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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 can prison guards maintain order without the use of either coercion or rewards?
2. What do false confessions look like?
3. Are women around the world becoming less accepting of violence from their husbands?
4. Does it make sense to require parolees who have violated a condition of their parole to attend a ‘day reporting centre’?
5. What role do women play in corporate frauds?
6. Why are children of immigrant parents in Sweden more likely to be involved in crime than their native born counterparts?
7. In which American cities are high concentrations of immigrants especially likely to be associated with low crime rates?
8. Does the crime reducing impact of marriage reduce men’s involvement in crime if the couple divorces?

Prison guards in Norway use an informal system of favours and the withdrawal of those favours to control inmates' behaviour.

“By distributing favours liberally to inmates, the guards create a new and efficient system of punishment, which consists of withdrawal of rewards. Since the removal of rewards is not a punishment in the official sense, it does not entail cumbersome institutional arrangements, such as hearings and reporting” (p. 360). On the other hand, “The reward system ... has to be kept hidden from the prison administration, which attempts to maintain supervision and disapproves of lasting informal relationships between guards and inmates. No discriminatory informal treatment of inmates is officially permitted, but the reward system is easier to conceal than one based on punishments” (p. 360).

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Confessions made by people who did not commit the crime they confessed to are persuasive because these confessions are likely to contain references to specific details about the crime and victim, as well as the confessors' thoughts and feelings about the crime. False confessions, therefore, are often too good to be true.

“Confessions are highly scripted statements... typically containing specific details about the crime, the victim, and the scene” (p. 118). The fact that these are often “accurate details about the crime that were not in the public domain” (p. 118) makes it believable that the confessor is the culprit. Presumably, details of this kind were purposefully or inadvertently given to those who make false confessions during the interrogation so that they could form part of the formal confession presented to the court. These details, combined with the belief that nobody would succumb to offering a confession if it weren't true, make false confessions very persuasive.

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Women around the world are learning that it is not acceptable for men to assault their wives.

One explanation for the findings – that there is a very consistent increase in the rejection of the legitimacy of intimate partner violence in a five year period - is that “diffusion of global cultural scripts about women's rights, gender equality, and the ills of violence against women was an important macro-level factor that influenced national policymakers and people at the grassroots” (p. 260). “The changes in attitudes about intimate partner violence occurred too rapidly to be explained by structural socioeconomic or demographic shifts” (p. 260). During the first decade of the 20th century, “women [in most countries] of all ages became more likely to reject intimate partner violence” (p. 261).

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When men violate a condition of parole, requiring them to attend a “day reporting centre” appears to be no better – and may be worse – than simply allowing them to continue in the community on ordinary parole.

It would appear that simply restricting the movements of those on parole during the first 90 days after they have violated a condition of release is no more effective than allowing them to continue ordinary parole (perhaps with modified conditions) and may be worse. There was no evidence that the actual programs that were available to parolees in the two locations differed in their effectiveness. Ninety days spent in a slightly different setting, then, did not appear to have any beneficial impacts and may have had harmful effects. Given that the costs of day reporting centres are higher than ordinary parole, the results of this study suggest that it is more cost effective to spend money on programs that could be shown to be effective.

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Women involved in corporate fraud typically are less central to these crimes than are men.

Although women are sometimes involved in corporate crime, it appears their involvement in crime tends – like their involvement in corporations – to be at a lower level than that of men. And like women’s incomes, they profit less from corporate crime than do men. Men, it would seem, are more likely to direct both the operation of America’s corporations and the criminal conspiracies that these corporations are involved in. The pigs at the front of the corporate trough, then, aren’t likely to be sows.

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Although children of Swedish immigrants and children who immigrated to Sweden with their parents tend, as young adults, to be more likely than native born Swedes to be involved in crime, much of this difference relates to socio-economic conditions as well as differences in the neighbourhoods in which they live.

Although children of immigrants and immigrant children in Sweden are more involved in crime than native born Swedes, most (or in some cases all) of this difference disappears when parental resources and characteristics of the neighbourhood are controlled for. The observed difference in crime between these two groups of immigrants on the one hand, and native born Swedes on the other, seems to be explained, in large part, by socio-economic factors known, in many studies, to be associated with involvement in crime.

