RACIAL TYPOIFICATION OF CRIME AND SUPPORT FOR PUNITIVE MEASURES

TED CHIRICOS
Florida State University
KELLY WELCH
Villanova University
MARC GERTZ
Florida State University

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This paper assesses whether support for harsh punitive policies toward crime is related to the racial typification of crime for a national random sample of households (N=885), surveyed in 2002. Results from OLS regression show that the racial typification of crime is a significant predictor of punitiveness, independent of the influence of racial prejudice, conservatism, crime salience, southern residence and other factors. This relationship is shown to be concentrated among whites who are either less prejudiced, not southern, conservative and for whom crime salience is low. The results broaden our understanding of the links between racial threat and social control, beyond those typically associated with racial composition of place. They also resonate important themes in what some have termed modern racism and what others have described as the politics of exclusion.

In 1994, at the height of a period of intensifying punitiveness within the American criminal justice system (Irwin and Austin, 2001; Tonry, 1995), Jerome Miller,1 the executive director of the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives, offered a racialized hypothesis for the dramatic rise in rates of incarceration. Miller observed that:

There are certain code words that allow you never to have to say “race,” but everybody knows that’s what you mean and “crime” is

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1. Miller previously headed the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and directed the Juvenile Corrections Systems of both Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.
one of those ... So when we talk about locking up more and more people, what we're really talking about is locking up more and more black men (Szykowny, 1994:11).

Miller goes on to argue that "when we talk about building more prisons, when we talk about longer sentences, when we talk aboutthrowing away the keys ... everyone knows that we're talking about blacks. And so the sky's the limit now" (Szykowny, 1994:12).

In essence, Miller contends that crime is typified in our culture as a black phenomenon and that our inclination to incarcerate at higher rates than ever before is directly tied to this. Similar points have been made by Beckett and Sasson (2000:136) and by Roberts, who argued that much of the support for an increasingly punitive response to crime is grounded in a "belief system that constructs crime in terms of race and race in terms of crime" (1993:1947). Though plausible, this provocative hypothesis is at best supported by anecdotal evidence or by inferences drawn from racial patterns of incarceration. We offer a direct test of the hypothesis. Specifically, we use national survey data to examine the extent to which support for harsh punitive measures toward criminals is linked to associating crime with race.

The possibility is consistent with, and may help expand, our understanding of the "social threat" approach to the sociology of social control (Liska, 1992). That approach, which builds on Blalock's seminal "power threat" concept (1967), hypothesizes that aggregate measures of social control are to some degree mobilized by the presence of minorities, principally blacks. The hypothesis has been examined by linking the racial composition of place to various measures of social control, such as the size and funding of police departments (Chamlin, 1989; Chamlin and Liska, 1992); rates of arrest (Harer and Steffensmeier, 1992; Liska et al., 1985); rates of incarceration (Bridges et al., 1987; Padgett, 2002) and individuals' chances of incarceration (Myers and Talarico, 1987).

But as Chiricos et al. (2001: 323) suggest, at the heart of such structural relationships are a variety of "microprocesses" that operate at the individual level and help to activate and make the structural relationships possible. For example, Liska and Chamlin note that "the threat hypothesis ... suggests that a high percentage of nonwhites produces an emergent property, 'perceived threat of crime,' which increases arrest

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2. For example, Miller (1996:87) offers such anecdotal evidence based on a conversation with a judge and Bridges, Crutchfield and Simpson (1987:355-356) provide similar evidence gleaned from interviews of prosecutors and judges.

3. These micro processes are presumed to operate at the level of individuals who may perceive the presence of blacks as threatening and be inclined to call the police (Warner, 1992) or otherwise assist in the mobilization of social control.
rates through increasing pressure on police to control crime” (1984:384–5). The perceived threat of crime in most social threat research is an essential but unmeasured element in the mobilization of social control. A fairly substantial body of research has developed to assess the extent to which fear of crime is related to the actual or perceived racial composition of place (Chiricos et al., 2001; Covington and Taylor, 1991; Liska et al., 1982; Moeller, 1989; Taylor and Covington, 1993; Skogan, 1995).

Measuring the relationship between where people live and their fear of crime is one approach to specifying the race-specific crime threat implicit to the social threat hypothesis. But another is to measure directly the extent to which people associate crime with blacks. Regardless of the racial composition of neighborhoods, an explicit link between race and crime may be the basis for support of more punitive controls—more arrests, more funding for police, greater use of incarceration, or other punitive measures. That, in effect, is what we are testing here. If the evidence supports the hypothesis, we may be in a position to broaden our understanding of how race, threat and social control interact.

RACE AND THREAT IN CONTEXT

Much of the research using racial composition of place as an indicator of race-related threat has shown that its relationship, either to social control at the macro level or to fear and other attitudinal measures at the individual level, is often contextual. Blalock was the first to raise the issue when he noted “the possibility that different kinds of persons will not be similarly motivated by the minority percentage variable” (1967:31). Pamela Jackson, who researched the relevance of racial composition of cities for various policing measures, concluded that “social context acts as a prism, altering perceptions of the degree of minority-group threat” (1992:94).

The most common contexts at the macro level have been time and place. For example, studies of police department size (Greenberg et al., 1985; Jacobs, 1979), police department funding (Jackson, 1985, 1986, 1989) and lynching (Tolnay et al., 1992) have found the relevance of percent black to vary over time. Regional variation in the relationship between racial composition and rates of incarceration (Padgett, 2002), lynching (Corzine et al., 1983), segregation (Emerson, 1994), police strength (Greenberg et al., 1985) and police funding (Jackson, 1989) has also been widely documented.

