



Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies  
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# *Criminological* Highlights

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*Criminological Highlights* is designed to provide an accessible look at some of the more interesting criminological research that is currently being published. Each issue contains “Headlines and Conclusions” for each of 8 articles, followed by one-page summaries of each article.

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This issue of *Criminological Highlights* addresses the following questions:

1. How does the criminal justice system punish homeless people even without arresting them?
2. What can be learned from Canada’s successful decarceration of youths?
3. Why are judges more likely to believe in the efficacy of the deterrent impact of harsh sentences than are ordinary citizens?
4. How does the skin tone of Blacks affect the manner in which they are treated by the criminal justice system?
5. Why is it in the public interest to provide for the physical and mental well-being of prisoners?
6. What can former prisoners do to increase their likelihood of getting a job?
7. How does the segregation of residential neighbourhoods affect homicide rates?
8. How does the incarceration of fathers of very young children affect a child’s educational experiences?

**Much of the policing of homeless people in urban settings begins with calls from the public rather than police-initiated actions. Police actions in response to these complaints can be extremely punitive even though there may be no formal arrests, detention, or incarceration.**

Though “the trigger of complaint-oriented policing [of the homeless] is not rooted primarily under police command” (p. 793) and arrest and its consequences are not the source of the most important or frequent punishments, “this policing results in consistent punitive interactions with state officials that typically do not result in incarceration but nonetheless exact material, psychological, and social suffering” (p. 794).

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**Between 1997 and 2015, Canada reduced its overall incarceration of youths by about 73%, mostly from a reduction in the number of youths in sentenced, not remand, custody. General lessons on how to reduce the use of prison might be gleaned by contrasting the successful decline in youth sentenced custody with the failure to reduce not only youth remand custody but also adult imprisonment.**

The dramatic reduction of youths in sentenced custody in Canada occurred as a result of at least three conditions: (1) Restraint in the use of incarceration was firmly embedded in Canadian criminal justice values; (2) There was clear political willingness to support change, and (3) The law was crafted to reduce the use of court and custody by explicitly structuring decisions through prescriptive provisions. It would appear that “Change is possible as long as we have the will to make it happen” (p. 1128).

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**Jurors who convicted defendants were, in general, much less likely than judges to believe that deterrence should be the most important purpose guiding the sentencing of the defendant they convicted.**

The results were similar to other survey findings suggesting that ordinary citizens want offenders to get “the punishment they deserve” (p. 37). The results are also similar to survey findings in Canada (*Criminological Highlights* 8(6)#1) in which deterrence was ranked a distant fifth most important factor in sentencing. Perhaps more interesting is that jurors’ skepticism that crime can be deterred by way of sentencing is more in line with empirical research (*Criminological Highlights Collection* on our website) than were judges’ sentencing decisions.

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**Black Americans with dark skin tones are more likely than lighter-skinned Black Americans to be arrested and incarcerated even when a set of standard control factors (e.g., childhood delinquency, education, neighbourhood crime rates) are taken into account.**

“There is... mounting evidence that life chances among African Americans are *internally* stratified by gradational differences in their skin tone – a form of inequality and stratification that is missed by conventional analyses that use dichotomous... ‘race’ categories.... While being black (and poor) may already predispose one to have a higher probability of contact with the criminal justice system and harsher treatment [by it] (for a wide array of reasons), being perceived as *blacker* intensifies this contact further and may increase the harshness of one’s treatment by the criminal justice system as an institution” (p. 1606). However, as the authors themselves point out, one should be cautious about assuming, on the basis of this one study, causal links between variation in skin colour among African Americans and treatment by the criminal justice system.

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**Successful reintegration of people imprisoned for serious and/or violent offences is impeded by physical and mental health problems that they experience in prison. These health problems have negative effects largely through their indirect impacts on employment, family conflict, or financial problems experienced after release.**

“The present research findings implicate both physical and mental health for reentry success and recidivism” (p. 562). Physical health issues “compromise one’s ability to secure and maintain employment” (p. 562), but poor physical health has an independent impact on depression which has its own negative impact on reentry success through its association with increased family conflict. In other words, prisoners who are released with physical and mental health challenges are more likely to commit offences and return to prison. “The findings underscore the need for policies and programs that improve health during incarceration and obviate health-related failures after release” (p. 567).

