

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL CONTROL IN POSTMODERN AMERICA CONFERENCE ON SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION OF A SOCIETY: EXPERIENCE AND MODERNITY

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My intentions in this short paper are very broad. First, I want to articulate some major American trends in social control, defined for purposes of this paper as "the repertoire of organized social responses to deviance (5)." In particular, I will point out some basic facts concerning policing, extraordinarily high American incarceration rates and related trends in the criminal justice system. Second, I shall indicate how technologies expressly developed in the context of a criminal justice response to crime have become widely diffused in American everyday life. Finally, I will sketch a theoretical model intended as a preliminary attempt to link the American transformation in social control to several factors fundamental to the development of global corporate capitalism and to some historical specifics of the contemporary American context.

American Trends in Social Control

During the past two or three decades, the following trends have transformed American institutions and practices of social control:

- An expansion of public policing
- The eclipse of public policing by private policing
- Use of computer technology to enhance policing
- A massive growth of imprisonment
- Privatization of prisons, especially at the federal level
- Revival of capital punishment, especially "medicalized" execution
- The infusion of surveillance technologies into everyday life

Below I will briefly document each of these trends.

Expansion of Public Policing. According to the most recent data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006),

- The total number of justice employees grew 86% between 1982 and 2003 with the Federal Government having the largest percentage increase - 168%.
- Total per capita expenditure for each justice function increased more than 300% between 1982 and 2003, with corrections having the largest per capita increase - 436%.
- The total direct justice expenditure for all levels of governments grew from \$3.6 billion in 1982 to \$185 billion in 2003, a 418% increase.

In recent decades, crime control has been an American "growth industry" both in the public sector and, as described next, in the private sector. (See Christie, 2000.)

Eclipse of Public Policing by Private Policing. In 1970, there were approximately 1.4 public police for each private security guard in the U.S. Now there are between three and four private police for each public police officer. The reasons for this shift are rooted in a general privatization of American life. Over the last three decades, ever increasing numbers of Americans spend greater portions of their daily lives in places where crime prevention is delivered by private security guards hired by shopping malls, educational institutions, medical or recreational facilities, and private condominiums or gated communities (Connolly, 2006). The expansion of public policing has been supplemented by a huge growth in private policing.

Use of Computer Technology to Enhance Policing. Perhaps the most widespread innovation in this regard is the COMPSTAT process whereby detailed data on crimes reported to the police, arrests and other police performance measures are collected, analyzed and mapped on a daily basis using advance computer techniques. These data can be used to hold police managers

accountable for their performance and to enhance the most efficient deployment of policing resources. (For New York City, see <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/nypd/html/chfdept/compstat-process.html> ; for Philadelphia, see http://www.ppdonline.org/hq_compstat.php ; for Washington, DC, see <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/maps/briefingbook.html>) The expansion of public and private manpower devoted to policing has been enhanced by sophisticated telecommunications and computer technology.

Massive Growth of Imprisonment. At the end of 2004, there were 2,135,901 prisoners held in Federal or State prisons or local jails (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005a). This yields an American incarceration rate of about 725 per 100,000, by far the highest in the Western world. Western European countries typically have incarceration rates less than 100 per 100,000. Our best estimates for Central and Eastern European countries place their rates from about 40 in Slovenia to about 685 in the Russian Federation. (The estimate for Belarus is about 500.) (See, Christie, 2000.) For most of the twentieth century, prior to 1980, American incarceration rates typically hovered at around 100. Since 1980, they have shot up very rapidly due primarily to the politically charged "wars" on drugs and crime and the implementation of harsh sentencing policies. (See Austin and Irwin, 2000.)

Privatization of Prisons, Especially at the Federal Level. At mid-year 2004, about 99,000 American inmates were held in privately operated facilities. Since 2000, the federal inmate population held in private prisons has grown from about 15,000 to about 24,000 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005a). From 1991 to 1999, there was an 838% increase in the rated capacity of private prisons in the U.S. (Thomas, 1999). While the growth of private prisons has slowed in the state systems, it has not at the national level.