At the micro-level the contingent nature of racial threat has also been demonstrated. For example, Liska et al. (1981) report that the relationship between percent nonwhite and fear varies by time and place. Ward et al. (1986) found that percent black and perceived safety of elderly
respondents were related only among those who reported "competency" difficulties. Chiricos et al. (1997) found that the relationship between racial composition and fear of crime depended on the respondent's race and (2001) varied regionally.

The findings of a number of studies on negative racial perceptions are relevant here. Carmine and Layman, for example, found that, in relation to support for government policies to assist blacks, racial "prejudice has its most powerful influence on white Democrats" and none on Republicans (1998:129). They concluded that "Republicans, whatever their level of prejudice, are committed to a limited role for the national government in the social welfare domain" and for them, prejudice has little consequence (1998:129). Borg (1997) found that support for the death penalty among white respondents to the General Social Survey (GSS) was significantly linked to racial prejudice but only for those classified as "nonsoutherners." Taylor (1998) also used GSS data to find that racial composition of the respondent's city was significantly related to "anti-black prejudice" and "policy-related beliefs about blacks," but only outside of the South. She concluded that the issue of race is so long-standing in the South that individual levels of prejudice might well be "less vulnerable" to it (1998:526).

It is reasonable to anticipate that the relationship of racial typification of crime to punitiveness might also be contextual. Much of the contextual evidence concerning racial threat and related attitudes is regional and we will therefore consider that in our analysis. Borg's (1997) findings about prejudice and punitiveness, Taylor's (1998) about racial composition and prejudice and Carmine and Layman's (1998) about prejudice and policy preferences have a common theme. Racial composition and racial prejudice are least consequential where either racial attitudes, punitiveness or policy preferences are more harsh. We might on that account, expect that racial typification will be weakest where punitiveness is already high.

Before describing our methodology and findings, we briefly review the salience of racial typification of crime and related research on punitive attitudes.

RACIAL TYPIFICATION OF CRIME

The presumed link of crime with black men is well established in American culture (Hawkins, 1995; Russell, 1998). It has been argued however, that since the 1960s, in the wake of civil rights activism and higher levels of integration, it has grown substantially more conspicuous (Barlow, 1998). The image of the black male as a criminal threat—which Russell (1998:71) contends often morphs into the perception of "criminalblackman"—received well documented media support from

Indeed, it is widely assumed that the media, especially television, has played an important role in establishing the identity of race and crime. Beckett and Sasson (2000:136), for example, observe that “television crime news and the new reality crime programs associate blackness and crime and do so in emotionally charged ways that encourage punitiveness among the viewing public.” Fishman notes that “the media have... propagated the erroneous and racist notion that all poor blacks, especially males are addicted to crack cocaine, involved in drug trafficking and/or involved in heinous drug-related crimes” (1998:112). And former Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan contends that “as he [the black male] typically appears in the media, he’s either a jewelry bedecked drug pusher, a misogynous pimp or a vicious thug” (quoted in Drummond, 1990:28).

The link between race and crime has become so well established that Barak (1994:137) can reasonably assert that “today’s prevailing criminal predator has become a euphemism for young black male.” So it may not be surprising that hoaxes about black suspects, such as those involving Charles Stuart in Boston and Susan Smith in South Carolina, are so readily found credible (Russell, 1998). The facile assumption of black criminal suspicion is further demonstrated by a recent experiment at UCLA. Subjects viewing newscasts of crime stories were twice as likely to believe that a black suspect had been identified in stories that made no specific reference to a suspect (Mauer, 1999:174).

The racial typification of crime is so well established that, as Barlow notes, in much discourse about crime, “it is unnecessary to speak directly of race because talking about crime is talking about race” (1998:151). Even public figures with politically “liberal” credentials make the race/crime connection. The Reverend Jesse Jackson, while speaking out against black on black crime, admitted to feeling “relief” when approaching strangers on darkened urban streets are not young black men (Cohen, 1993:A2). And former Democratic Senator Bill Bradley observed with chagrin that “the fear of black crime covers the streets like a sheet of ice” (Skogan, 1995:60).

The consequences of the racial typification of crime—besides the hypothesized support for punitive justice measures to be tested here—are many. At the very least they include the difficulty, if not impossibility, of service delivery in predominantly black neighborhoods and the “unavailability” of taxicabs to black travelers, even in racially mixed or

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4. In these highly publicized incidents, Susan Smith drowned her children and Charles Stuart shot his wife to death and in both instances police attention was focused for some time on alleged black male assailants.
predominantly white areas (West, 1994). They also include the racial profiling of suspects by law enforcement (Kennedy, 1997) and the increased likelihood of witness error in court testimony (Roberts, 1993). It has also been argued that the assumption of black criminality leads to the more likely use of deadly force in encounters between police and suspects in some urban neighborhoods (Chua-Eoan, 2000).