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**Ordinary people are able to overcome their negative views of people with criminal records if they are given information about the person from a previous employer who indicates a willingness to rehire the former offender if given an opportunity to do so.**

Overcoming the stigmatizing impact of a criminal record is difficult especially in an age in which many criminal records are accessible to those who search the internet. This study suggests, however, that personal information from an employer indicating a willingness to rehire a former prisoner can overcome much of the negative impact of contact with the criminal justice system.

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**Segregation of neighbourhoods in US metropolitan areas “plays a fundamental role in explaining black-white disparities in violent crime”: the more segregated metropolitan areas are, the larger the difference between black and white homicide rates. Nevertheless, “the more integrated metropolitan areas also tend to have considerably lower overall rates of homicide victimization” (p. 710).**

The “findings buttress arguments that segregation plays a fundamental role in explaining black-white disparities in violent crime.... The black-white homicide [rate] gap in the least segregated metro areas is a fraction of the gap in the most segregated areas” (p. 710). “Reduced exposure to violence may help explain why whites continue to remain highly segregated from blacks. This privilege that whites enjoy, however, is purchased at tremendous cost to African Americans in terms of increased homicide” (p. 712).

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**Children of fathers who were incarcerated when the child was very young are more likely than similar children whose fathers were not imprisoned to be suspended or expelled from elementary school.**

There is a substantial amount of research suggesting that incarceration has harmful effects on the person imprisoned. Other research suggests incarceration has negative impacts on those associated with the prisoner. This paper extends these findings by demonstrating that the very early incarceration of the father –before the child turns five -- has negative impacts on youths’ experiences in school before the child is nine years old.

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**Much of the policing of homeless people in urban settings begins with calls from the public rather than police-initiated actions. Police actions in response to these complaints can be extremely punitive even though there may be no formal arrests, detention, or incarceration.**

Police involvement in 'order maintenance' activities is typically seen as being initiated by them for the purpose of crime control. This broad and intensive study of the policing of homelessness in San Francisco, California, demonstrates that the police, responding to complaints from the public, can impose excruciatingly punitive actions completely outside of the criminal law.

The author of this study spent much of 9 months living on the streets, in shelters and other temporary housing with homeless people. In addition, he spent many days and nights with the police and public health workers, etc., observing the treatment of the homeless. The study includes data from a quantitative analysis of calls to the police and municipality for "homeless concerns" as well as survey data from homeless people. He also worked in the city office charged with the responsibility for responding to homelessness.

Though obviously San Francisco has a 'homelessness problem', an important change that has taken place over the past few years is the dramatic increase in the number of calls (to the city or the police) requesting something be done about homeless people near the caller's home or work. The goal of the caller is often simple: to move homeless people from the caller's visual field or simply to do something to get the homeless person to move. The police, in responding to these calls, rarely used any 'law'. Instead, they used various techniques to move

the homeless to different locations. Sometimes they just told homeless people to move, thus simply displacing the complaint. Or they would give homeless people bus tickets to another city if the recipient indicated they had a place to live elsewhere. Sometimes sanitation workers would be called in to power-wash the sidewalks (in order to get the homeless to move). Most of the homeless "feared the sanitation teams more than the police, due to the former's ability to confiscate and destroy property, which was viewed as a punishment worse than arrest" (p. 787). The homeless people could also be taken to a hospital if there appeared to be some possible justification. Such actions also frequently resulted in homeless people losing all of their belongings.

The loss of property was widespread: about half of the homeless interviewed as part of this study had lost vital possessions such as identification and benefit cards, medications, family photos and other priceless mementos.

Charging the homeless with some public order offence did occasionally occur. Given the frequency of contact the homeless had with police, a high portion of the homeless had been charged with at least one offence. The result of being charged, found guilty and fined was that, given that fines could not be paid, there were punitive civil consequences (e.g., being barred from services, housing and work).

*Conclusion:* Though "the trigger of complaint-oriented policing [of the homeless] is not rooted primarily under police command" (p. 793) and arrest and its consequences are not the source of the most important or frequent punishments, "this policing results in consistent punitive interactions with state officials that typically do not result in incarceration but nonetheless exact material, psychological, and social suffering" (p. 794).

*Reference:* Herring, Chris (2019). Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space. *American Sociological Review*, 84(5), 769-800.

