neighborhood surveillance, the result here also show that the addition of the crime complex variables reduces the coefficients for the *Crime Problem* and *Victimization Risk* variables by 30 percent and 86 percent, respectively. Thus, it appears that much of the impact of concern about crime and perceived risk on views about welfare is indirect through victim identification and the adoption of routine precautions against crime. Another noteworthy finding is that, as was the case in the full models for both crime-oriented outcome variables, the *Victims' Rights* and *Defensive Routines* measures are among the strongest predictors of attitudes toward welfare restrictions, and their inclusion increases the explanatory power of the model by a considerable amount: 63 percent. In fact, the findings demonstrate that out of all of the variables examined, the single strongest predictor of support for getting tough with welfare recipients is the number of precautions against crime a person has adopted (Beta = .197). Taken together, then, the results from both sets of analyses are supportive of the assumptions underlying Garland's arguments.

Table 3 about here

## Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this study was to test several of the specific predictions that underlie key arguments detailed in Garland's (2001) culture of control thesis and, in so doing, to contribute to the limited empirical literature evaluating what has become one of the most prominent accounts of the "get tough" transformation of criminal justice policy in recent decades. Specifically, using public opinion data, we examined two dimensions of what Garland (2001) termed the "crime complex" and their association with support for crime and welfare policies that emphasize increased control and security. The findings and their implications for theory, research, and policy are discussed below.

First, we found that concern about crime victims was consistently related to support for security-oriented crime policies that undermine civil liberties. For example, respondents who supported victims' rights were more likely to favor holding sex offenders beyond their sentences and video or audio taping high-crime neighborhoods. This finding supports the argument made by Garland (2001) and others (e.g., Dubber, 2002; Simon, 2007) that the cultural significance of victimhood may be a critical factor explaining public support for crime policies that center on retribution and risk management. Moreover, it bolsters scholars' contentions that today the dominant form of victim advocacy is closely associated with a law-and-order agenda, and thus may serve to widen nets of social control as much as, if not more than, further victims' interests (Dubber, 2002; Elias, 1993; Fattah, 1986).

The analyses also showed that the adoption of defensive routines, such as installing a home security system or avoiding certain neighborhoods, to reduce the risk of victimization was positively related to support for security-oriented crime policies. This finding lends support to Garland's (2001) contention that such behaviors influence how individuals feel and think about crime in a way that increases their demand for public protection. Moreover, it adds to the large body of research that has examined the effects of safety precautions, prevention measures, and

guardianship. Although the results of these studies suggest that behavioral measures increase fear of crime (Liska et al., 1988; Rader et al., 2007; Rountree, 1998; Rountree and Land, 1996a, 1996b; Wilcox et al., 2003), the evidence in this study indicates that they are also associated with greater support for more punitive and restrictive criminal justice policies.

Finally, the analyses revealed that the examined dimensions of the crime complex are associated with views about restrictive welfare reforms. Supporters of victims' rights and individuals who adopted a larger number of defensive routines were both more likely to support getting tough with welfare recipients. This finding lends support to Garland's (2001, p. 201) argument that public views about crime and welfare are intertwined and shaped by the same underlying set of assumptions, anxieties, and stereotypes—namely, those associated with the view of the poor as a threatening group that undermines the social order. More broadly, the results are consistent with the view that the popular association of the poor with criminal threat is a central explanation for why the public views most members of this group as undeserving (see Gans, 1995; Reiman and Leighton, 2010).

