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CONTROL AND PUBLIC POLICY**

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SOCIAL CONTROL AND
PUBLIC POLICY**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Cara E. Rabe-Hemp and Nancy S. Lind

INTRODUCTION

Political authorities play an important role in maintaining social control in our everyday lives. These institutions serve as direct agents of social control by transmitting the values of the state (i.e., government) through the law and by punishing those who deviate. However, modern, cross-cultural discourses of dissent and social inequality present an interesting challenge to traditional political authorities as the normalized operations of social power are increasingly challenged. Surveillance and the media play important roles as they have become tools of the watched as well as the watching, both as a socializing device to communicate and maintain the status quo, as well as a means of disrupting social control. The establishment and dissent of social control define public policymaking on the most pressing cross-cultural issues today, including governmental regulation, religion, the care of the impoverished and mentally ill, and the policing of deviance and immigration. The following chapters explore the overlapping themes of social control, political accountability, and public policymaking by detailing the major mechanisms of social control, their influence on public policy and the increasing disruption of social control through surveillance, protest, and mass media.

SOCIAL CONTROL

In 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, Michael Brown, an 18-year-old African American man, was fatally shot by police officer Darren Wilson, after he allegedly robbed a convenience store (*New York Times*, 2014). The next day 800 outraged citizens protested Brown's death, resulting in a significant police response – over 150 officers in riot gear attempted to disperse crowds through the use of tear gas and smoke canisters and when that did not work, force escalated to the use of armored vehicles, rubber bullets, and military-style weapons. The weeks of

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protests following Brown's death prompted the Governor of Missouri to declare a state of emergency in Ferguson. Today, we are still trying to make sense of the events in Ferguson and what this period in American history tells us about political authority, media, and social control. In the aftermath of Brown's death, concerned citizens took to social media, making #Ferguson shorthand for racial inequality and police brutality, metamorphosing this small town event into a national political movement (Grinberg, 2014). Others defined the protests as nothing more than rampant looting by "thugs" (Odom, 2015). This debate was obvious in the 2016 election as the events in Ferguson were fodder for both the "law and order" rhetoric at the Republican National Convention and in the "systemic inequality" speeches that marked the Democratic convention a week later (Rabe-Hemp, Mulvey, & Foster, 2017).

These debates are not unique to the United States. In the same period as the Ferguson protests, there were anti-government protests regarding the pact formed with the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party in the United Kingdom and violent anti-government protests in Venezuela (Casey & Torres, 2017; Mandhai, 2017). These protests challenge social control mechanisms of political authority and the hegemonic ways that state authorities establish and maintain control. Social control is "the normative aspect of social life, or the definition of deviant behavior and the response to it" (Black, 1976, pp. 1–2). States, most commonly associated with national governmental systems, set the goals for governance, linking the political system with its environment and its collective goals and influencing state-provided services such as education, law enforcement, the judicial system, public utilities, welfare, and transportation, just to name a few.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

These political protests make clear that while the government is the center of considerable political power, as the organized system for administering policies, members of society are not passive in the processes of governance. Members of society play both competing and complementary roles to that of government by communicating their wants and demands, pressing their agendas, and promoting programs for social change. For this reason, governance must account for the changing relationships between state and society to meet collective societal goals.

Over the past three decades, Western societies have entered a new phase in development, which many describe as post-modernity (although there are other terms, such as hyper-modernity, high modernity, and late-modernity; see Innes, 2003). This phase is characterized by changes in social, institutional, and organizational structures (Lash & Urry, 1987), changing relationships between the state and its agencies (Rose, 1996), definitions of identity (Bauman, 2015), and the use of media in communication (Castells, 1997). Scholars argue that these changes have led to the vast expansion of social control mechanisms.

For example, [Garland \(2001\)](#) argues that the “criminologies of everyday life” and the “criminology of other” have been constructed to have a place in our late modern social lives to act out concerns about disorder, insecurity, and deviance. Because crime has symbolically been constructed as a threat to a societal sense of security, an array of institutions have been modified and created to assist in reducing crime.

Technologically based social control mechanisms, such as surveillance cameras and the use of social media, have increasingly been utilized for accountability. Michel Foucault’s well-known account of how individuals, through technologies of power, are persuaded and coerced simultaneously into changing their behavior so that it conforms with “normal” models of behavior is an example of this “control creep” ([Innes, 2003](#)). At the same time, the increased participation in governance by the people through dissent in social media also represents a disruption of social control. The same is true of the mainstream media. Noam Chomsky argued that the key element of social control is the strategy of distraction – to divert public attention from important issues and changes decided by political and economic elites, through the technique of flooding, which provides continuous distractions and insignificant information. Of course, it could also be argued that the media may be used to disrupt social control through debate.