**Between 1997 and 2015, Canada reduced its overall incarceration of youths by about 73%, mostly from a reduction in the number of youths in sentenced, not remand, custody. General lessons on how to reduce the use of prison might be gleaned by contrasting the successful decline in youth sentenced custody with the failure to reduce not only youth remand custody but also adult imprisonment.**

From at least as early as 1965, Canadian government reports on the treatment of young people who commit criminal offences suggested that the institutional commitment of youths should be held to a minimum. Nevertheless, it was not until the late 1990s that the decarceration of youths became a reality.

In 1994, Canada's Minister of Justice announced in Parliament that Canada's youth justice laws had been unsuccessful in one of their important goals-- reducing imprisonment. This acknowledgement began a legal and cultural process that would have a dramatic impact on youth incarceration. First, two national reviews of youth justice were held. Second, a policy paper was released that suggested a completely new youth justice law. Third, a new law was introduced into Parliament in 1999, coming into force 4 years later. By that time, those working in youth justice had been trained in a new way of thinking about the appropriate way to respond to offending by youths. And by differentiating violent cases from all other cases – suggesting, implicitly, that violent cases might be dealt with harshly – public opposition to the new approach was minimized.

More importantly, perhaps, the 'aspirational tone' of previous youth legislation and policy (e.g., the use of incarceration should be minimized *where appropriate*) was replaced by more restrictive or directive language (e.g., custody can *only be imposed if* one of a number of fairly clearly defined conditions are met).

Youth incarceration rates began to decline in the late 1990s. The most dramatic decline, however, took place when Canada's new youth justice legislation came into place in early 2003 (see *Criminological Highlights 10(3)#1*). What is perhaps more surprising is that sentenced custody rates for youths continued to decline in the years following the new legislation. "The most parsimonious explanation [for this latter decline] is that the new youth justice culture in Canada became increasingly more firmly entrenched or implanted" (p. 1112). The data demonstrate reductions at all stages of youth justice processing between 1998 and 2015: fewer incidents (especially non-violent incidents) were reported to the police; a smaller proportion of reported incidents resulted in charges; a lower proportion of cases in court resulted in findings of guilt; and a smaller proportion of those cases with a guilty finding resulted in a custodial sentence.

Canadian governments have produced numerous reports suggesting that Canada imprisons too many adults and, indeed, Canadian legislation has aspirational language suggesting that imprisonment should be used as a last resort for adults. Similarly, in 2012,

Canada introduced new language into its youth law in an apparent attempt to reduce the use of pretrial detention for youths. Notably, neither attempt was successful in part because they used "aspirational" rather than "operational" language; there was little attempt to change the (administrative) approach used by those working in the justice system; and governments appeared more ambivalent about what they wanted to accomplish in these areas.

*Conclusion:* The dramatic reduction of youths in sentenced custody in Canada occurred as a result of at least three conditions: (1) Restraint in the use of incarceration was firmly embedded in Canadian criminal justice values; (2) There was clear political willingness to support change, and (3) The law was crafted to reduce the use of court and custody by explicitly structuring decisions through prescriptive provisions. It would appear that "Change is possible as long as we have the will to make it happen" (p. 1128).

*Reference:* Webster, Cheryl Marie, Jane B. Spratt, and Anthony N. Doob (2019). The Will to Change: Lessons from Canada's Successful Decarceration of Youth. *Law & Society Review*, 53(4), 1092-1131.

## **Jurors who convicted defendants were, in general, much less likely than judges to believe that deterrence should be the most important purpose guiding the sentencing of the defendant they convicted.**

The Victoria, Australia, Sentencing Act (1991) instructs judges that the sentences they impose must reflect one or more of the standard sentencing purposes: deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, just punishment and/or denunciation. Said differently, in general, judges are given little statutory guidance on the purpose that should guide the sentence but are generally given discretion in deciding on the purposes that should be the focus in each case.

This study looks at the views of Victoria jurors of the sentencing of the defendant whom they convicted. Because jury service is compulsory in Victoria and exemptions are few, jurors are likely to be representative of the local community. Hence it can be seen as a study of the views of sentencing of ordinary citizens who have a detailed and intimate understanding of a criminal case.