In sum, we find support for several of the core theoretical assumptions underlying Garland's (2001) thesis about the crime complex and public support for "get tough" social policies. At the same time, however, many avenues of inquiry remain to be addressed. Research is clearly needed, for example, that evaluates the extent to which the predicted mediating mechanisms—reduced empathy for both offenders and the poor, and increased anger and frustration over crime—can in fact explain the relationships between the crime complex variables examined herein and public views about crime policy and welfare regulations. Also valuable would be future studies that examine the possibility that beliefs about the characteristics of both victimization incidents and crime victims influence concern for victims and views about crime policy. For instance, prior research shows that perceptions about offenders' motivations for offending and demographic characteristics affect sentiments about criminal punishments (Chiricos et al., 2004; Unnever and Cullen, *In press*; Unnever et al., 2010). In the same way, it is likely that casual attributions for victimization and typifications about victims likely affect both

identification with victims and attitudes toward criminal justice policies (Herzog, 2008; Unnever and Cullen, 2009). Surprisingly, though, and in direct contrast to the breadth of research on typifications about offenders, little evidence exists about the roles of views about victims as determinants of support for getting tough on crime.

An interesting finding that emerged from our analyses is that for two of the three outcome variables, the effects of concern about crime and perceived risk on policy preferences were mediated by support for victims' rights and the adoption of routine precautions against victimization. Supplementary analyses (available upon request) revealed that perceived victimization risk was a strong predictor of both support for victim's rights and the adoption of routine precautions against crime. Similarly, the belief that crime is one of the most important problems facing one's community was associated with the adoption of routine precautions against crime. Taken together, these findings indicate that cognitive judgments about the risk of crime influence policy views, in part, by increasing identification with crime victims and altering individuals' routine activities.<sup>12</sup> These results are consistent with Garland's (2001: 152-162) arguments about the consequences of the increased salience of crime in everyday life. Nonetheless, they should be viewed in a tentative light pending replication in future studies employing a wider range of crime salience measures.

Additional data and analyses are also needed to examine Garland's (2001) arguments about the role of changes in structural conditions and public attitudes. In this study we limit our focus to the effects of victim identification and routine precautions against crime on policy views—two important dimensions of his theory. However, the causal processes outlined in Garland's thesis are considerably more broad-ranging than these two dimensions. Indeed, he spends considerable time in *The Culture of Control* skillfully tracing today's security-oriented policies to the intersection of late modern social trends with both the emergence of anti-welfare politics and several periods of rising crime rates (p. 75). In his view, though, the significance of those historical processes for understanding contemporary policy developments is tied directly to their influence on public views of issues related to crime, welfare, and social order (pp. 75-77).

Thus an important next step in efforts to assess Garland's theory is to assess the extent to which such factors as public identification with victims and participation in defensive routines in fact stem from the dynamic social, cultural, and political factors highlighted in his arguments.

Researchers should also assess Garland's assumption about the role of public attitudes toward criminals and the poor as determinates of policy responses in the areas of crime control and welfare regulation. Garland (2001) makes clear that he views public opinion as an essential causal factor in the security build-up of recent decades. For example, he asserts that "Far from being the exclusive creations of politicians or the media," current approaches to social control "depend—for their practical operation as well as for their political support—upon widespread habits of thought, routines of action and structures of feeling that have recently come to characterize civil society" (pp. 164-165). Stated differently, to Garland, public support for, or at least receptivity to, increased regulation is necessary for the maintenance and expansion of the prevailing strategies of social control. Future studies should test this assumption. Just as important, however, is the need for investigations into the ways in which emotions, attitudes, and behaviors may interact to amplify one another and create highly polarized views about offenders and social policy. Such research holds the potential to illuminate why, as Gottschalk (2006, p. 27) and others (Beckett, 1997; Mears, 2010; Roberts and Hough, 2005) emphasize, public opinion about crime and criminal justice policy can shift dramatically.

Two policy implications flow from our findings. First, the results lend support to the argument for promoting victims' rights in a way that both draws attention to the root causes of victimization and provides advocacy on behalf of human rights more generally, including those of offenders. In contrast, today's politics of victimization and dominant victims' movement both focus primarily on providing "support" to victims of violent crime in the form of tougher criminal sanctions and increased police powers (Dubber, 2002; Elias, 1993). Scholars contend that this emphasis inaccurately differentiates between victims and offenders, neglects the larger number of individuals victimized by white-collar crime and economic marginalization, engenders emotions that hinder rational debates about how to control crime, and displaces

attention off of the social processes and conditions that produce crime and thus crime victims in the first place (Elias, 1990; Fattah, 1986; Garland, 2001; Reiman and Leighton, 2010). The results from our analyses are consistent with this contention, and show that support for victims' rights is positively associated with support for policies that make it more difficult for ex-offenders to reintegrate back into society, widen nets of social control, and subject the poor to regulations that may further alienate them from mainstream society.