Finally, the racial typification of crime may contribute to what some have called “modern racism” (McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988). This is characterized by “a general hostility toward blacks” (Entman, 1990:332) as opposed to direct expressions of racial superiority or inferiority. The result is to increase the likelihood that some whites will “lump all or most blacks into categories with negative characteristics” (Entman, 1992:345). The ready association of blacks with crime is one example.5

PRIOR RESEARCH:
PUNITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD CRIMINALS

Survey research into the correlates and predictors of punitive attitudes toward criminals has been extensive but is difficult to synthesize. One reason is the many methodologies used. Perhaps the most important variable has been the measurement of punitive attitudes. Some researchers have asked a single question, concerning, for example, support for the death penalty (Borg, 1997; Britt, 1998) or judgment about the appropriateness of current sentencing practices (Cohn et al., 1991; Secret and Johnson, 1989; Sprott, 1999). The second type of question has been commonly used in both Gallup and GSS surveys for some time. Another method has been to give respondents an opportunity to choose among a variety of options for dealing with crime in general or with particular crimes. Among the alternatives considered are the use of fines and probation in addition to incarceration (Jacoby, 1989) or the use of community-based options, early release or “rehabilitation” programs (Skovron et al., 1988). Another approach has been to describe particularized crime vignettes and ask respondents either to assess the appropriateness of a hypothetical punishment (Miller et al., 1986, 1991) or to assign a punishment from within a specific range of possibilities (Blumstein and Cohen, 1980; Durham et al., 1996; Rossi and Berk, 1997; Thomas et al., 1976).

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5. For an excellent discussion of the evolution of modern racism and how it differs from traditional racism, see Sniderman, et. al., who observe that while both “centered on dislike of blacks ... before, racists would say blatantly that blacks were lazy. Now they would say instead that if blacks were only willing to work hard, they could be as well off as whites” (1998:21).
Given the extraordinary diversity of methods for estimating punitiveness, and because no prior research has dealt with racial typification of crime as a potential predictor, we briefly review here what has been learned about the relationship of punitiveness to race, racial attitudes and fear of crime. Because our theoretical focus is, broadly speaking, the threat of crime that is racially specified, the closest we can come to relevant research is that which deals with crime threat generally (fear) and race or racial attitudes specifically. None of this research bears directly on our hypothesized relationship, but because our analyses will be race specific and control for fear of crime and racial prejudice, this work may be relevant. The results we reference are limited to those based on multivariate analyses.

FEAR OF CRIME AND PUNITIVENESS

The evidence concerning fear and punitiveness is quite inconsistent. Sprott's (1999) Canadian study found no relationship between fear and judgments about the harshness or leniency of adult court sentencing. Similarly, Secret and Johnson (1989) found no relationship in a national random sample between fear and judgments about the appropriateness of court sentencing and spending to control crime. The most consistent support for the relevance of fear is reported by Langworthy and Whitehead (1986) in a national survey about the punitive rather than rehabilitative purpose of incarceration and by Applegate et al. (2002) in their Ohio study of support for harsher court penalties. Young and Thompson (1995) also found that fear predicted support for the death penalty, using national GSS data.

The remaining research involving fear has produced qualified results. For example, fear was unrelated to punitive responses to robbery, burglary, molestation, drug sales and drug possession in a Las Vegas study (McCorkle, 1993) but positively to those for rape. Cohn et al. (1991) found in their national sample that for white respondents fear was unrelated to judgments about the harshness of court sentencing, but for black respondents was highly significant. Tyler and Weber's (1982) Illinois study found fear to be unrelated to support for the death penalty in five estimates, but positively related in three. Using national survey data, Schwartz et al. (1992) found that fear of violent victimization predicted support for several punitive measures, but not for others. Using similar data, Schwartz et al. (1993) found that the same fear measure was related to support for juveniles being sentenced as adults for violent, property and drug crimes.
RACE AND PUNITIVENESS

There has been much more evidence on the relevance of race for punitiveness than for the fear of crime. The results are quite consistent. Most often, race is a nonsignificant predictor in multivariate estimates of punitiveness (Applegate et al., 1996, 2000, 2002; Grasmick et al., 1992; Harris, 1986; Langworthy and Whitehead, 1986; McCorkle, 1993; Sandys and McGarrell, 1995; Schwartz et al., 1993; Skovron et al., 1989; Tyler and Weber, 1982). Where race does make a difference, whites are almost always more punitive.

For example, Rossi and Berk (1997) used elaborately varied crime vignettes to solicit judgments from a national random sample on the choice of punishments for offenders under specified conditions. When respondent demographics were included with region and city size variables, whites were significantly more punitive in four of nine regression estimates. However, when social and political attitudes as well as personal experience with crime and justice were added to the models, race of respondent was no longer a significant predictor. Grasmick et al. (1993) found that race did not matter in Oklahoma City when it came to support for harsher laws and sentencing. They did find, however, that white respondents were significantly more likely to support the death penalty for both adults and juveniles.

Using national GSS data, Cohn et al. (1991) found that whites were more likely to say that courts in this country do not deal harshly enough with criminals. Secret and Johnson (1989) also made use of GSS survey data to assess whether courts are too harsh or not harsh enough with criminals and whether too much or too little money is being spent on “halting the rising crime rate” and “dealing with drug addicts.” Race was not significant in four separate estimates for the spending variables. But for one of two estimates, whites were significantly more punitive. Skovron et al. (1988) surveyed respondents in Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio. In Columbus race was unrelated to a question concerned with shortening sentences to reduce prison overcrowding, but in Cincinnati whites were more likely to oppose it.

Researchers using national GSS data (Borg, 1997; Britt, 1998; Combs and Comer, 1982; Young, 1992; Young and Thompson, 1995) have consistently found that whites supported the death penalty more than others. The only study to report greater punitiveness among blacks involved support among students at a southern university for the death penalty (Bohm, 1992).