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US cities with high concentrations of immigrants tend to have lower violent crime rates than cities with few immigrants. This is particularly true in cities in which immigrants are integrated into the political structure of the city.

“Rather than destabilizing communities and contributing to social disorder, [the data show that census tract level] immigration concentration was inversely associated with neighbourhood homicide and robbery.” Furthermore, “Cities with immigrant political opportunities enhance the protective association between neighbourhood immigration concentration and violence” (p. 621-2). It would appear that “Favourable immigrant political opportunities reinforce social organization within immigrant neighbourhoods by enhancing the trust immigrants place in civic processes and immigrants’ capacity to exert public social control” (p. 622).

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The crime reducing effects of marriage on men and women last only as long as the marriage.

The evidence suggests that the effect of marriage on those who have been arrested is contingent upon the marriage not ending in divorce. Although both men and women with a history of arrests are likely to reduce their offending rates when they marry, divorce is likely to lead to increased offending. It would appear, therefore, that the effects of marriage are more likely to be situational than to reflect an enduring change. Marriage may reduce the likelihood that a person continues to engage in crime, but only as long as the couple stays married.

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Prison guards in Norway use an informal system of favours and the withdrawal of those favours to control inmates' behaviour.

Informal social control of inmates in prisons – whether positive (e.g., selective favourable treatment of some inmates), or negative (e.g., physical abuse) – typically violates formal official regulations. Prisons not only have rules about the use of punishments and rewards, but guards are expected to treat all prisoners equally. Deviation from specified behaviours typically requires formal justification and some risk to the guard if the deviation is not seen as justified.

In this study of the largest prison in Norway, the author, a part-time guard, took notes systematically about the manner in which order was maintained in the prison. The data, then, are based on his observations on how order was maintained, rather than on formal or informal interviews.

Norwegian prisons, like most prison systems, have many formal rules covering almost all aspects of prisoners' daily lives (e.g., number and lengths of visits and phone calls), details on meals, and details about most day-to-day operations. Guards are expected to follow these rules. At the same time, however, there are certain 'privileges' (a TV in one's cell, social time with inmates) that are allowed and have become "part of the entitlement a prisoner expects" (p. 348). For the guard, the goal of granting such privileges is simple: a peaceful period of time without difficulties or grievances from prisoners. But in addition, there are possibilities of additional informal 'privileges' that can be granted to most prisoners without consequences to the guards.

One way of accomplishing the goal of tranquility is through selective use of generosity in handing out these rewards to inmates. For example, time on the telephone was a valued commodity since prisoners were allowed only a fixed

number of minutes on the telephone. Guards, then, could simply record fewer minutes than actually used, letting the inmate know that this was being done. Such actions (e.g., recording a call as using 10 minutes rather than 18) occurred not to 'reward' prisoners for any particular behaviour, but instead as "an active contribution [to the inmate] given by guards" (p. 350) prior to any need for special control of the prisoner. Creating the expectation for additional rewards – like additional telephone minutes – gave guards power to punish behaviour that they didn't like. This could be done informally and without negative consequences to guards simply by recording the *actual* number of minutes for the next call.

Prisoners' behaviour was often communicated by one shift to the next at a kind of briefing meeting between shifts. Guards on the upcoming shift might be told that a particular prisoner had been difficult. That was a signal that a 'punishment' such as not allowing a prisoner to socialize at the same time as the prisoner's friend would be appropriate. This then would communicate guards' displeasure with an inmate's behaviour. Entitlements that were not required could, therefore, be withdrawn in order to maintain general discipline on the floor. Inmates, of course, cannot grieve

the failure to receive rewards that are not required or which violate rules. One interesting consequence of using the *withdrawing* of 'extra' entitlements as a punishment is that they "must be distributed liberally and pre-emptively from the moment an inmate arrives... if the sanction is going to be realizable" (p. 353).

Conclusion: "By distributing favours liberally to inmates, the guards create a new and efficient system of punishment, which consists of withdrawal of rewards. Since the removal of rewards is not a punishment in the official sense, it does not entail cumbersome institutional arrangements, such as hearings and reporting" (p. 360). On the other hand, "The reward system ... has to be kept hidden from the prison administration, which attempts to maintain supervision and disapproves of lasting informal relationships between guards and inmates. No discriminatory informal treatment of inmates is officially permitted, but the reward system is easier to conceal than one based on punishments" (p. 360).