Second, the findings from this study suggest that a public that was more accurately informed about the frequency and risk of crime may be less supportive of "get tough" crime and welfare policies that undermine civil liberties, because such information would likely reduce participation in defensive routines. This possibility assumes greater importance given evidence that members of the population greatly exaggerate the prevalence of serious crime (Warr, 1980). Garland (2001, p. 158) lays some of the blame for this institutionalized crime consciousness on the media, which he maintains dramatizes and reinforces the public experience of crime in a way that "increases the salience of crime in everyday life" (see also Cavender, 2004). Studies support this contention, and show that the media is a key source of public information about crime (Graber, 1980), and that watching television news increases fear of crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz, 2000; Eschholz, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2003). Given the media's significant influence, the results of our study support calls for news programs to both contextualize crime stories so as to more accurately reflect the prevalence and nature of offending and provide information on the costs and effectiveness of different crime prevention policies (Warr, 2000).

Before closing, it is important to address two limitations of our analyses, both of which are related to our inability to assess the conditions under which Garland's arguments are most applicable. First, prior research consistently demonstrates that policy preferences in the areas of crime and welfare are shaped by racial concerns (Chiricos, Welch, and Gertz, 2004; Gilens, 1996; Unnever and Cullen, 2010). Related, a leading criticism of Garland's thesis is that it pays inadequate attention to the racial sources of American's punitiveness (Unnever and Cullen, 2010; Western, 2004). Our data do not include a direct measure of either racial prejudice or racial

context, thus we are unable to directly assess the interrelationships between racial stereotypes or animus, threatening local demographic conditions and dimensions of Garland's crime complex.<sup>13</sup> It is entirely conceivable that crime complex dimensions, such as victim identification and the adoption precautions against victimization, may be most consequential for policy preferences when they coincide with highly negative views of minorities or racially heterogeneous geographic contexts (see, e.g., Unnever and Cullen, 2009). The adjudication of such possibilities is an important line of inquiry that should be addressed in future studies. Indeed, it is one that may begin to shed light on why the coming of late modernity in other Western countries has not been associated with the same degree of "get tough" reform experienced in the U.S (Savelsberg, 2002; Western, 2004).

A second limitation of our study is that it draws on data from a survey of residents of one large county in Florida. Thus readers should take caution against generalizing our findings to broader contexts. In particular, recent work indicates that macro-level political and civic processes, such as citizens' democratic involvement and political polarization, influence the effect of factors such as victim's right movement mobilization on penal outcomes (Barker, 2007, 2009). Thus it is possible that the relationships observed in the current study may be stronger in some contexts and weaker or non-existent in others. That is, the effects observed herein, as well as the applicability of Garland's arguments more generally, may vary across political contexts in direct relation to the nature of their institutional configurations of political authority and levels of civic engagement, social capital and social trust (see Barker, 2007, Savelsberg, 2002).

To conclude, the current study tested and found support for several predictions deriving from the arguments outlined in Garland's (2001) culture of control thesis. The results demonstrated that, as he suggested, the cultural sensibilities—such as identification with crime victims—and social routines—such as taking routine precautions to guard against crime—that comprise the crime complex give rise to an increased willingness to trade off the civil liberties of offenders and the general public for security. Additionally, our research suggests that views about the coercive control of marginalized citizens seeking public assistance also emerge from

such sensibilities and routines, and do so even more than from factors such as race, political ideology, or political party affiliation.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This total excludes Washington, which passed an involuntary commitment law for sex offenders in 1990 (James et al., 2008).

