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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. Can judges determine whether a citizen decides to vote?

2. Does public opinion about crime and punishment affect punishment policies?

3. Was California's determinant sentencing law in the 1970s responsible for California's increase in imprisonment?

4. When drug offenders get jobs, are they likely to slow down their drug use and crime?

5. Do police stops of youths increase or decrease offending?

6. What kinds of people favour 'tough on young offenders' policies?

7. What kinds of neighbourhoods are safest?

8. Do community characteristics determine how murder cases are prosecuted?

People who are sent to prison are less likely to participate fully in their communities and in civic life after they are released.

The negative impacts of imprisonment on civic involvement (e.g., voting) or trust in government are large. "The effect of being incarcerated [on political involvement]… is larger in size than having a college-educated parent, being in the military, receiving welfare and being black…. It is not just that custodial populations come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are prevented from voting due to felon exclusions; the results point to the large independent effect of punitive encounters that does not depend on pre-existing characteristics…." (p. 827).

Public opinion about crime and punishment matters: Data from the US suggest that American legislators between 1953 and 2012 responded to increased concern in the general public about crime and that changes in imprisonment were affected by these public attitudes.

This paper's finding that "The public's rising punitiveness appears to be a fundamental determinant of the incarceration rate" (p. 13) is important in that it provides evidence that political leaders followed rather than led the public.   This conclusion is somewhat different from that in an earlier study (*Criminological Highlights 14*(1)#4) that found that presidential statements about crime tended to precede changes in public sentiment. It may be, of course, that both are true and that the relationships among public views, elite views, and changes in policy are not simple or unidirectional.

California's increase in imprisonment in the latter part of the 20th century started *after* a key legislative reform – determinate sentencing – had been put in place.   This shift to determinate sentencing appears to have created opportunities for laws that led to more punitive penal policies.

California's imprisonment rate increased as a result of legislative changes that followed and were made possible by the determinate sentencing law (DSL). Legislators saw harsh sentences as the way to solve the crime problem. Attempts to mitigate the impact on prison populations failed. The drop in crime in California in the early 1980s was attributed, by politicians and conservative economists, to the new harsh penalties. Furthermore, "The [California] Governor essentially redefined overcrowded prisons as indicators of success, not correctional failure or penal excess" (p. 401).   Although the sentencing ranges in the original DSL were seen as too lenient by some, the law opened the door to increased prison populations.

Providing work opportunities to heavy drug users reduces their offending, but does little to reduce cocaine and heroin use.

Clearly the long term success of any transitional job program such as this one depends in large part on the ability of the labour market to absorb the workers at the end of the program. What is notable about this program, however, is that "it provides strong evidence for a causal relationship between work and arrest" (p. 124): arrests for robbery and burglary were reduced significantly. "The program accomplished these reductions by providing income that would not otherwise be available through legitimate channels" (p. 124). The results support a harm reduction approach that gauges success beyond simple abstinence from all drugs. "Supported employment programs for heavy substance users represent a promising model for reducing predatory crimes such as robbery or burglary" (p. 125).

Being stopped by the police increases future offending.

Stop-and-frisk interactions between youths and police "may have the unintended consequence of increasing future delinquent involvement. Thus police practices of engaging in high rates of stops, many of which are 'unproductive' or 'innocent,' may be counterproductive" (p. 956). "For both youth who are stopped and youth who are arrested, delinquency amplification is partially explained by the attenuation of prosocial bonds, changes in deviant identity, and increased involvement with delinquent peers" (p. 956-7).

Americans who are most likely to favour highly punitive measures for young people who commit crime also are likely to hold strong anti-Black attitudes and to be members of the Tea Party Movement.

"Prior research demonstrates the widespread typification of crime, especially youth crime, as a black phenomenon…. Thus the results in this study provide support for group threat theory by demonstrating that favourable attitudes to coercive crime control policies, which scholars have long suggested 'provide white Americans with a means to control or subordinate black people' … are greater among Tea Partiers – individuals who hold especially negative views about blacks and who are presumably the most anxious about the Obama presidency" (p. 183). But in addition to Tea Party membership, those respondents who expressed resentment about favourable treatment of Black Americans were especially likely to express punitive attitudes towards youth who offend.

Neighbourhoods are most likely to be safe if very few or almost all streets in the neighbourhood are active and have people on them. The most dangerous neighbourhoods appear to be those that have a mixture of some active streets and some largely empty streets.