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6. It should be noted that race was most often not the specific focus of these studies, but a variable that was included in multivariate estimates of punitiveness.
RACE RELATED ATTITUDES AND PUNITIVENESS

To our knowledge, only a handful of studies have examined race-related attitudes and punitiveness and none of them used racial typification of crime. The results are relatively consistent. For example, Borg (1997) used a national random sample of white respondents to assess support for the death penalty. Among her independent variables were "racial antipathy" and "racial stereotyping." The first was measured by questions that asked about living in a neighborhood where "half your neighbors were blacks" and having a close friend or relative "marry a black person." The second combined responses to statements about blacks being lazy, unintelligent, unpatriotic and wanting to live on welfare. For the full sample, and for a subsample of "southern" respondents, neither racial antipathy nor racial stereotyping was related to support for the death penalty. However, both antipathy and stereotyping were significantly related to punitiveness in a subsample of "nonsouthern" respondents.7

Similar results using national GSS data have shown support for the death penalty to be related to racial antipathy and negative stereotyping (Barkan and Cohn, 1994) as well as to a seven-item "racism" scale (Aguirre and Baker, 1993). Cohn et al. (1991) used 1987 GSS data to show that racial prejudice as indicated by a three-item scale involving intermarriage, discrimination in home sales and neighborhood exclusion, was related to judgments that courts were not harsh enough in punishing criminals.

Rossi and Berk (1997) also used a national sample of respondents who were given crime vignettes with variable characteristics, including a judgment about whether minority groups had too few or too many "civil rights." In the fullest models, which included demographic, regional, criminal justice contact and attitudinal measures, Rossi and Berk (1997) report that respondents who would prefer "fewer civil rights for minorities" were more punitive toward all crimes, including drug trafficking and white-collar crime, and were more supportive of the death penalty.

Finally, Leiber and Woodrick (1997) interviewed juvenile court personnel about their beliefs in racial differences. Specifically they asked whether black families were more distrustful than other families and whether black youth have "poorer attitudes" and are less willing to acknowledge guilt. An index was constructed from the responses. The

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7. The authors also looked at a model with regional interaction terms for the full sample and in that estimate, both racial antipathy and racial stereotyping were statistically significant.
authors report that the belief in racial differences significantly predicted support for the death penalty being applied to a juvenile in a hypothetical situation, but not support for stricter courts or a general endorsement of the need for stricter punishment in relation to juvenile offenders.

In sum, while there is no research linking punitiveness to the racial typification of crime, the findings we have reviewed here may be indirectly relevant to that question. Most germane is that negative perceptions of blacks and minorities are in most instances related to punitive attitudes. The racial typification of crime can be considered a similar negative perception. Almost all the significant race effects on punitiveness involve whites and this would be relevant if one could assume that whites are more likely to see blacks as criminally threatening. This study will directly address that question.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We conducted a telephone survey of a national random sample (N=885) of adults, 18 years and older, in households accessed by random digit dialing. The calls were made between January and April, 2002. The final sample was 56.5 percent female; 79.8 percent white; 11.4 percent black and 7.5 percent Hispanic. Forty-four percent of the sample had graduated from college. The median age was 46 years. The slight overrepresentation of white, female and older respondents is not uncommon in telephone surveys (Lavrakas, 1987).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE:
PUNITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARD CRIME

As noted, the method for assessing punitiveness toward crime has varied considerably. There has been frequent reliance on global assessments of support for the death penalty or whether courts are too harsh or too little is being spent on fighting crime. There has been some use of vignettes that can vary factors that could play into punitive preferences of respondents. Because the vignette option is too complex for telephone surveys and because we wanted to engage some of the specific punitive policies that legislatures and courts have either been using or considering, our survey asked this question:

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8. The survey was conducted by The Research Network, Inc., a public opinion polling firm in Tallahassee, Florida. A two-stage Mitofsky-Waksberg sampling design was utilized and an eight call-back rule was employed before replacement. Using the definition recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (1998) we obtained a cooperation rate of 40 percent among all contacts with eligible respondents. Ninety-three percent of all surveys initiated were completed.
I am going to read a list of things that have been suggested as ways of dealing with crime in the United States. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is being not at all supportive and 10 is being very supportive, tell me how much you support each of these proposals:

- Making sentences more severe for all crimes
- Executing more murderers
- Making prisoners work on chain gangs
- Taking away television and recreation privileges from prisoners
- Using more mandatory minimum sentencing statutes, like "Three Strikes" for repeat offenders
- Locking up more juvenile offenders
- Using the death penalty for juveniles who murder
- Sending repeat juvenile offenders to adult courts.

Responses to the eight items are aggregated into an index (PUNATT) with an alpha of 0.88. The individual items with the strongest support (means in parentheses) were more mandatory minimum sentencing (7.2), more severe sentencing for all crimes (7.1), and adult court for repeat juvenile offenders (6.9). Those with the lowest support were death penalty for juvenile murderers (4.2) and locking up more juvenile offenders (5.9). The remaining items scored between 6.5 and 6.7.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Our principal independent variable is an index (BLKCRIME) composed of responses to three questions that assess the extent to which respondents typify crime as a disproportionately black phenomenon. The questions were:

- What percent of people who commit violent crimes in this country would you say are black?
- When you think about people who break into homes and businesses when nobody is there, approximately what percent would you say are black?
- When you think about people who rob other people at gunpoint, approximately what percent would you say are black?