Reference: Ibsen, Alexander Z. (2013) Ruling by Favours: Prison Guards' Informal Exercise of Institutional Control. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 38 (2), 342-363.

Confessions made by people who did not commit the crime they confessed to are persuasive because these confessions are likely to contain references to specific details about the crime and victim, as well as the confessors' thoughts and feelings about the crime. False confessions, therefore, are often too good to be true.

There is substantial evidence that “confessions are so powerful that once a suspect confesses, additional investigation often stops and the suspect is prosecuted and convicted” (p. 111). In addition, it would seem that jurors believe confessions even when evidence is presented raising serious doubts about their veracity. Essentially what seems to be happening is that those who hear a confession make a fundamental psychological error: they assume that nobody would make a confession that wasn't true while simultaneously underestimating the situational pressures placed on the suspect by the police that lead to the confession.

“Anecdotally, false confessions often seem credible despite a lack of corroboration because they contain not only admissions of guilt but also factual details, statements of voluntariness, statements about motivation, error corrections and other factors that interrogators are trained to include in taking a confession” (p. 113). This study was designed to investigate what false confessions, generally, look like. Twenty false confessions (all the result of police interrogation) were examined. Factual innocence was established either through DNA evidence (14 cases) or because the real perpetrator was found (2 cases) or because courts had determined that the confession was not accurate (4 cases). Nine of the 20 confessions were recorded electronically; the rest were transcribed by police. All 20 cases involved accusations of rape and/or murder.

Crime details (e.g., the location and time of the offence, visual details, details of the victim's behaviour) were included in all 20 false confessions. Other details (e.g., victim's mental state) were included less often. Many details were graphic and specific. For example, one suspect – subsequently exonerated by DNA evidence – provided gruesome details:

“In the basement I found some scissors and some nails and I left the nails in his forehead. I used the brick to put some nails in the forehead” (p. 116).

“One of the most compelling tactics police officers are trained to use to demonstrate that a confession is both voluntary and reliable is the “error correction ploy” [suggested in a standard textbook for police on extracting confessions]... Investigators are advised to purposefully include in the written statement minor factual errors... that the suspect will presumably notice, correct, and initial...” (p. 117-8), the theory being that only the accused would have that information. In this study, 44% of the written confessions had “corrected errors.”

A second study presented 141 students with trial scenarios containing one of 8 different confessions that varied along three dimensions: details were included (or not); motives for the crime were offered (or not), and an apology was offered by the suspect (or not). In addition, a no-confession condition was included. The presence of any confession increased the students' belief that the suspect was guilty. Confessions

with details of the crime increased participants' beliefs that the accused committed the crime. Statements about the motive and the apology tended to have the same effect.

Conclusion: “Confessions are highly scripted statements... typically containing specific details about the crime, the victim, and the scene” (p. 118). The fact that these are often “accurate details about the crime that were not in the public domain” (p. 118) makes it believable that the confessor is the culprit. Presumably, details of this kind were purposefully or inadvertently given to those who make false confessions during the interrogation so that they could form part of the formal confession presented to the court. These details, combined with the belief that nobody would succumb to offering a confession if it weren't true, make false confessions very persuasive.

Reference: Appleby, Sara C., Lisa E. Hasel, and Saul M. Kassin (2013). Police-induced confessions: An empirical Analysis of Their Content and Impact. *Psychology, Crime, & Law*, 19 (2), 111-128.

Women around the world are learning that it is not acceptable for men to assault their wives.

In most western countries, it is fair to assume that most women do not think it is acceptable for men to assault their spouses if the woman does something that the man disapproves of. The question addressed by this study is whether this view has spread to other parts of the world. “Rapid dissemination of global norms about violence against women began in the mid-1990s and accelerated in the first decade of the 2000s” (p. 241). This study examines whether these western norms affected women’s views of spousal violence worldwide.

Evidence that global attitudes are changing comes, first of all, from a survey of national policies. “Since 1975, 119 different countries enacted approximately 260 national-level legal changes.... to address intimate partner violence” (p. 244), 95% of which occurred after the 1995 4th Conference on Women that was held in Beijing. However, the fact that laws have changed does not necessarily mean that women’s attitudes have changed.