It would appear that when neighbourhood streets are mostly empty, "increases in the prevalence of active streets may offer little more than additional potential targets for victimization" (p. 1035). However, once a threshold is reached, increases in street use in a neighbourhood reduces exposure to violence, violent victimization, and homicide rates. Hence it is possible that the 'gentrification' of neighbourhoods may produce short term increases in violence due to there being fewer people on the streets. The increase in violence will continue until the neighbourhood experiences higher rates of street use at which point it, the streets do, in fact, become safe.

The outcome of a murder case is determined, in part, by the characteristics of the community in which it occurred.

The legal outcome of homicide cases is, to some extent, determined by the level of community social organization and collective values in that community. But the results are not simple: high levels of support for capital punishment in a community were associated with increased likelihood of prosecution and conviction but not with harsher sentences. A high level of Christian fundamentalism in a community was associated with a high likelihood of conviction and longer sentences. Most importantly, however, it appears that "legal outcomes in criminal cases are influenced by several features of the social environments in which cases are processed" (p. 173).

People who are sent to prison are less likely to participate fully in their communities and in civic life after they are released.

It is well established that prisons have harmful effects both on those imprisoned and on their families (see *The Effects of Imprisonment: Specific Deterrence and Collateral Effects. Research Summaries Compiled from Criminological Highlights* on our website). This paper extends that work and examines the impact of contact with the criminal justice system – and imprisonment in particular – on political participation and trust in government. "For many citizens, their most frequent, visible, and direct contact with government may be through a prison, court, or police station, rather than a welfare office, state capital, or city hall" (p. 818). Given the number of people around the world who have been imprisoned, it is important to consider whether the lessons they learn from that experience are not ones that serve the community at large.

There is evidence that people see government as "one big system" (p. 819) and may not differentiate among departments or agencies. If that is the case, then negative experiences with one arm of the government may be generalized to other parts of the government which, in turn, may affect one's willingness to be civically engaged. Those who have been imprisoned are likely to feel rejected by society in both subtle and obvious ways. Imprisonment can communicate to people that they are not full members of the community. For example, in some states, convicted felons are not allowed to vote (*Criminological Highlights* 5(5)#1), and in many more they are prohibited from voting while in prison or while serving sentences in the community.

This study used data from two different longitudinal surveys to classify people according to their highest level of contact with the criminal justice system: No encounters with the police, stopped by police, charged, convicted, spent time in prison, or spent a year or more in prison. People were also asked about their political involvement (registering to vote, voting, involved in civic or political organizations). Respondents were also asked questions measuring their trust in government.

Various sophisticated methods were used to group respondents who were similar on all dimensions except that of primary interest to the researchers: involvement with the criminal justice system. These groups were then compared on their civic engagement and trust in the government. Before controls were imposed, the data are clear: the higher the involvement in the criminal justice system, the less likely it is that people registered to vote, voted, or participated in some civic or political activity, and the less likely that people had trust in federal, state, or local government. More important, even when race, age, education, income, unemployment, drug use, and other variables were controlled, the results were the same. Furthermore, those sent to prison, especially for a long time, were least likely to trust government or be involved in civic activities when they had an opportunity to do so.

There are strong reasons to believe that these effects are causal. One analysis, for example, took advantage of the longitudinal nature of the data to identify people who at the time of the first interview had not had any contact with the criminal justice system. The next time they were interviewed, at Time 2, those who had experienced criminal justice contact were compared with those who had not. At Time 1, the political attitudes and behaviours of the two groups were identical. At Time 2 – after one group had experienced contact with the criminal justice system – the two groups differed. Contact reduced trust and reduced involvement in political activities.

Conclusion: The negative impacts of imprisonment on civic involvement (e.g., voting) or trust in government are large. "The effect of being incarcerated [on political involvement]… is larger in size than having a college-educated parent, being in the military, receiving welfare and being black…. It is not just that custodial populations come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are prevented from voting due to felon exclusions; the results point to the large independent effect of punitive encounters that does not depend on pre-existing characteristics…." (p. 827).

Reference: Weaver, Vesla M. and Amy E. Lerman (2010). Political Consequences of the Carceral State. *American Political Science Review* 104(4), 1-17.

Public opinion about crime and punishment matters: Data from the US suggest that American legislators between 1953 and 2012 responded to increased concern in the general public about crime and that changes in imprisonment were affected by these public attitudes.