Another obvious area of expansion has been the world of policing where two, almost diametrically opposed policing models, have developed and gained popularity conjointly: community and paramilitary policing. Community policing strengthens relationships between police and the communities they serve through greater problem solving and innovation. Surprisingly, the popularity of this model has been accompanied by the proliferation of paramilitary police units ([Kraska & Kappeler, 1997](#)). Critics argue that the pacifying methods of community policing are “backed up by an increasingly para-militarized approach to policing whose big guns are trained on those subjects who are risk-profiled as enemies of the liberal order” ([Kienscherf, 2016](#), p. 1187). [Williams, Murphy, and National Institute of Justice \(US\) \(1990\)](#) argued that these “enemies” are often people of color who face a legacy of discrimination and brutality in their interactions with police through the enforcement of Jim Crow laws, slave patrols, and segregation. The discursive creation of what [Garland \(2001\)](#) called the “criminology of other” is the process by which people perceived as threatening become dangerous and worthy of punishment and exclusion. Modernity only stokes the fear of “the other” and the answer is greater social control by police to thwart these threats. These practices discursively justify the existence of the police, but also prompt fear and uncertainty in the lives of citizens ([Bierschenk, 2016](#)).

Laws and coercive social control are tools of governance and governments to re-establish control when their authority is undermined ([Pierre & Peters, 2000](#)). Social control embodies the mechanisms used to control behavior defined as deviant, problematic or criminal through all practices in a society which compel people either through persuasion (the “velvet glove”) or through outright coercion (the “iron fist”) to conform ([Institute for the Study of Labor and Economic](#)

Crisis, 1982). The public both expects social control from the government and resists control from the government. Innes (2003, p. 1) sums it up nicely saying, “At the same time our society is straining for control, it is also straining for freedom.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

As chapters in this volume demonstrate, social control occurs in many dimensions. Given this, understanding social control can be challenging. One way to examine the significance and reach of social control is to analyze how it is constructed and perpetuated through discourse. For this reason, we start the book with an integrative framework, *The Rhetoric of Social Control* written by Joseph Zompetti, which lays the groundwork for the book by highlighting how the apparatuses of social control function rhetorically through discourse. In this chapter, the operations of social control – primarily emanating from government entities, law enforcement, and public officials – are examined by reviewing the way they function rhetorically. Based on the theoretical work of Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser, social control is viewed as the articulations of power that are manifested in specific ways. The chapter concludes with a theoretical framework for understanding the persuasive appeals and strategies used to legitimize social control.

After the framework, the book is divided into three topical parts, Part I: Formal Mechanisms of Social Control; Part II: Social Control through Public Policy; and Part III: Resistance and Reification: Surveillance, Political Violence, and Mass Media. The first three chapters that comprise Part I are concerned with one of the most visible agents of social control in public governance – the police. In Chapter 1, *Police Militarization: Implications for Communities of Color*, Ashley K. Farmer, Cara E. Rabe-Hemp, and Jeruel Taylor trace the history of police militarization in America, and how it adversely affects minority communities, especially in the context of how the police play a role in enforcing the oppression behind a capitalist system. Since the 1033 Program of the National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Department of Defense to transfer military-grade weapons to local law enforcement agencies, thousands of police agencies have received weapons and equipment to police American streets. Mostly this was done to provide police agencies the power to fight the War on Drugs. However, these social control policies have had devastating consequences, increasing racial tensions between police and the communities they are sworn to protect.

Chapter 2, *Policing Communities of Color: An Historical Examination of Social Control and Protest Management Strategies*, written by Kenneth Bryant Jr, uses a critical lens to examine police behavior, specifically related to community policing and responses to community protests, including the three current strategies of protest management (escalated force, negotiated management, and strategic incapacitation) that have all been embraced to varying degrees with relationship to police response to black community protests. The chapter concludes that the iterative process of police “command and control” policies and black community

protests have “co-evolved,” mirroring one another with antagonistic attitudes from both sides.

In Chapter 3, *Community Policing, Coproduction, and Social Control: Restoring Police Legitimacy*, Amie M. Schuck discusses community policing as a potential means to increase police legitimacy, strengthen community resilience, and promote prosocial interactions between officers and residents. Because community policing is grounded in trust, cooperation, and problem solving, it has the potential to improve residents’ quality of life by developing and strengthening mechanisms of social control and support. The chapter concludes with arguments for how community policing can increase police legitimacy by providing opportunities for community members to examine the actions and policies of the police, assess the alignment of these state-sanctioned activities with residents’ values and needs, and bring the two into agreement.