This study examined *changes* in women’s views of intimate partner violence in 26 countries during the first decade of the 21st century. Two surveys were carried out in each country – one in the first half of the first decade of this century and the other in the second half of the decade. Half of the countries were in sub-Saharan Africa. Other countries were scattered around the world and included Armenia, Cambodia, Egypt, India, Nepal, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Turkey, among others. Sample sizes within each wave were all large, varying between 4,168 and 93,724 women.

Though the questions varied a bit from country to country, the most common form of the question was “Sometimes a

husband is annoyed or angered by things which his wife does. In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife in the following situations.... (1) If she goes out without telling him; (2) if she neglects the children; (3) if she argues with him; (4) if she refuses to have sex with him; (5) if she burns the food.”

The main results are easy to describe: In 23 of the 26 countries, an increased proportion of women rejected the view that intimate partner violence is acceptable. The exceptions were Indonesia, Jordan, and Madagascar. In a separate study of 15 countries in which men were asked similar questions, intimate partner violence was increasingly seen as unacceptable by men in 12 of these 15 countries (the exceptions being the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Madagascar). Controlling for other factors, in 22 of the 26 countries, urban women and more educated women were more likely to reject intimate partner violence. Surprisingly, however, “younger women were less likely than their elders to reject intimate partner violence” (261), though younger women, like older women, did change in the direction of rejecting the

legitimacy of this kind of violence.

Conclusion. One explanation for the findings – that there is a very consistent increase in the rejection of the legitimacy of intimate partner violence in a five year period - is that “diffusion of global cultural scripts about women’s rights, gender equality, and the ills of violence against women was an important macro-level factor that influenced national policymakers and people at the grassroots” (p. 260). “The changes in attitudes about intimate partner violence occurred too rapidly to be explained by structural socioeconomic or demographic shifts” (p. 260). During the first decade of the 20th century, “women [in most countries] of all ages became more likely to reject intimate partner violence” (p. 261).

Reference: Pierotti, Rachel S. (2013). Increasing Rejection of Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence of Global Cultural Diffusion. *American Sociological Review*, 78 (2) 240-265.

When men violate a condition of parole, requiring them to attend a “day reporting centre” appears to be no better – and may be worse – than simply allowing them to continue in the community on ordinary parole.

Many of those who are in prisons in the US and Canada are there because they have violated a condition of parole (or other form of conditional release from prison). In order to provide an intermediate response to these violations, the ‘day reporting centre’ was developed. The idea, obviously, was that if the parolee was engaged in useful, supervised, activities during the day, but returned home at night, costs could be reduced and outcomes, perhaps, improved.

Previous research has demonstrated, not surprisingly, that day reporting centres are less expensive than re-incarcerating the parole violator, but the effects on recidivism are inconsistent. However, that line of research leaves unanswered another question: Are day reporting centres any better than simply allowing parolees who have violated a condition of their release to continue on ordinary parole (perhaps with some modifications of his conditions of release)? This study compares rates of reoffending for parole violators required to attend a day reporting centre to the offending rates of those allowed to continue on ordinary parole. Most importantly, it uses a randomized experimental design in which 355 men were randomly assigned to receive one or the other of these two conditions.

If a parolee violated one or more conditions of release in the early stages of parole supervision, he was randomly assigned either to attend a day reporting centre (7 centres participated in the experiment) or to continue on ordinary parole. Both groups of offenders were required to attend various treatment programs, though the study was not able to determine exactly which programs the offenders received or the efficacy of

individual programs. The focus, instead, was on whether the additional control afforded by the day reporting centre was cost effective in reducing subsequent crime.

During the study period (the 90 days in which the parolees were required to attend the day reporting centre or were continued on ordinary parole), there was no difference between the two groups in the recorded number of offences or violations of conditions of release. About half of both groups completed this period without any incidents. However, of those who did not complete this phase successfully, the day reporting group was more likely to be arrested for a new offence and the ordinary parolees were more likely to be found to have violated a condition of parole. In the longer term (either 6 or 18 months after the assignment to condition) there were no differences in overall arrest rates, but those assigned to the day reporting centre were more likely to have been convicted of an offence during the first 6 months. The results suggest, therefore, “that something about the day reporting centre experience creates an environment that is conducive to an increase in ... arrests for new offences during program participation and convictions for new

offences in the short term” (p. 135).