Incarceration rates are largely driven by policy decisions made, typically, by elected officials. What, then, is the role of public opinion? Two positions have been argued. First it has been suggested that politicians lead public opinion on this issue –for example, creating policies, and selling arguments to the public that support high incarceration – and that the public follows their political leaders. Second, the opposite has been suggested: that politicians respond to demands from the public for harsher criminal justice policies. This paper, using US data, argues that the second explanation is more accurate.

There are many reasons to expect that, in the US at least, public opinion is an important cause of increased imprisonment. First, in 24 states, the public can have direct impact on criminal justice policies by way of ballot initiatives. The original 3-strikes law in California was implemented in this way (*Criminological Highlights 1*(2)#5). If such laws are popular among members of the public, there may be pressure in neighbouring states for similar laws. Judges and prosecutors in many states are elected and may respond to public pressure simply to stay in office. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the sustained support for more punitive policies over a long period of time from both political parties in the US would have occurred had there not been support from the public.

Studying the effects of public opinion about crime is difficult because straightforward measures of 'public punitiveness' are not available consistently over a long period of time. Instead, this study uses multiple questions asked occasionally over long periods of time to form an overall index of public punitiveness. Four dimensions were examined: criminals' rights and the punishment of criminals, support for the death penalty, views about spending on crime and the criminal justice system, and confidence and trust in the police and the criminal justice system. Results were gathered from a number of public opinion organizations for the period 1953-2012. The patterns for the four dimensions over time were relatively similar suggesting that these four dimensions reflect common underlying attitudes related to being tough on crime.

New admissions to prisons were used as the main incarceration measure because they reflect contemporaneous decisions better than do counts of prisoners. [Counts reflect not only recent decisions, but decisions made some time earlier.] The results show that changes in the rate of prison admissions correlate very highly with attitudes of the public: "Support for being tough on crime explains over 30% of the changes in the incarceration rate" (p. 9). This simple relationship holds even after controlling for other potential determinants of imprisonment rates: various crime measures, economic inequality, and political party support.

Congressional hearings related to crime were used as a measure of political attention to crime and imprisonment. The data suggest that "shifts in the public's punitiveness appear to precede shifts in congressional attention to crime" (p. 12). "The public's rising punitiveness offers a theoretical framework for understanding why interest groups and policy makers have advanced policies that have led the U.S. to become the most punitive country in the world" (p. 13). They did so, apparently, because they decided to follow public opinion.

Conclusion: This paper's finding that "The public's rising punitiveness appears to be a fundamental determinant of the incarceration rate" (p. 13) is important in that it provides evidence that political leaders followed rather than led the public. This conclusion is somewhat different from that in an earlier study (*Criminological Highlights 14*(1)#4) that found that presidential statements about crime tended to precede changes in public sentiment. It may be, of course, that both are true and that the relationships among public views, elite views, and changes in policy are not simple or unidirectional.

Reference: Enns, Peter K. The Public's Increasing Punitiveness and Its Influence on Mass Incarceration in the United States. *American Journal of Political Science* (in press: Published online 5 March 2014).

California's increase in imprisonment in the latter part of the 20ᵗʰ century started *after* a key legislative reform – determinate sentencing – had been put in place.   This shift to determinate sentencing appears to have created opportunities for laws that led to more punitive penal policies.

Policies that govern imprisonment in the US are largely state policies, because only about 8% of US prisoners have been convicted of federal crimes. This paper provides a detailed account of the changes in California's criminal laws and policies.

Prior to the 1970s, California was "hailed as one of the states most firmly committed to rehabilitative principles" in its penal system (p. 386). Indeed, even Ronald Reagan was happy to celebrate the reduction in imprisonment that occurred during his first term as governor (*Criminological Highlights 12*(1)#5). Indeterminate sentencing, which had been in existence since 1917, was seen as key for achieving rehabilitative goals. It allowed judges to assign a wide-ranging period in prison. An administrative parole authority determined each prisoner's actual length of time in prison based on assessments of their rehabilitation. In the early 1970s, however, "Critics from across the political spectrum attacked indeterminate sentencing" (p. 388) and before the decade was over, it was abolished.