<sup>2</sup>The social and economic changes emphasized by Garland (2001, pp. 77-89) include, but are not limited to: the shift from monopoly capitalism to consumer capitalism, and associated expansion of capitalist markets and technologies of production; patterns of economic restructuring that reduced manufacturing jobs and job security for unskilled workers; the mass entry of women into the workforce; the spread of automobiles and television viewing; suburbanization; the dismantling of traditional social hierarchies and moral authorities.

<sup>3</sup>Cross-sectional assumptions also underlie many of Garland's (2001) broader arguments about social change and the emergence of the "get tough" movement. For instance, his contention that today's punitive crime policies are in part a result of large segments of the population *coming* to identify with crime victims (p. 144) presumes a cross-sectional, positive relationship between identification with victims and punitiveness.

<sup>4</sup>We do not believe the timing of the survey is an issue because the available evidence suggests that the processes described by Garland have not desisted in the years since the data was collected. For example, the percentage of the public perceiving an increase in crime in the previous year grew by more than 40 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Jones and Saad, 2010), despite a 13 percent decline in homicide during this time period (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). The U.S. imprisonment rate has continued to increase during this time period, albeit at slower rate of growth (Guerino, Harrison, and Sabol, 2011). And as noted at the outset, just in the past years most states have considered imposing additional "get tough" restrictions on welfare recipients (Budd, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> While indexes or scales are generally used to tap underlying constructs such as general punitiveness, the use of single-item measures as key dependent variables is common practice in studies examining factors that influence attitudes toward specific social policies (Baumer et al.,

2003; Huddy et al., 2005; Unnever and Cullen, In press; Unnever et al., 2007).

<sup>6</sup>Although the alpha score for this index is relatively low, a separately conducted factor analysis confirmed that the items are not unique—all three items correlate with a single factor (eigenvalue = 1.75) with loadings that ranged from .74 to .80. Note also that Chronbach's alpha is heavily influenced by the number of items in the index—the likely explanation for the low alpha associated with our three-item index—and provides a conservative estimate of the measure's reliability (Carmines and Zeller, 1979: 45). For these reasons, we believe the reliability of this measure is acceptable.

<sup>7</sup>Conservatism was measured with the following question: “Politically, would you consider yourself conservative, moderate, or liberal?” Party affiliation was measured with the question: “Which one of the following political parties are you registered with—Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Independent, not registered?”

<sup>8</sup>Gender was measured at the end of the survey via interviewer observation. Race was measured with a single question: “Please indicate the category that best describes you—White, African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or Other.” Age was measured by asking respondents “What is your age?” Interviewers coded respondents responses into the categories listed in the text. Marital status was measured with the question: “What is your current marital status—single, married, widowed, divorced, separated, or other?” Parental status was measured with the question: “Do you have any children?”

<sup>9</sup>We imputed missing values on the income measure based on scores for the other covariates. However, the results are unchanged when these cases are dropped using listwise deletion.

<sup>10</sup>In additional analyses (available upon request), we estimated Models 1 - 4 in Table 2 using logistic regression with dichotomous versions of the two crime-specific dependent variables (0 = oppose, neutral; 1 = favor). The results paralleled those reported in Table 2.

<sup>11</sup>We report results from analyses of unweighted data for two reasons. First, there is an ongoing debate about whether sampling weights should be used in multivariate analyses because weighting requires difficult assumptions about the data (e.g., that categories of nonresponders are

similar to their counterparts in the sample) (Groves et al., 2009) and can result in both a loss of precision and increased difficulty in interpreting regression coefficients (Gelman, 2007; Winship and Radbill, 1994). Second, as noted in the text, the differences between the demographic characteristics of our sample and those of the population of Leon County were relatively small.

<sup>12</sup>These findings likely do not simply reflect the effects of prior victimization experience. Prior research shows that victimization experience is weakly related to support for victims' rights and those who are most supportive of the latter are the least likely to be victimized (i.e., females, older individuals, and highly educated persons) (Smith, Sloan, and Ward, 1990). Similarly, evidence suggests that victimization status is either not related or negatively related to punitiveness (Costello, Chiricos, and Gertz, 2009; Unnever, Cullen, and Fisher, 2007).