In Chapter 4, *Government Spending and Regulation and Social Control of Neighborhoods*, the focus shifts from police as agents of social control to local governments, when Gardenia Harris highlights how state and local governments shape neighborhoods in ways that support their political and social goals. Governments’ purposes for controlling neighborhoods including increased neighborhood cohesion, crime reduction, and economic development are explored. At the local level, land use restrictions and zoning policies are major tactics governments employ to shape communities and neighborhoods. The pros and cons of local governmental efforts to develop and gentrify neighborhoods are scrutinized from the standpoint of the groups that benefit from these policies, as well those disadvantaged by them.

In Chapter 5, *Social Control and the Politics of Public Spaces*, Katharine Leigh explores the governmental control of a different space – public spaces. Leigh argues that public spaces are typically for everyone, and can be used by anyone, but local governments can control how they may be used. Examples are taken from around the globe, from Tiananmen Square (Beijing, China) to Times Square (New York City, United States), from the American South before the Civil Rights Movement and South Africa during Apartheid, and in various countries impacted by the Arab Spring uprisings. The chapter concludes that governments cannot avoid applying social control on the usage of public spaces, and their limitations often lead to controversy (whether for being excessive, insufficient, or both).

The last chapter in Part I, Chapter 6, *Religion and the State: The Politics of Social Control in Myanmar and the United States*, written by Robert Edward Sterken Jr, uses the case history of the repression of the Muslim minority by Buddhists in Myanmar and the US Christian Dominionists to illustrate the relationship between the state, repression, religion, and social control. Sterken argues that from Muslims in Pakistan to Christians in the United States to Buddhists in Myanmar, some religious and government leaders tend to share a goal to exercise complete religious control over their societies. The chapter concludes that state support for, regulation of, or state hostility toward all religion fosters greater societal intolerance, greater discrimination, and often repression of rights and minority groups.

Part II of the text starts with Chapter 7, *The Paradox of State Control in the Global Age of Migrations: The 2018 Central American Immigrant Caravan*, written by Andrea Silva and Maura I. Toro-Morn. In this timely chapter, Silva and Toro-Morn examine the rhetoric of one modern nation-state in implementing border controls and immigration policies. Modern nation-states occupy a curious place in this process as it has traditionally managed, sometimes restricted the conditions and terms of entrance, most often outright prevented groups from entering under legitimate conditions creating migration flows of undocumented peoples. Nation-states have always sought to control borders and regulate the flow of people, but the current era offers some stark moments that demonstrate the contradictions embedded in the neoliberal regimes for modern, nation-states. In this chapter, the authors conclude that the United States, with its desire to enforce borders and social controls, creates a humanitarian crisis unseen in modern history.

In Chapter 8, *Social Control and Serious Mental Illness: Understanding and Challenging Current Ideologies*, Christopher Donald Gjesfeld examines the public policies of social control for another vulnerable population – the mentally ill. In the past, state mental hospitals played a primary role in the care of a portion of those with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). Today, these state-funded facilities have played a diminished role, with the criminal justice systems playing a greater role in providing this “care.” This chapter outlines this general defunding of the US community mental health system in the early 1980s, also known as deinstitutionalization. Ideological and social assumptions (e.g., Szasz’s myth of mental illness) as well as the national political climate (e.g., the defunding of national community mental health services) are examined for how they shifted treatment to those with SPMI from health care facilities to criminal justice facilities.

Chapter 9, *Sex Offenders, Policies, and Social Control*, written by John C. Navarro explores the public policies of social control of one of the most vilified criminal groups – registered sex offenders. Navarro argues that depictions and perceptions of sex offenders as monstrous beings effectively bolsters public support for legitimized strategies of social control to supervise sex offenders. Molding the body to docility to conform to the moral standards violated by sex offenders occurs at the cost of further depriving sex offenders’ fundamental constitutional rights. Education and revised evaluative assessments of sexual recidivism are suggested as approaches to redefine how sex offenders should be portrayed, as a heterogeneous group of individuals that vary in their amenability to rehabilitative treatment. Otherwise, Navarro argues, the falsehood of monstrous sex offenders will continue.