The initial legislation creating determinate sentencing was "fraught with uncertainty and conflict over who would ultimately have the power to establish sentencing ranges" (p. 388-9). Prosecutors and police wanted the legislature (which by then was controlled by the Democrats) to set the terms of imprisonment people would serve. They also wanted longer prison terms. The legislative committee considering the bill heard evidence from experts who questioned whether longer sentences would reduce crime. In addition, as the chair of the legislative committee considering the bill pointed out, the legislature "has neither the expertise, the temperament, the continuing interest, nor the insulation from political pressures that are necessary to establish – and maintain over the years – a rational sentencing structure" (p. 390). He was almost certainly proven to be correct.

Nevertheless, in 1976, the determinate sentencing bill was amended in a manner that retained mandatory sentence enhancements, limited judicial discretion, and gave the legislature power to set sentencing ranges. The Democratic governor was "aware of California's populist traditions" and the bill became law in 1976. Nevertheless, opposition to the determinate sentencing law (DSL) that passed included right-wing spokespersons as well as the California American Civil Liberties Union. As much as the shift to DSLs are seen as responsible for increases in imprisonment in the US, the events surrounding the passage of the DSL in California do not support the view that there was a deliberate effort to create an oppressive penal regime. Indeed, the passage of the DSL "does not seem to reflect a wave of public demands for longer sentences…. Its passage was not the fruit of extensive public campaigns…" (p. 393) as would be the case with a ballot initiative in 1982. "What was radical was that [the DSL] restructured the institutional processes that would establish sentencing ranges in the legislature where they were immediately subject to interest group activism and, ultimately, populist pressures" (p. 394).   In other words, while the DSL set the stage for populist increases in sentencing, the original DSL was not, in itself, responsible for prison population growth.

By 1981, however, California's Democratic governor clearly linked crime reduction to tough sentencing measures, such that "at one point, nearly *one-third* of all bills introduced were crime related" (p. 395) Furthermore, legislators appeared to be willing to pay for increased imprisonment, one noting that "sometimes we just have to bite the unpalatable bullet on essential issues" (p. 398).

Conclusion: California's imprisonment rate increased as a result of legislative changes that followed and were made possible by the determinate sentencing law (DSL). Legislators saw harsh sentences as the way to solve the crime problem.   Attempts to mitigate the impact on prison populations failed. The drop in crime in California in the early 1980s was attributed, by politicians and conservative economists, to the new harsh penalties. Furthermore, "The [California] Governor essentially redefined overcrowded prisons as indicators of success, not correctional failure or penal excess" (p. 401). Although the sentencing ranges in the original DSL were seen as too lenient by some, the law opened the door to increased prison populations.

Reference: Campbell, Michael C. (2014) The Emergence of Penal Extremism in California: A Dynamic View of Institutional Structures and Political Processes. *Law & Society Review 48*(2), 377-409.

Providing work opportunities to heavy drug users reduces their offending, but does little to reduce cocaine and heroin use.

Providing work opportunities to offenders or those involved in drugs is always controversial, especially in periods of relatively high unemployment. Programs that provide jobs to those seen as undeserving – drug offenders for example – may need to justify themselves by providing evidence that they reduce crime. The question raised by this paper is whether providing jobs to recently incarcerated, unemployed, heavy drug users reduces crime and drug use.

Work might reduce people's involvement in crime as a result of a number of different factors. Those receiving jobs may have less time to engage in criminal activities. Work may increase informal social controls, by strengthening the social ties that those who are given jobs have with non-offenders. However, while some studies show favourable impacts of work programs, the effect is not uniform for all groups (see *Criminological Highlights 4*(3)#6, *6*(3)#6, *6*(5)#7).

This study uses data that were collected in the 1970s. Members of a group of drug-involved offenders were randomly assigned to an experimental group who were offered "supported work", or subsidized jobs (typically in construction or manufacturing). They, and the control group that were not offered jobs, were also involved in drug treatment programs. All participants had been incarcerated and all were unemployed.

More than half of both groups completed the three year follow-up period without using drugs. However, the proportions of the two groups that reported using drugs during this three year follow-up were similar. In other words, the supported work program "had little effect on relapse to cocaine or heroin use" (p. 113).

However, the 'supported work' group was significantly less likely to be arrested for any crime, including robbery or burglary. Differences in arrest rates showed up after about 9 months and the size of the difference increased over time. At the end of the 18 month period (during which the members of one group were guaranteed jobs under the supported work program) 26% of those offered subsidized jobs had been arrested for any crime compared to 32% of the control group. Only 7% of those who received subsidized jobs were arrested for robbery or burglary compared to 13% in the control group. The difference between the two groups continued to the end of the 3-year follow-up period. Other analyses suggest that the difference is, in large part, due to the difference in the income available to members of the two groups.