Revival of Capital Punishment. From a 20th-century peak in the late-1930s, capital punishment general trended downward in the U.S. until between the late-1960s and late-1970s there were no executions. From about 1980, the rate of executions has generally increased. Since 1977, 944 people have been executed in the U.S., more than one-third of them in the state of Texas. In 2005, 60 inmates were executed in the U.S., one more than in 2004. American capital punishment has become "medicalized" with lethal injection the method in 37 of 50 states and the federal system. (See U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005b.)

Infusion of Surveillance Technologies into Everyday Life. Methods of surveillance, often developed initially for military purposes or to enhance security in dangerous criminal justice situations, such as prisons, have now become ubiquitous in American life. Closed circuit television (CCTV) is now used widely to watch people on public streets, private shopping malls, small independent stores and in gated communities. CCTV is also to be found on school busses and in the bedrooms of sleeping infants so parents can watch for signs of medical distress. As one other example among many, Radio Frequency Identification Tags (RFIDs) are now commonly used to track consumer purchases of everything from pharmaceuticals to clothing. The wireless technology on which the tags are based allows objects, people or animals to be tagged and tracked from more than 500 feet away. The use of the tags is exploding with sales of an estimated 1.3 billion tags this year. (Consumer Reports, June 2006). (For the history of surveillance in American society, see Parenti, 2005. See also, Staples, 2000 and Lyon, 2001.)

Master Trends in American Society

The social control trends noted above are embedded in still larger American transformational developments over the last quarter century or longer. They are enormous growth in:

1. Economic and Social Segmentation; 2. Privatization; and 3. Advanced Information-Age Technology.

Economic and Social Segmentation. In 1999, Gary Burtless wrote, "Over the past two decades the United States has experienced a startling increase in inequality. The incomes of poor Americans shrank and those of the middle class stagnated while the incomes of the richest families continued to grow. The well-being of families up and down the income scale has increased over the past five years, but the average income of the poorest Americans remains well below where it was at the end of the 1970s."

Between 1947 and 1979, family income growth for all quartiles of American families was about equal, with the top 5% being even a bit less than the rest. Between 1979 and 1998, the bottom fifth of American families decreased their income by 5% while those households earning \$260,00 or more, the top 1%, increased by over 100%. The escalating income inequalities and corresponding disparities of wealth are reflected in patterns of residential segregation by class and race and unequal educational and employment opportunities. America is a segmented society where the segments are increasingly distanced by widening gaps in wealth and income. (See <http://inequality.org>)

Privatization. The "privatization" movement in the U.S. is very extensive involving the purchase of public hospitals by private corporations, widespread private contracting of public service such as trash collection, educational services and, of course, corrections—to say nothing of private contracting by the U.S. military. (See <http://privatization.org/>.) A growing manifestation of privatization, linked to the excluding segmentation of growing inequality, is the increasing number of well-to-do Americans who live in "gated communities" or privately secured condominiums. Approximately eight million Americans, six percent of the population, now live behind the walls of gated communities and in some major metropolitan areas, gated communities comprise about half of all new housing construction (Low, 2004).

Advanced Information-Age Technology. The Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID Tag), already mentioned, is perhaps the most representative example of how the marriage of the computer-assisted collection and analysis of huge data-bases with the miniaturization of radio technology increases the information-gathering and surveillance capacity of business and governments. To take but another example, the exponential growth in the use of mobile telephones—an obvious convenience demanded by people world-wide—carries with it the opportunity for businesses and governments to collude in assembling massive databases comprising virtually everyone who uses a telephone. In respect to collecting information—whether for commercial or government purposes—advanced information-age technologies are now the primary mechanism by which there is a "widening of the net and thinning of the mesh (Cohen, 1985)" in respect to capturing information in the service of social control.