Conclusion: It would appear that simply restricting the movements of those on parole during the first 90 days after they have violated a condition of release is no more effective than allowing them to continue ordinary parole (perhaps with modified conditions) and may be worse. There was no evidence that the actual programs that were available to parolees in the two locations differed in their effectiveness. Ninety days spent in a slightly different setting, then, did not appear to have any beneficial impacts and may have had harmful effects. Given that the costs of day reporting centres are higher than ordinary parole, the results of this study suggest that it is more cost effective to spend money on programs that could be shown to be effective.

Reference: Boyle, Douglas, J., Laura M. Ragusa-Salerno, Jennifer L. Lanterman, and Andrea Fleisch Marcus. An Evaluation of Day Reporting Centres for Parolees: Outcomes of a Randomized Trial. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 12 (1), 119-143.

Women involved in corporate fraud typically are less central to these crimes than are men.

Previous research has shown that the involvement of women in corporate fraud is relatively rare. In one study of significant organizational or corporate frauds, only 14% of the offenders were women. One reason for this, of course, is that women are considerably less likely than men to be in a position in a company to carry out crimes of this kind.

This study looks at major indictments from the US Corporate Fraud Task Force, covering 83 cases involving 436 offenders (9% of whom were women) that occurred between 2002 and 2009. The goal of the study was to understand the role and position of women in these offences, compared to men. 76% of the offences involved more than one person, but *none* of the single-offender cases involved women. Furthermore, there were *no* 'group' crimes involving just women.

Many more men (71%) than women (38%) in the all-men and mixed-sex offender groups had top or high level positions in the companies. Only 3 of the 37 indicted women (8%) were identified as the ringleaders of the crime, compared to 39% of the men who were indicted. 51% of the women who were indicted were seen as having had minor roles in the offences whereas only 6% of the indicted men had minor roles. 17% of the women who were indicted were thought to have individually profited with more than half a million dollars. More than twice as many men (38%) involved in these crimes were thought to have reaped profits of at least this much. A multivariate analysis suggests that the

reason women's profits from the crimes were so much lower is that they had less important roles in the crimes.

About 30% of the women involved in these offences had some relationship (spouse, partner, loyal assistant) to a major (male) player in the offence. Not surprisingly, given that the women involved in these crimes tended not to be high ranking officials in the companies, many (68%) had job responsibilities that were instrumental to carrying out the offence. Females who were indicted as a result of investigations by this Task Force tended to be more likely than men to be following directions of others rather than acting proactively.

The women who were indicted, then, "were unduly vulnerable to indictment and prosecution not so much because of their culpability or real contribution to the conspiracy, but instead because of their utility: they were in mid-level, easily monitored, positions in which they collected and reported financial data that, in turn, made them useful tools for the prosecution to gain evidence and turn state's witness against co-conspirators" (p. 470).

Conclusion: Although women are sometimes involved in corporate crime, it appears their involvement in crime tends – like their involvement in corporations – to be at a lower level than that of men. And like women's incomes, they profit less from corporate crime than do men. Men, it would seem, are more likely to direct both the operation of America's corporations and the criminal conspiracies that these corporations are involved in. The pigs at the front of the corporate trough, then, aren't likely to be sows.

Reference: Steffensmeier, Darrell J., Jennifer Schwartz, and Michael Roche (2013). Gender and Twenty-First-Century Corporate Crime: Female Involvement and the Gender Gap in Enron-Era Corporate Frauds. *American Sociological Review*, 78 (3), 448-476.

Although children of Swedish immigrants and children who immigrated to Sweden with their parents tend, as young adults, to be more likely than native born Swedes to be involved in crime, much of this difference relates to socio-economic conditions as well as differences in the neighbourhoods in which they live.