Although the data suggest that providing jobs reduced offending, the jobs program had little impact on drug use. Data from another more contemporary study using interviews with drug users suggested that combining drug use with work was very difficult. However, even though it was difficult, work was seen as necessary to keep from returning to a life of selling and using drugs. What may have happened is that "the basic controls and

structure provided by the supported work program may in fact have held drug use in check, while the income provided by the program curtailed involvement in systematic economic crime" (p. 122).

Conclusion: Clearly the long term success of any transitional job program such as this one depends in large part on the ability of the labour market to absorb the workers at the end of the program. What is notable about this program, however, is that "it provides strong evidence for a causal relationship between work and arrest" (p. 124): arrests for robbery and burglary were reduced significantly. "The program accomplished these reductions by providing income that would not otherwise be available through legitimate channels" (p. 124). The results support a harm reduction approach that gauges success beyond simple abstinence from all drugs. "Supported employment programs for heavy substance users represent a promising model for reducing predatory crimes such as robbery or burglary" (p. 125).

Reference: Uggen, Christopher and Sarah K. S. Shannon (2014). Productive Addicts and Harm Reduction: How Work Reduces Crime – But Not Drug Use. *Social Problems 61*(1), 105-130.

Being stopped by the police increases future offending.

There is a growing body of research suggesting that being processed by the criminal justice system can increase subsequent offending (see *The Effects of Imprisonment: Specific Deterrence and Collateral Effects. Research Summaries Compiled from Criminological Highlights* on our website) This study compares the impact on subsequent offending of being stopped by the police, or being stopped and arrested.

The concern, derived from labeling theory is that "a public label may lead to secondary deviance… through social exclusion and the weakening of social bonds" (p. 930), and "once the deviant label is applied and the process of social exclusion is set in motion, the labeled individual may begin to develop or adopt a deviant identity" (p. 931).

This study uses four waves of longitudinal data on 2,127 youths, collected in the context of a program evaluation, to evaluate the impact of police contact. Youths were interviewed each year for four years. Their propensity to offend was estimated on the basis of the first years' data. Police contact was assessed during the next two years and in the fourth interview, delinquency – the outcome variable - was measured. The number of stops for questioning was obtained from each youth as was the number of arrests.

In the third wave of data, school commitment was assessed as was youths' involvement with delinquent and non-delinquent peers. To assess 'deviant identity' youths were asked questions such as how guilty they would feel if they engaged in a range of different types of offences. On the basis of their contact with the police, youths were divided into three groups: those with no contact with the police, those stopped (only) by the police, and those stopped and arrested. Then, on the basis of their answers to questions during the first wave of data collection (when they were 11-12 years old) they were matched on their apparent propensity to be stopped and/or arrested by the police. Though sets of youths with the same propensity to be stopped/arrested were created, only some were, in fact stopped or arrested by the police. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the police contact was, in a sense, randomly determined since the members of the three groups were matched with those in other groups who had the same 'propensity' to do whatever it was that would bring them into contact with the police.

The results showed that after matching youths on their propensities to experience police contact, those who were arrested were significantly more likely to engage in delinquencies than those who were only stopped, and those stopped were more likely to engage in delinquencies than those who had no police contact. Furthermore, there was a tendency for more police contact to reduce commitment to school, increase the likelihood that the youth would have delinquent friends, and reduce their feelings of guilt about offending.

Other analyses suggest that the impact of being stopped by the police on offending is caused, in part, by increased likelihood that the youth will have larger numbers of delinquent friends. But in addition, being arrested appears to increase delinquency through its effect on reducing commitment to school, reducing anticipated guilt about engaging in delinquency, and increasing the youth's belief that offending really does not hurt anyone.

Conclusion: Stop-and-frisk interactions between youths and police "may have the unintended consequence of increasing future delinquent involvement. Thus police practices of engaging in high rates of stops, many of which are 'unproductive' or 'innocent,' may be counterproductive" (p. 956). "For both youth who are stopped and youth who are arrested, delinquency amplification is partially explained by the attenuation of prosocial bonds, changes in deviant identity, and increased involvement with delinquent peers" (p. 956-7).

Reference: Wiley, Stephanie Ann, Lee Ann Slocum, and Finn-Aage Esbensen (2013). The Unintended Consequences of Being Stopped or Arrested: An Exploration of the Labeling Mechanisms Through Which Police Contact Leads to Subsequent Delinquency. *Criminology 51*(4) 927-966.