A Model of Transformation in American Social Control Institutions and Practices

Finally, I want to conclude this brief sketch with a model that relates the three master transformational developments—economic and social segmentation, privatization, and advanced information-age technology—to the trends in American social control that I enumerated at the outset.

Figure 1

About Here

The origins of both segmentation and privatization, I believe, are to be found in the dynamics of global corporate capitalism. The widespread public acceptance of extreme ine-

qualities (segmentation) and hostility toward the public sector (privatization) are deeply rooted in an American ideology of individualism. (See Bellah, et al., 1985 and Putnam, 2001). The polarization engendered by economic and social segmentation creates a growing sense of threat and fear among class, ethnic and racial groups in the U.S. This is what drives the growing trend toward exclusion—particularly in its residential and educational manifestations. At this moment, the strain toward exclusion is manifest in the intense public debate concerning American immigration policies. The appeal of exclusionary policies, heightened in a climate of threat and fear, forms the backdrop for American trends in policing, security, surveillance, tolerance for extraordinarily high rates of incarceration and a "fortress" residential mentality. A politics of fear, now reflexively practiced by those of the American right-wing, regularly reinforces both the public sense of threat and justifies ever increasing surveillance and harsh penal policies in the name of "law and order" in a chaotic world. The trends and transformations I have described have all been evident for two decades or longer. The anxious American public reactions to "9/11" have merely made it easier for the right-wing to employ a politics of fear in the service of intensified policing, surveillance and social control.

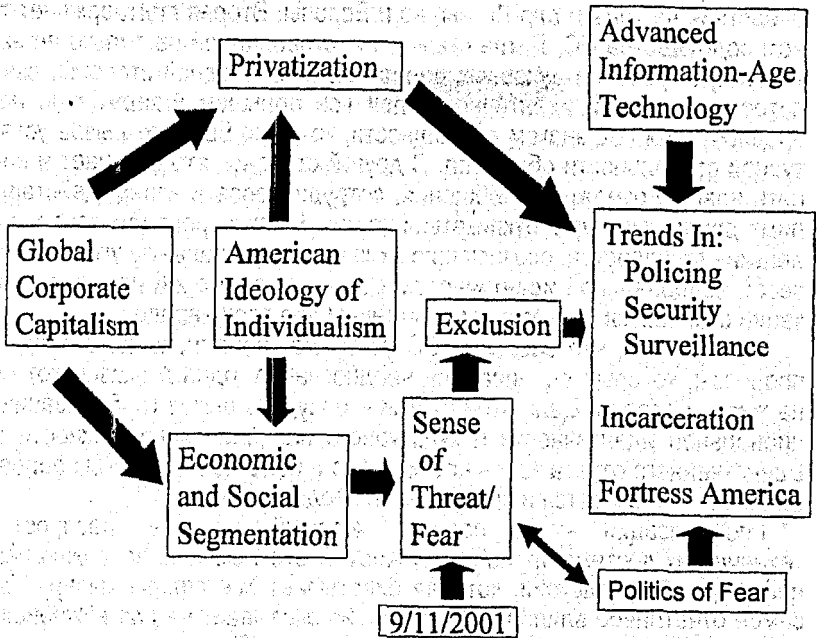
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- U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005 (b), "Capital Punishment, 2004"

Figure 1

A Model of Transformation in American Social Control Institutions and Practices

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cp04.pdf>



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ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИИ И НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ

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С восстановлением независимости Литва решительно повернула в сторону Запада, внедряя рыночную экономику и ценности демократической жизни. Широко поддерживаемые стремления экономического благосостояния и решительные действия властей ускорили процесс превращения Литвы в полноправного члена ЕС, а вместе с тем и надежды достичь более высоких жизненных стандартов для своих граждан. В свою очередь интеграция в экономические и политические структуры ЕС и обязанности членства в нем наряду с надеждами породили и проблемы.