Responses to the three questions are aggregated into an index with an alpha of 0.83. Estimates substantially exaggerate black involvement in violent crime, slightly exaggerate black involvement in burglary and

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9. We also asked respondents what percent of these crimes were committed by whites and Hispanics. The number, of course, frequently did not add to 100 percent.
underestimate black involvement in robbery. For example, the median respondent perception of black involvement in violent crime is 39.8 percent, but victim surveys put that level at 29.4 percent for completed crimes of violence (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003a). Respondents put black involvement in burglary at 38.3 percent, but blacks comprise 31.6 percent of those arrested for that crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Survey respondents attribute 39.8 percent of robberies to black offenders, but victim surveys put black involvement in completed robberies at 48.8 percent (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003a).

Other independent variables include several demographic characteristics of respondents. Sex (FEMALE = 1), race (WHITE = 1) and ethnicity (HISPANIC = 1) are coded dichotomously, and AGE is coded continuously. EDUCATION is coded into seven categories ranging from no high school to postgraduate work. Prior research on punitiveness in relation to these variables has indicated a tendency for punitiveness to be greater for white respondents and for men, but no consistent results in relation to age. The relationship between education and punitiveness appears to be consistently inverse (Welch, 2002). Southern residence (SOUTHERN = 1) is also included as a predictor, in part because rates of incarceration are consistently higher in the south than elsewhere and because religious fundamentalism, which some have found related to punitiveness (Borg, 1997, 1998; Young and Thompson, 1995) is also strong in that region.

A second set of independent variables includes “crime salience” measures, or indicators of how respondents regard crime. It is reasonable to expect that the more salient crime is in one’s consciousness, the more punitive toward crime one may be. Our measures of this dimension include fear of criminal victimization (FEARVIC), which is comprised of a six-item index (alpha = 0.92) based on questions assessing how much respondents fear each of six specific crimes. As noted, there has been no consistent relationship between fear and prior assessments of punitiveness. Ferraro (1995), among others, has noted a conceptual distinction between

10. Victim identified race of offenders is not available for burglary and it is impossible to know for certain whether the percent of those arrested for burglary who are black is higher or lower than those who may have been involved in that crime.
11. The states included in this region are: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia.
12. Respondents were asked: “On a scale from 0-10, with 0 being not at all fearful and 10 being very fearful, how much would you say you fear having your car stolen, having someone break into your house, being robbed or mugged on the street, being raped or sexually assaulted, being beaten up or assaulted by strangers, being murdered.”
affective responses to crime, such as fear, and cognitive responses, such as the assessment of risk or expressions of "concern." One can be concerned about crime as a general issue, without being particularly fearful, for whatever reasons.

The second measure is concern about crime (CONCERN), which is measured by a single question, with responses ranging from 0 (unconcerned) to 10 (very concerned). Our final crime salience measure taps into an issue that students of crime and the media have frequently noted—the tendency to exaggerate the violent dimensions of crime (Surréte, 1992). We asked respondents to estimate the percent of crimes in the United States that involve violence (PCTVIO). Not surprisingly, the mean of 53.8 percent vastly overstates the violent component of even serious "Index" crimes. We anticipate that punitiveness will be positively related to this perception.

Two final independent variables that we include in our analyses are political conservatism (POLCON) and racial prejudice (RACEPREJ). The first is measured by respondents' self attribution as conservative (=1) or either moderate or liberal. This approach has been taken by a number of researchers (McCorkle, 1993; Rossi and Berk, 1997; Sandys and McGarrell, 1997) who most often find punitiveness related to "conservatism." Racial prejudice is measured by an index (alpha = 0.77) based on five questions concerned with the acceptability of having someone of a different race in varying contexts of social proximity.13

Table 1 describes each of the variables used in these analyses as well as the bivariate correlation of each independent variable with our measure of punitive attitudes. It can be seen that the strongest correlations with punitive attitudes involve the percent of crime that is perceived to be violent (0.34), concern about crime (0.31), conservatism (0.24), racial prejudice (0.24) and the racial typification of crime (0.22). The net effect of each remains to be seen when other factors are controlled.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The data are analyzed using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. There are no apparent problems of multicollinearity, with tolerance levels consistently above 0.73 and no bivariate correlations between independent

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13. These contexts included "live nearby," "marry into my family," "join a social club or organization of which I was a member," "have dinner" and "a job in which my supervisor was a different race." Responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree and means were computed because not all questions were responded to. Respondents were dichotomized at the mean to designate "higher" and "lower" levels of prejudice.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description and Coding</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>r PUNATT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable</strong></td>
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<td>PUNATT</td>
<td>Index—R’s overall attitudes toward punishing adult and juvenile offenders. Scale 0-10 (most punitive)</td>
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<td>2.3595</td>
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<td>BLKCRIME</td>
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<td>.00</td>
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<td>.26</td>
<td>.07 *</td>
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<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>R’s highest level of schooling 0 = No high school 1 = Some high school 2 = High school graduate 3 = Vocational or trade school graduate 4 = Some college 5 = College graduate 6 = Post graduate work or degree</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
<td>-.29 **</td>
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<td>POLCONS</td>
<td>Political ideology of respondent 0 = Moderate/Liberal 1 = Conservative</td>
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<td>.4811</td>
<td>.24 **</td>
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<td>CONCERN</td>
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<td>2.50</td>
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<td>Perceived percent of crimes with violence</td>
<td>53.82</td>
<td>24.73</td>
<td>.34 **</td>
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<td>FEARVIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACEPREJ</td>
<td>R’s overall level of racial prejudice 0 = Less racially prejudiced 1 = More racially prejudiced</td>
<td>.4955</td>
<td>.5003</td>
<td>.24 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHERN</td>
<td>R’s region of residence 1 = Southern, 0 = All others</td>
<td>.3654</td>
<td>.4818</td>
<td>.14 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05  
** p<.01