<sup>13</sup>We conducted ancillary analyses (available upon request) to try to provide some preliminary insight into these issues. Specifically, we examined a series of interactions between respondent race and support for victims' rights and routine precautions against victimization. The coefficients for the product terms were not significant in any of the models predicting our three outcome variables.

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**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	SD	Range
<b>Dependent Variables</b>			
Hold Sex Offenders Past Sentence	3.55	1.47	1 – 5
Video/Audio Tape Neighborhoods	3.48	1.43	1 – 5
“Get Tough” Welfare Regulations	2.98	1.12	1 – 5
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
Victims’ Rights	2.41	.55	1 – 3
Defensive Routines	2.49	1.51	0 – 6
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Female	.59	.49	0 – 1
White	.70	.46	0 – 1
Age	3.29	1.73	1 – 7
Education	4.32	1.38	1 – 6
Income	2.46	1.39	1 – 7
Married	.46	.50	0 – 1
Parent	.65	.48	0 – 1
Conservative	.33	.47	0 – 1
Republican	.26	.44	0 – 1
Community First	.35	.48	0 – 1
Crime Problem	.24	.43	0 – 1
Victimization Risk	4.35	2.40	1 – 10

*N* = 1693

**Table 2**  
**Regression Analyses Predicting Support for Security-Oriented Crime Policies**

	Model 1: Hold Sex Offenders Past Sentence		Model 2: Hold Sex Offenders Past Sentence		Model 3: Video/Audio Tape Neighborhoods		Model 4: Video/Audio Tape Neighborhoods	
	<i>b</i>	Beta	<i>b</i>	Beta	<i>b</i>	Beta	<i>b</i>	Beta
Victims' Rights	—	—	.480***	.180	—	—	.334***	.128
Defensive Routines	—	—	.116***	.120	—	—	.120***	.127
Female	.401***	.135	.322***	.109	.134†	.046	.062	.021
White	.225*	.071	.176*	.055	.056	.018	.008	.002
Age	-.022	-.026	-.024	-.029	.069**	.084	.064**	.077
Education	-.166***	-.156	-.163***	-.153	-.139***	-.134	-.143***	-.138
Income	.000	.000	-.025	-.023	.009	.009	-.003	-.003
Married	.038	.013	.030	.010	-.231**	-.081	-.224**	-.078
Parent	.185†	.061	.136	.045	.166†	.056	.082	.028
Conservative	.096	.031	.033	.011	.260**	.085	.206*	.068
Republican	.120	.036	.096	.029	.039	.012	.001	.000
Community First	.115	.038	.158*	.052	.383***	.128	.413***	.138
Crime Problem	.064	.019	.018	.005	.218**	.065	.132†	.040
Victimization Risk	.022	.035	-.014	-.023	.047**	.078	.014	.024
Intercept	3.602***	—	2.516***	—	3.241***	—	2.513***	—
<i>R</i> -squared	.060		.110		.083		.115	
N	1563		1517		1572		1527	

†*p* < .10; \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001 (two-tailed).

**Table 3**  
**Regression Analyses Predicting Support for “Get Tough” Welfare Regulations**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>b</i>	Beta	<i>b</i>	Beta
Victims' Rights	—	—	.208***	.102
Defensive Routines	—	—	.146***	.197
Female	-.068	-.030	-.161**	-.071
White	.140*	.057	.125†	.051
Age	.017	.026	.001	.002
Education	-.159***	-.196	-.158***	-.193
Income	-.024	-.029	-.039	-.047
Married	-.040	-.018	-.044	-.019
Parent	.003	.001	-.030	-.013
Conservative	.160*	.067	.140*	.059
Republican	.129†	.050	.060	.023
Community First	.139*	.059	.145*	.062
Crime Problem	.199**	.076	.138*	.053
Victimization Risk	.036**	.078	.005	.010
Intercept	3.291***	—	2.778***	—
<i>R</i> -squared		.076		.124
N		1578		1531

†*p* < .10; \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001 (two-tailed).