Research carried out in the US (see *Criminological Highlights* 8(3)#5, 8(6)#5, 10(6)#7, 11(1)#4, 13(6)#7) and Canada (*Criminological Highlights* 11(2)#1) tends to show that immigrants, and neighbourhoods with large proportions of immigrants, have lower levels of crime. Detailed studies in Europe, however, suggest that the findings may be more complicated in that there may be complex interactions involving the country of origin and generation (*Criminological Highlights* 8(3)5).

This study examines the official involvement in crime (from age 15 to approximately 30) of childhood immigrants (those who immigrated before age 12) and children of immigrants – those born in the host country, Sweden – in comparison to children of native born Swedes. In Sweden, previous research has shown that immigrants are more likely than native born Swedes to be involved in crime.

This study examines the criminal justice involvement in crime overall and in violent crime. Various measures were used including whether the person was suspected by the police of involvement in crime, but not necessarily charged (thought to be equivalent to measures, in US studies, of arrests by police), those convicted of crimes (or violent crimes), and those incarcerated. The involvement (if any) in crime of a sample of 66,330 people who completed their final year of compulsory education (Grade 9) between 1990 and 1993 was examined for 12-15 years.

Parental resources were measured with a number of different variables related to the youth's situation before age 15. These included family structure (single or two parent family), number of children, parents' education and the nature of parents' employment. In addition, the

youth's neighbourhood was controlled for by statistically comparing the two immigrant groups to native born Swedes who grew up in the same neighbourhood.

In comparison to native born males of Swedish parents, male children of immigrants (the children, but not the parents, were born in Sweden) were about 40% more likely to be suspected of offences; and childhood immigrants (those born abroad) were about 55% more likely to be suspected of crimes. For females, the comparable figures were 40% and 74%, respectively. The figures for convictions and incarceration were relatively similar: children of immigrants and immigrant children, both males and females, were over-represented among those convicted and incarcerated. All of these figures are similar to figures on the higher involvement in crime in Sweden of adult immigrants.

However, when controls for parental resources and neighbourhood were introduced as controls, the differences between the two groups of immigrant children and native born Swedes decreased dramatically. For example, looking at convictions, before controls for parental resources and neighbourhood were introduced, male children of immigrants were 38% more likely to be convicted than native born Swedes.

When the social background controls were introduced, this difference was only 15%, and when social background and neighbourhood controls were entered, the difference was only 11%. For females, children of immigrants were 25% more likely to be convicted of any crime. When controls for parental resources and neighbourhood were introduced, the difference between the two groups disappeared completely. The results for violent crime were similar.

Conclusion: Although children of immigrants and immigrant children in Sweden are more involved in crime than native born Swedes, most (or in some cases all) of this difference disappears when parental resources and characteristics of the neighbourhood are controlled for. The observed difference in crime between these two groups of immigrants on the one hand, and native born Swedes on the other, seems to be explained, in large part, by socio-economic factors known, in many studies, to be associated with involvement in crime.

Reference: Hällsten, Martin, Ryszard Szulkin, and Jerzy Sarnecki (2013). Crime as a Price of Inequality? The Gap in Registered Crime between Childhood Immigrants, Children of Immigrants, and Children of Native Born Swedes. *British Journal of Criminology*, 53, 456-481.

US cities with high concentrations of immigrants tend to have lower violent crime rates than cities with few immigrants. This is particularly true in cities in which immigrants are integrated into the political structure of the city.

Various studies have found that – in the US – the more immigrants there are in a city or neighbourhood, the lower the violent crime rate (*Criminological Highlights* 8(3)#5, 8(6)#5, 10(6)#7, 11(1)#4). However, the manner in which immigrants are welcomed into cities varies. This study examines whether the relationship of immigration to crime may vary depending on how receptive the city is to the concerns of immigrant groups.

It is suggested that cities that are politically receptive to immigrant concerns can engender trust in the political system, encouraging immigrants not only to become engaged in the political process, but also to become more attached to and integrated into their neighbourhoods. Various indicators of favourable immigrant opportunities were examined. The concentration of Latino and Asian Americans in municipal elected offices (corrected for their concentration in the city) was one such indicator. The number of Black, Hispanic, and Asian police officers was another. Some cities had policies not to look for violations of immigration laws. General support for pro-immigrant and liberal causes was estimated by examining the presidential voting records in the 2000 election (Bush vs. Gore).