Americans who are most likely to favour highly punitive measures for young people who commit crime also are likely to hold strong anti-Black attitudes and to be members of the Tea Party Movement.

In the US, there are contradictory explanations of the strong anti-Obama views of members of the American "Tea Party Movement" (TPM). TPM supporters suggest that their complaint about government is not related to race (or the fact that the US president is Black), but instead reflects their opposition to the size of the US government and its specific policies (e.g., the government's support for publicly funded health care). On the other hand, racial threat theorists suggest that the TPM is driven largely by race issues.

Other research has suggested that those who view crime as being disproportionately committed by Blacks are likely to be more punitive (see *Criminological Highlights* *1*(1)#7, *10*(3)#5, *13*(1)#4). This paper examines the relationship of support for the TPM and racial resentment (the view that Black Americans are currently treated more favourably than they deserve) to the view that the US should "get tough" in its youth justice policies.

A representative sample of 961 adult Americans were interviewed on the telephone during the summer of 2010. They were asked to indicate their support for various youth justice policies such as "Trying more juvenile offenders in adult court", "Locking up more juvenile offenders", and "Putting violent juvenile offenders in adult prisons" (p. 174). Racial resentment was measured by the level of agreement with statements such as "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites" or "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favours" (p. 176). Respondents were also asked if they consider themselves

to be members of the TPM. In addition, data on various other control measures including income, gender, political ideology, perceived risk of being a victim of crime, and TV viewing were obtained.

Not surprisingly, people who identified themselves as being conservative, those who said they were at risk from crime, those who watched a lot of local news on TV, and those who did not think that offenders could be rehabilitated were more likely to favour punitive youth policies. On the other hand, older respondents, those with high levels of education and crime victims were less likely to favour punitive policies.

However, above and beyond those effects, those harbouring strong feelings of racial resentment towards blacks and those who considered themselves to be tea party members were more likely to support harsh youth justice penalties. Part – but not all - of the relationship between TPM membership and support for harsh youth justice policies appears to be mediated by racial resentment.

Conclusion: "Prior research demonstrates the widespread typification of crime, especially youth crime, as a black phenomenon…. Thus the results in

this study provide support for group threat theory by demonstrating that favourable attitudes to coercive crime control policies, which scholars have long suggested 'provide white Americans with a means to control or subordinate black people' … are greater among Tea Partiers – individuals who hold especially negative views about blacks and who are presumably the most anxious about the Obama presidency" (p. 183).   But in addition to Tea Party membership, those respondents who expressed resentment about favourable treatment of Black Americans were especially likely to express punitive attitudes towards youth who offend.

Reference: Pickett, Justin T., Daniel Tope, and Rose Bellandi (2014). "Taking Back Our Country": Tea Party Membership and Support for Punitive Crime Control Policies. *Sociological Inquiry 84*(2), 167-190.

Neighbourhoods are most likely to be safe if very few or almost all streets in the neighbourhood are active and have people on them. The most dangerous neighbourhoods appear to be those that have a mixture of some active streets and some largely empty streets.

Jane Jacobs suggested in 1961 that neighbourhoods with active street life were safer than quieter streets in part because there were always people around to ensure that crime did not occur. The assumption, of course, is that people will intervene if there is trouble and that the presence of others will deter those who, otherwise, might commit street crime. Hence neighbourhoods composed of streets with many adults on them should be safe.

From a neighbourhood perspective, however, if almost all of the activity is concentrated on a few streets, leaving the others empty, adding more 'active' streets may simply add more potential victims.

Using data from a large Chicago study, 157 neighbourhoods were examined. Children and their parents were interviewed. In addition, all of the streets in each neighbourhood were observed to determine whether adults generally were present on the street. The neighbourhoods themselves were also assessed (using census data as well as crime and survey data) on various characteristics such as the level of poverty, people's connection to the neighbourhood and their trust of others in the neighbourhood, whether people reported that they tended to know their neighbours, crime rates, etc. The main outcome measures were whether neighbourhood residents reported that they had witnessed violence in the previous year, whether they or a family member had been a victim of violence,

and the neighbourhood homicide rate.