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variables in excess of 0.35 (CONCERN and FEARVIC). Modified Glesjer tests indicate that the assumption of homoskedasticity is not violated. Because much of our analysis will involve subsample comparisons, we report unstandardized (b) as well as standardized (Beta) coefficients throughout. Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>PUNATT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Beta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>-.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>-.0119*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.080)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHITE</td>
<td>.566**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.095)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISPANIC</td>
<td>.689*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>-.215**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-.130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLCONS</td>
<td>.731**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCERN</td>
<td>.158**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCTVIO</td>
<td>.01997**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEARVIC</td>
<td>.05483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACEPREJ</td>
<td>.630**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHERN</td>
<td>.399**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKCRIME</td>
<td>.01373**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>.271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05
** p<.01

Table 2 reports the results of regressing punitive attitudes on the set of independent variables described above for the full sample. The adjusted
R$^2$ (0.27) is relatively strong for research involving punitiveness and all coefficients (except for FEMALE) are statistically significant. Support for punitive measures is lower for those who are older and better educated. Punitive sentiments are stronger for southerners, self-identified conservatives, those who are racially prejudiced, white and Hispanic respondents, for those who are concerned about or fearful of crime, or perceive crime to be more often violent. Most notable for our purpose is that when each of these factors is controlled, the racial typification of crime has a significant effect on punitiveness ($p<0.01$) apparently as strong or stronger than the effects of fear, age, gender and Hispanic ethnicity.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSES

Racial threat has most often been taken to be an experience of whites threatened by the presence of minorities (Blalock, 1967; Liska, 1992; Taylor, 1998). In addition, negative racial attitudes (Carmines and Layman, 1998; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1998) and to a lesser extent punitiveness (Borg, 1997; Britt, 1998; Cohn, 1991) have been linked to whites. So we first examine whether the relationship between punitiveness and racial typification is similarly concentrated. We have noted that the consequences of racial threat vary by region (Corzine et al., 1983; Emerson, 1994; Jackson, 1989) and it is recognized that punitiveness is generally higher in the South (Rossi and Berk, 1997). For this reason we also examine region.

Also as noted, some related research makes it reasonable to anticipate that the effects of racial typification of crime may be weakest where punitiveness is already high. Table 2 has shown that concern about crime, the perception that it is disproportionately violent, political conservatism and racial prejudice are to this point, the strongest predictors of punitiveness. On that account, these factors will be used to further refine our assessment of racial typification. To do this, we estimate its influence on punitive attitudes for respondents who are above ("high") and below ("low") the median values for CONCERN, PCTVIO and RACEPREJ. We also estimate the relationship separately for southern and nonsouthern as well as conservative and nonconservative respondents. Tests for the

14. For example, Rossi and Berk (1997:291) report adjusted R$^2$ values between .03 and .08 for their fullest models, and Applegate, et al., (2000:734) report values between .03 and .19.

15. Rates of incarceration in the south are 29 percent higher than in western states, 44 percent higher than in the midwest and 76 percent higher than in the northeast (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003b).

16. The mean levels of punitiveness for the contextual categories are as follows: Whites / Minorities (6.33 / 6.30); High / Low CONCERN (7.08 / 5.78); High / Low PICTVIO
significance of difference in slope coefficients for BLKCRIME use the methodology suggested by Paternoster et al. (1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Punnett (Beta) Whites</th>
<th>Punnett (Beta) Minorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.376**</td>
<td>-0.456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.81)</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.0191**</td>
<td>0.006699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.128)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.222**</td>
<td>-0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.134)</td>
<td>(-0.094)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pctvio</td>
<td>0.772**</td>
<td>0.779*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.163)</td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>0.138**</td>
<td>0.215**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
<td>(0.215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pctvio</td>
<td>0.01937**</td>
<td>0.01913*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.205)</td>
<td>(1.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearvic</td>
<td>0.08841**</td>
<td>-0.00391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(-0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raceprej</td>
<td>0.599**</td>
<td>0.803*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.130)</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>0.599**</td>
<td>-0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(-0.116)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blkcrime*</td>
<td>0.01583**</td>
<td>0.01126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.634</td>
<td>2.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rsquared</td>
<td>0.309</td>
<td>0.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Rsquared</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Estimates Disaggregated by Level of Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Concern</th>
<th>Punnett (Beta)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pctvio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. p-value for Punnett slope difference is .375

(7.08 / 5.80); High / Low Raceprej (6.93 / 5.73); Southern / nonsouthern (6.90 / 6.01); Conservative / non-Conservative (7.11 / 5.85). With the exception of the Whites/Minorities comparison, all values are for whites only and all differences are statistically significant (p < .01).
Table 3 shows separate estimates for whites (N = 606) and minorities (N=144). Because of the small numbers involved, it is not as reliable to look at black and Hispanic respondents separately. Several variables significantly predict punitiveness for both whites and minorities. Specifically, punitive attitudes are harsher for those concerned about crime, politically conservative, racially prejudiced and perceiving a greater proportion of crime to be violent. But education, age, sex, southernness and fear of crime are related to punitiveness only among whites. More important, the racial typification of crime significantly predicts punitiveness (p<.01) among whites but not among racial or ethnic minorities. However, as indicated in the table, the difference in slopes for the two is not statistically significant. Because racial typification is consequential for punitiveness only among whites, our subsequent contextual analyses are limited to white respondents.