After arriving at a guilty verdict, jurors were asked to indicate what they thought the sentence should be (see *Criminological Highlights* 16(5)#3) and then were asked to indicate which of 7 possible alternatives was the 'single most important purpose' that would be achieved by their sentence. (Previous research has suggested that when asked to rate the importance of each purpose, many people simply rate all of them as being important.) Data were collected from jurors who had participated in 124 trials in Victoria. Most cases were relatively serious: 71% of the cases involved sex or violence offences.

The judges' sentencing remarks were also coded on a four-point scale of how important the judge indicated each purpose was in the case at hand. Finally, a subset of jurors was interviewed.

48% of the jurors (pooling across all types of cases) saw denunciation or retribution as the single most important purpose. These were seen as being more important than any of the other five purposes (specific or general deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation or compensation). The interviews, as well, "revealed that juror preferences were dominated by a desire to communicate censure, to construct a meaningful response to offending or to send a message to the offender and society." Deterrence (specific or general) was not seen as being very important.

In the most serious cases, jurors were more inclined than in other cases to list incapacitation as the most important purpose (20.6% vs. 10.5% for the other cases). Only in drug offences did a substantial portion of people list general deterrence (38%) as the most important purpose. For the most part, however, jurors wanted sentences to reflect denunciation and retribution rather than the traditional utilitarian purposes (deterrence and incapacitation).

Judges saw things differently. Their reasons for sentencing were coded by the researchers. General deterrence was the purpose most likely to be identified as the *single predominant* purpose and

it was also the purpose most likely to be described as being important or very important in determining the sentence. Said differently: "General deterrence was at the top of the list for judges but at the bottom for most groups of jurors" (p. 34). In the interviews, jurors suggested such things as "people don't think about the consequences" (p. 35) or that people aren't aware of penalties.

*Conclusion:* The results were similar to other survey findings suggesting that ordinary citizens want offenders to get "the punishment they deserve" (p. 37). The results are also similar to survey findings in Canada (*Criminological Highlights* 8(6)#1) in which deterrence was ranked a distant fifth most important factor in sentencing. Perhaps more interesting is that jurors' skepticism that crime can be deterred by way of sentencing is more in line with empirical research (*Criminological Highlights Collection* on our website) than were judges' sentencing decisions.

*Reference:* Warner, Kate, Julia Davis, Caroline Spiranovic, Helen Cockburn, and Arie Freiberg (2019). Why Sentence? Comparing the Views of Jurors, Judges and the Legislature on the Purposes of Sentencing in Victoria, Australia. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 19(1), 26-44.

## **Black Americans with dark skin tones are more likely than lighter-skinned Black Americans to be arrested and incarcerated even when a set of standard control factors (e.g., childhood delinquency, education, neighbourhood crime rates) are taken into account.**

Recent data suggests that within the Black American community, skin tone predicts various outcomes including education, income, occupation and health. Darker-skinned African Americans are disadvantaged more than lighter-skinned African Americans.

Previous death penalty research has shown, for example, that “even after controlling for relevant factors, the more stereotypically Black a defendant was perceived to be (i.e., darker skin tone and more Afrocentric facial features), the more likely that Black defendant was to be sentenced to death” (p. 1596). This paper uses a national study of African Americans to investigate the likelihood of arrest and incarceration of people with a range of different skin tones.

The analyses presented in the paper use data for native-born US Blacks, age 18 and over, who participated in a national survey. The main outcome variables are whether the respondent had ever been arrested and whether the respondent had been incarcerated. The main independent variable – coded by Black interviewers for the Black respondents – was the rating, on a 7-point scale, of the skin tone of the interviewee. Overall, 33% had been arrested at least once.

Black respondents with darker skin tone were more likely to be arrested than were those with lighter skin tone. This relationship was reduced slightly when various control factors were added such as educational attainment, a poverty measure, neighbourhood crime, drug use, childhood delinquency.

Of course, it is possible that some of these ‘control’ factors (e.g., educational attainment, poverty) are partially a function of skin tone.

The survey also collected data from white (non-Hispanic) Americans living in equivalent neighbourhoods. The likelihood of being arrested for the lightest-skinned Blacks is roughly the same as for whites as a whole. But overall, “whites who tend to live in neighbourhoods with African Americans are still significantly less likely to be arrested than African Americans” (p. 1603). The difference, however, between the likelihood of ever having been arrested for Black vs. white Americans is less than the difference between the likelihood of having been arrested for the lightest- vs. darkest-skinned African Americans.