In the final part of the book, Part III, chapters explore the role of surveillance, political violence, and mass media as tools for both establishing and disrupting social control of political institutions. In Chapter 10, *Expectations of Privacy in the Age of Surveillance: Implications for Democracy*, Benjamin Bricker discusses the increasingly important confluence of privacy rights, surveillance, and social control from a constitutional standpoint. He points out that in the age of unparalleled access to personal data, the state can accumulate mass information on its citizens. In the hands of law enforcement officials, these surveillance advances

also can be used to greatly enhance the state's ability to exercise social control – a circumstance that has both positive and negative connotations. After years of limiting the expectations of privacy that citizens may have in their day-to-day lives, several recent Supreme Court decisions have attempted to take account of the privacy expectations held by individuals in today's ever-evolving technological world and in doing so have limited the ability of law enforcement to engage in surveillance without first obtaining a warrant. Bricker concludes that law of standing must be updated to permit judicial claims by individuals who challenge the legality and constitutionality of comprehensive surveillance programs.

Chapter 11, *Crime 3.0: Understanding the Post-Industrial Challenge to Security, Policing, and Social Control*, by Mark A. Tallman explores the implications of the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” and its theoretic challenges to status quo security and crime controls. The “4th Industrial Revolution” is characterized by a rapidly developing synthesis of information technology and precision manufacturing capability. Through a series of descriptive case studies illustrating the complex collisions between post-industrial criminal methods and status quo security regimes, including the manufacturing of 3D printable and “do-it-yourself (DIY)” weapons, the production and use of aerial drones, the adoption of improved cross-border smuggling techniques, and the criminal use of secure communications technology, the chapter closes with a comparative case analysis and discussion of shared and divergent factors in post-industrial crime and its countermeasures.

In Chapter 12, *The Impact of Police Technology Adoption on Social Control, Police Accountability, and Police Legitimacy*, Michael T. Rossler examines the other side of the coin to examine how technologies may influence the perceived legitimacy of police. Since the advent of the professionalism movement in the early 1900s, American police departments have continuously adopted technologies in an effort to reduce crime, maintain order, and provide services to citizens. As technological advances have exponentially increased in the twenty-first century, police departments now have access to a multitude of resources that allow for large scale monitoring of citizens, police officers, and generalized crime patterns. As a result of these advancements, many technologies have been adopted that are designed to increase political authority and police accountability (e.g., body-worn cameras, online complaint systems, and less lethal weapons), while others are intended to increase social control over citizens (e.g., license plate readers).

Chapter 13, *Government Use of Social Control to Address Political Violence and Dissent*, by Elizabeth Wheat highlights the recent challenge to the country's recognition of freedom of expression in the Alt-Right/white nationalist movement. She identifies a number of universities such as Auburn University, Texas A&M, the University of Florida, and Michigan State University that recently found themselves in the middle of free speech and expression events. Her chapter explores the question of to what extent a university can ban controversial speakers out of concern for violence and when must they allow controversial speech?

In Chapter 14, *The Need to Disrupt Social Control*, Amentahru Wahlrab, Sarah M. Sass, and Robert Edward Sterken Jr use examples of sexual assault, bathroom bills, the civil rights movement, and the Arab uprisings to illustrate the necessity of disrupting social control when it promotes or permits the oppression

of individuals, groups, and societies. In these cases, social control maintains an oppressive order of some kind, thus social control is understood as a potential negative. The chapter concludes with a call to action to disrupt social control when it permits oppression of a group of people.

In the final chapter of Part III, Chapter 15, *Mass Media, Social Control, and Political Authority in a Post-truth Environment*, John P. McHale examines the role mass media plays in the maintenance of social control and policy formulation and implementation in the Trump political era. First, an historical survey of mass media theory is presented and used as an analytic lens through which to identify that mass media has long been recognized as a powerful tool of social control or disruption and in public policy formulation and implementation. Next, the chapter explores the challenges posed to society and policy when a president uses mass media to spread misinformation and disinformation and the resulting divisive nature of US political attitudes in the Trump era and how social media contributes to this cleavage. The chapter concludes that mass media has been both a divisive and uniting force, although the rise of social media and its susceptibility to manipulation poses a danger to social cohesion and effective public policy formulation and implementation.

In conclusion, this text provides a modern look at the key elements needed to understand the role of governance in establishing and maintaining social control. What the reader will find is that many themes cut across the multiple levels of social control represented in this book – law and public policymaking, surveillance, and dissent. As citizens across the globe are increasingly challenging the traditional and normalized ways that political authorities and governing bodies produce and maintain social control and their resulting public policies, the implications are vast as increased participation in governance by the people through dissent represents both a disruption of social control as well as a mechanism for increased accountability through surveillance and media.

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