Table 4 reports the results of estimating the effects of racial typification on punitiveness for the white subsample, disaggregated by levels of concern about crime and the perception that it is disproportionately violent. It appears that racial typification of crime interacts similarly with both measures of crime salience. Specifically, the perception that crime is disproportionately committed by blacks significantly predicts punitiveness only among those whose concern about crime is relatively low. Similarly, racial typification of crime is a significant predictor of punitive attitudes only among respondents who perceive crime in less violent terms. These interactions suggests that perhaps when the salience of crime is particularly high—as measured by concern and the equation of crime with violence—there may be something of a “ceiling effect” created in relation to punitive attitudes. That is, crime salience may be such a strong predictor of punitiveness that for those who are “high” on the indicators of this factor, there is less opportunity for the effects of racial typification to be expressed. The conclusiveness of these findings are tempered by the fact that slope differences are significant only for the concern context.

A similar interaction is shown in Table 5, which examines the effects of the racial typification of crime in the contexts of low and high racial prejudice as well as nonsouthern and southern residence of white respondents. The significant effects of racial typification are limited to those who are below the median level of prejudice and to those who do not live in the south, though the difference between regression coefficients is not statistically significant. As with the crime salience indicators, there may be something of a ceiling effect in terms of punitiveness among those who are racially prejudiced and live in the south. That is, for southerners and those expressing higher levels of racial prejudice there may be little opportunity for variation in racial typification to influence punitive attitudes.
It is interesting that among self-described conservative respondents, as shown in Table 6, the effects of gender, fear, racial prejudice and the perception that crime is violent are reduced to nonsignificance. Moreover, among conservatives, the perception that crime is disproportionately a black phenomenon is not only a significant predictor of punitiveness, but by standardized coefficients, it is the strongest predictor in the model. The racial typification of crime has no significant effect on punitiveness for liberal and moderate respondents, even though all of the other predictors are significant.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Not Conservative</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>-.424*</td>
<td>-.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0685)</td>
<td>(.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>-.0184**</td>
<td>-.0227**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.114)</td>
<td>(.192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>-.275**</td>
<td>-.145*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.156)</td>
<td>(.111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCERN</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>.09378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.175)</td>
<td>(.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCTVIO</td>
<td>.02494**</td>
<td>.005127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.255)</td>
<td>(.065)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEARVIC</td>
<td>.09809*</td>
<td>.05861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.091)</td>
<td>(.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHERN</td>
<td>.623**</td>
<td>.488*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.120)</td>
<td>(.133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACEPREJ</td>
<td>.765**</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.153)</td>
<td>(.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLKCRIME *</td>
<td>.009515</td>
<td>.02459**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.049)</td>
<td>(.194)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N: 377 229
Constant: 4.457 6.201
R-squared: .325 .185
Adjusted R-squared: .308 .152

* p<.05  ** p<.01

a. p-value for PUNATT slope difference is .105

In sum, our analyses have shown that racial typification of crime is a significant predictor of punitive attitudes toward crime, even with controls for various demographic factors, crime salience variables and attitudinal dimensions. In addition, we have found that this relationship exists only for white respondents, and more particularly, whites who are less concerned about crime, perceive crime to be less often violent, live outside of the south, are less racially prejudiced and are politically conservative. Though racial typification is significant in some contexts and not others, the fact that differences between coefficients are not significant tempers the conclusiveness of our results.

**DISCUSSION**

Between 1980 and 2002, the rate of incarceration in the United States increased 242 percent—from 139 per 100,000 to 476. In 2002, the rate for black men (3,437) was 6.6 times as high as for white (450) (U.S.
Department of Justice, 2003b). These extraordinary levels of punitiveness, unprecedented in our history and in the history of other Western democracies (Beckett and Sasson, 2000; Garland, 2001; Irwin and Austin, 2001), are clearly not being driven by crime since index crime rates have dropped by 30 percent.

Why then are so many people being locked up for what have become longer and longer periods? There is certainly no single or simple answer. Garland (2001) has suggested that it may be the result of both the increasing salience of crime and a variety of social and economic insecurities. Young (1999) similarly points to “ontological insecurities” of late modern society, which include the risk of crime and promote social processes that “essentialize” and “demonize” others, making social exclusion and the “criminology of intolerance” more likely.

The present results certainly support the relevance of crime salience, inasmuch as the perception that crime is violent and both concern about and fear of crime significantly predict support for punitiveness in many of our estimates. But our results linking punitive attitudes to the racial typification of crime suggest that there may be a racial overlay to the crime salience issue. Indeed, it is when concern about crime and the perception that crime is violent are “low” that racial typification of crime is a significant predictor of punitiveness. In these contexts a racialized crime threat may be substituting for a generalized threat that is presumed by crime salience.