Given the results on arrest, it is not surprising that skin tone also predicts whether the respondent had ever been incarcerated. “The lighter-skinned African Americans have mean incarceration levels that are indistinguishable from that of whites. Those at the darker end of the spectrum, however, have significantly higher mean incarcerations levels... than both the lightest-skinned African Americans and whites” (p. 1605-6).

*Conclusion:* “There is... mounting evidence that life chances among African Americans are *internally* stratified by gradational differences in their skin tone – a form of inequality and stratification that is missed by conventional analyses that use dichotomous... ‘race’ categories.... While being black (and poor) may already predispose one to have a higher probability of contact with the criminal justice system and harsher treatment [by it] (for a wide array of reasons), being perceived as *blacker* intensifies this contact further and may increase the harshness of one’s treatment by the criminal justice system as an institution” (p. 1606). However, as the authors themselves point out, one should be cautious about assuming, on the basis of this one study, causal links between variation in skin colour among African Americans and treatment by the criminal justice system.

*Reference:* Monk, Ellis P. (2019). The Colour of Punishment: African Americans, Skin Tone, and the Criminal Justice System. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(10), 1593-1612.

**Successful reintegration of people imprisoned for serious and/or violent offences is impeded by physical and mental health problems that they experience in prison. These health problems have negative effects largely through their indirect impacts on employment, family conflict, or financial problems experienced after release.**

People who are incarcerated are likely to experience health problems. This study examines the impact of physical and mental health states immediately before release on prisoners after they are released from prison. In addition, it attempts to understand how the health status of a recently released prisoner might impact reintegration by looking at possible mediating mechanisms (employment, family conflict, and financial problems).

Most prisoners even in the US eventually are released back into the community. This study examines data on 1,532 men who were released from prisons in 12 US states after spending an average of about 2.5 years incarcerated.

Prisoners were interviewed three times: approximately 30 days before release, and 3 and 9 months after release. Health data consisted of self-reports of whether there were any problems with normal mobility and activities as well as experience with pain. Depression was measured with feelings of loneliness, having no interest in things, feeling fearful, feeling hopeless, etc. Not surprisingly, physical health had a direct impact on depression.

After release, family conflict and employment were measured three months after release; and self-reported financial problems were assessed 9 months after release. Self-reported involvement in crime was measured 9 months after release with 6 items measuring involvement in violent, drug, property and other crimes. Various other control measures (e.g., age, education, prior arrests and incarceration) were also included in the statistical models.

Reincarceration data (15 months after release) were obtained from state and federal administrative data.

Poor physical health was directly related to being unemployed. And being unemployed three months after release was directly related to increased crime at 9 months. Experiencing depression and being unemployed were each independently linked to increased likelihood of family conflict 3 months after release. Those experiencing family conflict were more likely to report financial problems. Those with financial problems were more likely than others to report involvement in crime. Those involved in crime at 9 months (as well as those experiencing financial problems at 9 months) were, not surprisingly, more likely to be incarcerated at 15 months.

In summary, then, "Physical health limitations led to increased crime through their impact on employment" (p. 560), and depression was linked with crime through its effect on family conflict (which in turn was linked directly with crime and indirectly with crime through its impact on financial problems).

*Conclusion:* "The present research findings implicate both physical and mental health for reentry success and recidivism" (p. 562). Physical health issues "compromise one's ability to secure and maintain employment" (p. 562), but poor physical health has an independent impact on depression which has its own negative impact on reentry success through its association with increased family conflict. In other words, prisoners who are released with physical and mental health challenges are more likely to commit offences and return to prison. "The findings underscore the need for policies and programs that improve health during incarceration and obviate health-related failures after release" (p. 567).

*Reference:* Link, Nathan W., Jeffrey T. Ward, and Richard Stansfield (2019). Consequences of Mental and Physical Health for Reentry and Recidivism: Toward a Health-Based Model of Desistance. *Criminology*, 57, 544-573.

## **Ordinary people are able to overcome their negative views of people with criminal records if they are given information about the person from a previous employer who indicates a willingness to rehire the former offender if given an opportunity to do so.**

It is well established that people with a criminal record have difficulty getting employment and housing (*Criminological Highlights* 6(3)#2, 15(1)#7, 16(4)#7, 17(2)#6). At the same time, stable employment and housing contribute to the crime-free reintegration into society of those with criminal records.