Exposure to violence was, in general, highest among African Americans and Latinos, males, youths without much family supervision and those living in poor neighbourhoods. The most relevant finding, however, was that there was a curvilinear relationship between the level of street activity and the experience of violence. Holding individual and other neighbourhood characteristics constant, in neighbourhoods in which most streets did not have any adults on them, there was apparently very little experience of violence (or victimization). As the proportion of streets with adults on them in the neighbourhood increased, the likelihood that residents would witness violence also increased. However, at about the point at which about half of the blocks had at least one adult on them, increasing the prevalence of adults on the street tended to decrease residents' exposure to violence. The findings were very similar for the measures of violent victimization and homicide.

Conclusion: It would appear that when neighbourhood streets are mostly empty, "increases in the prevalence of active streets may offer little more than additional potential targets for victimization" (p. 1035). However, once a threshold is reached, increases in street use in a neighbourhood reduces exposure to violence, violent victimization, and homicide rates. Hence it is possible that the 'gentrification' of neighbourhoods may produce short term increases in violence due to there being fewer people on the streets. The increase in violence will continue until the neighbourhood experiences higher rates of street use at which point it, the streets do, in fact, become safe.

Reference: Browning, Christopher R. and Aubrey L. Jackson (2013). The Social Ecology of Public Space: Active Streets and Violent Crime in Urban Neighbourhoods. *Criminology, 51* (4), 1009-1043

The outcome of a murder case is determined, in part, by the characteristics of the community in which it occurred.

It is easily understood that certain characteristics of criminal cases (e.g., whether the defendant has a criminal record, or whether the defendant is tried by a jury) are likely to affect the outcome of jury trials. It is less obvious, however, that characteristics of the community in which the offence takes place – e.g., how fearful people are, how cohesive the community is – might also affect case outcomes.

This study examines the outcomes of the murder cases involving 2,518 suspects arrested for murder in 27 counties in the United States in 1988. Three outcomes were examined: whether the suspect was prosecuted (in 15% of cases, there was no prosecution), whether a jury convicted (85% of cases), and the mean sentence length for those convicted. The effects of various case characteristics were examined (e.g., whether there were multiple victims, whether the murder took place in the victim's home, whether the accused was arrested quickly), as were characteristics of the victim and defendant (race, age, sex, prior conviction, whether the accused was a drug dealer or gang member).

By using data from prosecutors' case files as well as survey data in each jurisdiction (in order to be able to characterize the community), it was possible to see whether community characteristics had an impact on case outcome above and beyond the characteristics of the case. Hence various characteristics of the community were examined – e.g., the level of support for capital punishment in the community, level of fear of crime in the community, and residents' attachment to the community (an index which includes measures of trust of others in the community, involvement in community groups, and belief that community residents will help them if needed).

Not surprisingly, trials were most likely to occur when arrests had been made quickly and when the murder took place in the victim's home, as well as in those cases in which the offender was male, young and had prior convictions. But overall, although case characteristics account for some of the variation in the disposition of cases within county, differences in case characteristics do not account for differences *across* counties on whether charges were laid and convictions obtained. Not surprisingly, given that there are differences across states in the prescribed penalty for murder, case characteristics were more important in determining sentence length across counties.

More interesting is the fact that characteristics of the counties predicted the outcome of cases. In fact, full prosecutions are more likely to take place in counties in which people are most supportive of capital punishment. Contrary to expectations, however, people who were arrested for murder in counties in which people describe themselves as politically conservative were less likely to be sent to trial than were suspects in less conservative counties. Convictions by a jury were most likely to occur in counties with high levels of religious fundamentalism and in counties with high support for capital punishment. Sentences for murderers tended to be longer in counties with high

levels of religious fundamentalism and fear. But in addition, sentences were longer in counties in which people were more attached to their communities. This suggests that there may be heightened sensitivity to murder in communities with high levels of trust and cooperation.

Conclusion: The legal outcome of homicide cases is, to some extent, determined by the level of community social organization and collective values in that community. But the results are not simple: high levels of support for capital punishment in a community were associated with increased likelihood of prosecution and conviction but not with harsher sentences. A high level of Christian fundamentalism in a community was associated with a high likelihood of conviction and longer sentences. Most importantly, however, it appears that "legal outcomes in criminal cases are influenced by several features of the social environments in which cases are processed" (p. 173).

Reference: Baumer, Eric P. and Kimberly H. Martin (2013) Social Organization, Collective Sentiment, and Legal Sanctions in Murders Cases. *American Journal of Sociology 119*(1), 131-182.