The relationship demonstrated here between the racial typification of crime and punitiveness is consistent with the mechanism of “essentialism” that Young (1999) has shown to be an instrumental moment in the politics of “exclusion.” The belief that “others” are essentially different from oneself or one’s own group “allows people to believe in their own superiority while being able to demonize the other, as essentially wicked, stupid or criminal” (Young, 1999:109). Indeed, the racial typification of crime essentializes race in terms of crime and crime in terms of race, thereby “demonizing” blacks as the locus of threat. In other historical contexts, such demonizing has been a precursor to the most extraordinary atrocities (Cohen, 1995). Today, it energizes the mechanisms of social exclusion that include, but are surely not limited to, what Young has called “the great penal gulag” (1999:190) that has been created in this country during the past twenty years.

As noted, the mobilization of social controls in response to racialized crime threat has, for some time, been the subject of much research interest. To date, that research has focused on the racial composition of place as a presumed basis of “social threat” (Liska, 1992) and has shown that racial composition is related both to the fear of crime that could animate controls and to such indices of control as rates of arrest, levels of
police funding and rates of incarceration. Our research provides an alternative direct measure of how race and threat can potentially energize social control. The fact that the typification of crime as a black phenomenon is consistently related to support for punitive measures to deal with crime is further evidence of how racialized crime threat can help to mobilize punitive control. It suggests as well that “social threat” may be activated not only by the residential proximity of racial minorities, but by the conflation of race and crime that exists in the minds of many, regardless of where they live. It could be argued that the racial typification of crime is a more direct measure of racial crime threat than racial composition, inasmuch as the second implies or assumes that the first is true—otherwise the proximity of blacks would not equate to a threat of crime.

These data, which demonstrate just one of the consequences of the racial typification of crime, may underscore the relevance of what Entman (1990) and Sears (1988), have described as a new form of racism—“modern racism”—that has evolved in the United States. This form of racism eschews overt expressions of racial superiority and hostility but instead sponsors a broad “anti-black affect” that equates blacks with a variety of negative traits, and crime is certainly one of those. In some ways “modern racism” may be more pernicious than the “traditional” overt expressions of racial antipathy, because of its oblique character. Consider James Q. Wilson’s assertion that “it is not racism that makes whites uneasy about blacks moving into their neighborhoods... it is fear. Fear of crime, of drugs, of gangs, of violence” (1992:A-16). Such an assertion, in one short sentence, simultaneously disavows white racism while equating blacks with a list of negative attributes. There may be no more apposite expression of what has been called “modern racism” than the simple equation of violence, gangs, drugs and crime with blacks.

Finally, this study demonstrates that the equation of race and crime is a significant sponsor of the punitive attitudes that are given material substance in the extraordinary rates of incarceration now found in this country. In short, these data are consistent with Miller’s conjecture (Szykowny, 1994) that initially prompted this research.

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Fishman, Laura T.

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Greenberg, David F. Ronald C. Kessler and Colin Loftin
Harer, Miles D. and Darrel Steffensmeier

Harris, Phillip W.

Hawkins, Darnell F.

Irwin, John and James Austin

Jackson, Pamela Irving

Jacoby, Joseph E.

Jacobs, David

Jamieson, Kathleen H.

Kennedy, Randall
RACIAL TYPOIFICATION OF CRIME

Langworthy, Robert H. and John T. Whitehead

Lavrakas, Paul J.

Leiber, Michael J. And Anne C. Woodrick

Liska, Allen E.

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Liska, Allen E., Joseph J. Lawrence and Andrew Sanchirico

Mauer, Marc

McConahay, John

McCorkle, Richard C.

Mendelberg, Tali
Miller, J. L., Peter Rossi and Jon E. Simpson

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Moeller, Gertrude L.

Myers, Martha A. and Susette Talarico


Padgett, Kathy

Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Paul Mazerolle and Alex Piquero

Roberts, Dorothy E.

Rossi, Peter H. and Richard A. Berk

Russell, Katheryn K.

Sandys, Marla and Edmund F. McGarrell

Schwartz, Ira M., Shenyang Guo and John J. Kerbs

Sears, David

Secret, Philip E. and James B. Johnson

Skogan, Wesley G.

Skovron, Sandra E., Joseph E. Scott and Francis T. Cullen

Sniderman, Paul M., Thomas Piazza and Hosea Harvey

Sprott, Jane B.

Surrette, Ray

Szykowny, Rick

Taylor, Marylee C.
Taylor, Ralph B. and Jeanette Covington

Taylor, Garth D., Kim Lane Schepelle and Arthur L. Stinchcombe

Thomas, Charles W., Robin J Cage and Samuel C. Foster

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Tyler, Tom R. and Renee Weber

U.S. Department of Justice

Ward, Russel A., Mark LaGory and Susan R. Sherman

Warner, Barbara D.

Welch, Kelly

West, Cornel
Wilson, James Q.

Young, Jock

Young, Robert L.

Young, Robert L. And Carol Y. Thompson

Ted Chiricos is professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. His current research examines the effects of economic insecurity on punitiveness toward criminals, immigrants and welfare recipients, as well as the relationship between environmental threat and punitive responses to environmental crime. He is also studying the effects of race on the withholding of adjudication, and with it, the legal label of felon for those actually convicted of felony crimes as well as the effect of this judicial decision on the subsequent life chances of criminal offenders.

Kelly Welch is joining the faculty as an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Villanova University. Her research interests include race and crime, social justice, public opinion and policy, the sociology of punishment and victimology.

Marc Gertz is a professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. His current research interests include comparative criminal justice systems, courts and social policy and the consequences of the fear of crime. His recent publications include the 9th edition of The Criminal Justice System: Politics and Policies (edited with George F. Cole and Amy Bunger.

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