Data on robberies and homicides taking place between 1999 and 2001 in 8,931 census tracts in 87 US cities with populations in excess of 100,000 were the focus of the study.

Overall, higher levels of immigration were associated with lower rates of homicides and robberies. However, this was not true for all cities. In some cities, higher immigrant concentrations were associated with somewhat higher rates of violence.

In general, the negative association between immigrant concentration and homicide across census tracts (more immigrants, less crime) is greater when the city appears to have a more pro-immigrant culture (e.g., higher rates of immigrants in elected offices, a more diverse police force). Furthermore, “Democratic support enhances the inverse relationship between immigration and homicide” (p. 617). The overall pattern of the data on robbery is quite similar, though, in general, not as likely to be statistically significant as the data on homicide.

Conclusion: “Rather than destabilizing communities and contributing to social disorder, [the data show that census tract level] immigration concentration was

inversely associated with neighbourhood homicide and robbery.” Furthermore, “Cities with immigrant political opportunities enhance the protective association between neighbourhood immigration concentration and violence” (p. 621-2). It would appear that “Favourable immigrant political opportunities reinforce social organization within immigrant neighbourhoods by enhancing the trust immigrants place in civic processes and immigrants’ capacity to exert public social control” (p. 622).

Reference: Lyons, Christopher J., María B. Vélez, and Wayne A. Santoro (2013). Neighbourhood Immigration, Violence, and City-Level Immigrant Political Opportunities. *American Sociological Review*, 78 (4), 604-632.

The crime reducing effects of marriage on men and women last only as long as the marriage.

There is a substantial amount of evidence that when those who have been arrested get married, their likelihood of offending decreases. Though the effect seems to be robust, the explanations for it are not clear.

Two general classes of explanations for the reduction in criminal activity that follows marriage are the following: (1) Marriage creates or reflects an enduring change where people's identity (as offenders) changes and new attachments are created; and (2) Marriage changes an offender's life in that they are involved in different activities and, because of their spouses, simply don't have the opportunities for involvement in crime that they had when single. The former explanation implies an enduring change in the person such that the effects of marriage should be evident even if the marriage breaks down. The latter suggests a more situational mechanism such that offending rates should go up if the marriage ends.

This study used data from a longitudinal study of 2,838 American males and females who were first interviewed in their mid-teens and then followed for 13 years. For this study, only those who had been arrested at least once were studied. Various other factors were controlled statistically in the analyses. These included race, household size, family structure, economic disadvantage, etc. Because the sample was interviewed annually, it was possible to determine not only whether there were differences across individuals (e.g., between those who were married and those who were not; and if they were ever married whether they were divorced) but also

whether, within individual, the rate of offending changed when the person married or divorced.

Looking at the whole sample (which included only those who had been arrested at least once), it appears that marriage and divorce have important impacts on criminal activity. Those whose histories included a marriage had fewer arrests than those who were not married. More interesting was the fact that for those who got married, there was a decrease in arrests after the marriage. The effect of divorce was examined (separately for males and females) for those who not only had been arrested at least once, but who also had been married. For both men and women, those who were divorced showed increased numbers of arrests. Taking advantage of the fact that the study used longitudinal data on the 813 men and women who had married, it was shown that if a person got divorced, arrests went up for both men and women.

For short marriages (23 months or less) the effects of a divorce were negligible. For longer marriages, however, divorces (and legal separations) increased the likelihood of an arrest considerably. Furthermore, "the detrimental effect of divorce is likely not a temporary outcome of the immediate turmoil associated with getting divorced, but instead it seems to maintain over time" (p.424).

Conclusion: The evidence suggests that the effect of marriage on those who have been arrested is contingent upon the marriage not ending in divorce. Although both men and women with a history of arrests are likely to reduce their offending rates when they marry, divorce is likely to lead to increased offending. It would appear, therefore, that the effects of marriage are more likely to be situational than to reflect an enduring change. Marriage may reduce the likelihood that a person continues to engage in crime, but only as long as the couple stays married.

Reference: Bersani, Diana and Elaine Eggleston Doherty (2013). When the Ties That Bind Unwind: Examining the Enduring and Situational Processes of Change Behind the Marriage Effect. *Criminology*, 51 (2), 399-433.