This paper examines the way in which the stigmatizing effect of a criminal record might be overcome. It provides evidence supporting the conclusion that “By contextualizing the criminal record as just one piece of information about the person, decisionmakers can more accurately assess the ‘whole person’ in their review” (p. 3) and be less influenced by this one negative fact.

In this study, ordinary participants in an online US survey were given a description of a hypothetical job applicant and were asked to indicate their willingness, if they were looking for employees, to call back this applicant for a job interview. The ‘job applicant’ varied on a number of dimensions. The applicant was described as having had no criminal record or as having been imprisoned for 18 months for a drug felony or a violent felony.

If the hypothetical applicant had a record, some survey respondents were given no special job-related information about the applicant. Other applicants were described as having participated in a job skills program voluntarily or as a requirement while in prison. Another group of applicants was described as having a state license (as a barber) implying that the state had determined that he was rehabilitated enough to be

employed in a profession that involved contact with the public. The final group was described as having a favourable reference letter from a previous employer (prior to the imprisonment) indicating that the job applicant had been a good worker and that notwithstanding the felony conviction, the employer would be willing to rehire him if he had the opportunity to do so.

Consistent with other research, people were considerably less likely to indicate a willingness to call back a job applicant with a criminal record (drug or violent felony) than they were a person with no criminal record. Having a reference letter from a previous employer, however, removed most, but not all, of the stigmatizing effect of the criminal record. People were substantially more likely to call back a person with a record if they had a positive reference letter from a previous employer than if the applicant had a record but did not have such a letter. It did not, however, eliminate the effect of a criminal record: respondents indicated that they were somewhat less likely to call them back than they would similar people without a criminal record.

Having participated, as a prisoner, in voluntary job training seemed to have a small impact in overcoming the stigma

of a criminal record but was not as effective as an independent source of information about the character of the former prisoner apparently written by a former employer.

For respondents who indicated that they had been in a position to review job applications and conduct job interviews, the results were quite similar, although the *only* thing that appeared to mitigate the impact of a criminal record was the reference letter from the previous employer. The results also were generally similar for applicants regardless of whether they were apparently Black or White.

*Conclusion:* Overcoming the stigmatizing impact of a criminal record is difficult especially in an age in which many criminal records are accessible to those who search the internet. This study suggests, however, that personal information from an employer indicating a willingness to rehire a former prisoner can overcome much of the negative impact of contact with the criminal justice system.

*Reference:* DeWitt, Samuel E. and Megan Denver (2019). Criminal Records, Positive Employment Credentials, and Race. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (2019: Online First).

**Segregation of neighbourhoods in US metropolitan areas “plays a fundamental role in explaining black-white disparities in violent crime”: the more segregated metropolitan areas are, the larger the difference between black and white homicide rates. Nevertheless, “the more integrated metropolitan areas also tend to have considerably *lower overall* rates of homicide victimization” (p. 710).**

It has been suggested that whites benefit from segregation by having a reduced risk of violent victimization. This study examines whether “changes in segregation [in 103 major US metropolitan areas] between 1970 and 2010 influenced the prevalence of homicide for both whites and blacks” (p. 691).

The main explanatory variable of interest in the study is an index that estimates the degree of segregation of blacks and whites within a metropolitan area at a given point in time. In addition, a number of other control variables – measured separately for blacks and whites – were included in the analysis. These included such factors as income, unemployment rates, and residential instability. For the metropolitan area as a whole, the overall percent black, incarceration rate, and police per capita were also controlled for. Data were obtained at five points in time (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010) – years when census data were collected.

Without controls, homicide rates for blacks were highest in the most segregated cities. White homicide rates were considerably lower. When controls were added to the model, it was clear there was substantial variation in black and white homicide rates across time. But in addition, there is a substantial *positive* relationship between increased segregation and black homicide rates.

Given that the analysis controlled for various measures of black disadvantage, it would appear that high levels of segregation are associated with high rates of black homicide victimization. This effect was found above and beyond control variables such as poverty levels.

For whites, however, controlling for black and white poverty, residential stability, etc., the higher the degree of segregation of the city at any given point in time, the *lower* the white homicide rate.

Since, controlling for other factors, black homicide goes up, and white homicide goes down with increased segregation in a given metropolitan area, it would appear that “African Americans bear the brunt of ... [high levels of racial segregation in] neighborhoods, while whites benefit from spatially concentrating social problems in [black] communities” (p. 703-4). Other analyses suggest “that the segregation-homicide link is not driven solely by selective migration patterns into and out of segregated places that simultaneously determine

segregation and crime. [Instead]... the results... provide strong causal evidence that the maintenance of segregation does indeed benefit whites, at least in terms of reduced risk of homicide victimization” (p. 708).

*Conclusion:* The “findings buttress arguments that segregation plays a fundamental role in explaining black-white disparities in violent crime.... The black-white homicide [rate] gap in the least segregated metro areas is a fraction of the gap in the most segregated areas” (p. 710). “Reduced exposure to violence may help explain why whites continue to remain highly segregated from blacks. This privilege that whites enjoy, however, is purchased at tremendous cost to African Americans in terms of increased homicide” (p. 712).

*Reference:* Light, Michael T. and Julia T. Thomas (2019). Segregation and Violence Reconsidered: Do Whites Benefit from Residential Segregation? *American Sociological Review*, 84(4), 690-725.

## Children of fathers who were incarcerated when the child was very young are more likely than similar children whose fathers were not imprisoned to be suspended or expelled from elementary school.

The incarceration of a parent has a variety of negative impacts on their children. These include, among other things such problems as increased likelihood of offending by the children, lower educational achievement, higher levels of aggressiveness, and lower earnings as a young adult (see *Criminological Highlights* 1(1)#6, 10(3)#2, 12(5)#1, 12(6)#7, 13(1)#7, 14(2)#1, 16(2)#1, 16(4)#8, 16(6)#8).

This paper extends this line of research by looking at the impact of the incarceration of a youth's father early in the youth's life on that child's elementary school experience. It examines whether some of the other negative impacts of the incarceration of a parent have their roots in the early school experiences of the child. Other studies have suggested that the experience of punishment in school (e.g., suspension from school) is associated with later criminal justice involvement.

This paper uses data from the "Fragile Families Study" – a longitudinal study of a cohort of children born between 1998 and 2000. The survey over-represents socioeconomically disadvantaged families. This study uses data obtained from the parents from the time of the birth of the child to age 9 as well as data obtained from the child in later years. The focus is on the impact of the incarceration of a parent before the child turned 5 years old. The main outcome measure was whether the child reported that they had ever been suspended or expelled from school by age 9. A total of 50 control variables (e.g., neighbourhood, family structure, parental and school measures) was used to ensure that comparisons between children who had a parent incarcerated and those who did not were, in general, similar on other relevant characteristics.

Three different statistical approaches were used to ensure that differences between children whose fathers were incarcerated before the child turned 5 and those whose father had not been incarcerated could reasonably be attributable to the incarceration of the father. These techniques of creating equivalent groups were important because, without these controls, there were, not surprisingly, important differences between the children who experienced an incarcerated father and those who did not.

The analyses -- using various approaches for controlling for other factors -- led to very similar findings. Controlling for other differences, the odds of school punishment (suspension or expulsion) by the time the child turned 9 were considerably higher for children whose fathers were incarcerated than the odds of school punishment were for similarly placed children who did not have an imprisoned father.

An independent confirmation that this effect was apparently caused by the incarceration of the parent (and not other factors) came from an analysis of school punishment for those children whose father did *not* live with the mother and child. When the various controls were put in place (in effect comparing comparable children whose 'non-residential' father was or was not incarcerated) there was no effect of the incarceration of the parent. In other

words, only when the criminal justice system *took the father out of the home* was there a negative impact of paternal incarceration. If he wasn't in the home to begin with, incarcerating the father had no measurable impact on whether the child was subsequently suspended or expelled from school.

Other analyses suggested that some, but not all, of the association between the incarceration of the father and school suspension or expulsion is due to behavior problems on the part of the child (various types of offending) and weakened social bonds of the child with the family.

*Conclusion:* There is a substantial amount of research suggesting that incarceration has harmful effects on the person imprisoned. Other research suggests incarceration has negative impacts on those associated with the prisoner. This paper extends these findings by demonstrating that the very early incarceration of the father – before the child turns five -- has negative impacts on youths' experiences in school before the child is nine years old.

*Reference:* Jacobsen, Wade C. (2019). The Intergenerational Stability of Punishment: Paternal Incarceration and Suspension or Expulsion in Elementary School. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 56(5), 651-693.