



CRIME AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY DIVISION NEWS SPECIAL ISSUE ON RACIAL JUSTICE

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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DIVISION CHAIR: Kelley Sittner (2019-2021), Associate Professor, Sociology, Oklahoma State University. 471 Murray Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078-4062. Email: kelley.sittner@okstate.edu

DIVISION ASSOCIATE CHAIR: Sarah Jane Brubaker (2019-2021). Professor, Criminal Justice and Public Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University. Box 842028, 923 West Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23284. Email: sbrubaker@vcu.edu

EDITOR: Chris Wakefield, M.A., Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 S. Maryland Pkwy, Las Vegas, NV 89154. Email: wakefc1@unlv.nevada.edu

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Inside this issue:

Note from the Chair	1
Scholar Spotlight: Charles Bell on School Discipline and Black Families	3
Shaping the Social Memory of Police (Mis)Conduct by Tony Cheng	4
Put Some Respek on Their Names: Qualitative Research with Black Children of Incarceration by Muhammad, Gatewood and Turner	5
Selections from Gary T. Marx on Racial Justice and Policing Movements	8
Recent Member Publications on Racial (In)Justice	9

Note from the Chair

Dear Members of the Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division,

I will begin this note as I did the last one, with my sincere hope you are doing well wherever you are. We live in stressful, uncertain times and the pandemic, racial injustices, and divisive politics cast a pall over everything.

Earlier this summer, our division issued a call for submissions for a special issue of our newsletter with the theme of “Black Lives Matter and the Criminal (In)Justice System.” We selected this theme in response to the ongoing assaults against the Black communities by law enforcement around the United States, and the growth and vitality of the #BlackLivesMatter movement and other demands for reform and abolition. We invited our members to submit original research briefs, summaries of prior publications, creative works, published or un-

published op-eds, and calls for action on Black Lives Matter, racism and inequalities in the justice systems, police brutality, protest, activism, and reform, among others.

This issue features work by four members. Dr. Charles Bell provides a summary of his recent publication that uses Critical Race Theory to understand perceptions of Black students and parents regarding school discipline. Given the importance of education to many indicators of wellbeing over the life course and the critical role it plays in socioeconomic status, this study shines a light on the processes in schools that marginalize, silence, and drive out Black students. Tony Cheng, this year's winner of the CJDD graduate student paper competition, describes his study of social media and police misconduct, and specifically how social media shapes perceptions and memories of police behavior. Our newsfeeds are filled with images and videos of police stopping, searching, arresting, brutalizing, and killing people of color, and Mr. Cheng's analysis of Twitter data demonstrates that social media is leveraged not just by protest movements but by police, and the latter uses it to redefine and legitimize police violence. In the blog entry by Dr. Britany Gatewood and colleagues, they describe the importance of respect in the research process and in particular in their study with Black children of incarcerated parents. Respect goes well beyond the interview process and should guide all phases of the study, starting with involving children of incarcerated parents in all phases of the research process. Dr. Gatewood and colleagues lay out some principles of researcher-subject engagement that will be a valuable guide and lesson to anyone working with, as they note, "directly-impacted individuals." And Gary Marx, who has been a member of SSSP since 1985, provided a bibliography of his research and interviews. His work has spanned decades and has impacted scholarship in criminology, surveillance studies, race and ethnicity, and law. CJDD recognized Dr. Marx with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011.

The issue concludes with a selection of publications of several of our members that, in my humble opinion, further demonstrates the contributions and potential of the Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division to inform, shape, advance, and offer solutions to inequality, racism, police brutality, crime, and mass incarceration, among others. The list is not exhaustive of all that our members do. If you would like your work featured in an upcoming issue of our newsletter, please email me at kelly.sittner@okstate.edu.

Take care,

Kelley J. Sittner, PhD

Associate Professor

Department of Sociology

Oklahoma State University

kelly.sittner@okstate.edu

Chair, SSSP Division on Crime & Juvenile Delinquency (2019-2021)



Charles Bell on Disciplinary Action on Black Youth

Dr. Charles Bell is an assistant professor in the Criminal Justice Sciences department at Illinois State University. His research focuses on race, school discipline, and policing.

In the 2015-2016 academic year, Black students represented 16% of the school-age population but made up 39% of those who received at least one suspension.¹ Nationally, studies show Black boys and girls are suspended at three and six times the rates of their White counterparts respectively. Although school suspensions are intended to punish students for serious conduct violations, studies continue to show Black students are suspended for minor infractions.

To understand how Black families perceive school punishment, I interviewed 30 Black high school students and 30 parents of Black high school students. I recruited the students and parents from inner-city and suburban districts in southeast Michigan. Each of the students had received at least one out-of-school suspension in the year before our interview. I found the students and parents held negative opinions of school suspensions because their voices were disregarded or silenced throughout the disciplinary period, and students felt they were targeted for suspension because of their style of dress, hair, and preference for hip hop music. I also found excessive school suspensions led Black families to withdraw from punitive schools. I published these findings in the [Children and Youth Services Review](#) journal as part of my [ongoing research](#) on how Black students and parents view school punishment, safety measures, and resource officers.

What I learned from the students and parent participants has significance for educators, parents, researchers, policymakers, and millions of students who are suspended in the U.S. every year.

Voices Are Silenced

In one interview after another, students told me they were denied the opportunity to explain their perspective. In some instances, students stated if they were allowed to explain their viewpoint, school officials might have determined a suspension was not necessary. The student's infractions include hugging a boy on school grounds, skipping lunch to avoid physical confrontations and other minor offenses. Parents also told me their voices were disregarded throughout the disciplinary process and that they encountered formidable barriers as they advocated for their children.

Feelings of Being Targeted

Students told me they felt school officials targeted them for suspension based on their style of dress, hair, and music preference. Collectively students gave the impression that they believed educators constructed a "profile" to select students who wore afro hairstyles, expensive designer jeans, or listened to hip hop music and subsequently used out-of-school suspension to initiate their removal.

Black Educational Flight

Finally, parents told me that they viewed some of the suspensions their children received as an extreme response to relatively minor infractions. Consequently, parents chose to remove their children from punitive schools.

Conclusion

Collectively the findings suggest Black students and their parents experience pervasive marginalization throughout the school punishment process. As Black Lives Matter activists and scholars call for an innovative focus on racial justice issues, the findings in my study illuminate the need for comprehensive school punishment reform. The students' and parents' statements also confirm that issuing excessive suspensions has financial consequences for schools as parents remove their children. To learn more about this study, please find the article "[Maybe If They Let Us Tell The Story I Wouldn't Have Gotten Suspended](#)" in the [Children and Youth Services Review](#) journal.

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Shaping the Social Memory of Police (Mis)Conduct

Tony Cheng is a PhD student in the Sociology Department at Yale University. His research focuses on urban sociology, law and society, and policing and crime.

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin applied his knee to squeeze the air out of George Floyd over the course of eight minutes. Chauvin's knee is a symbol of the police-community initiatives across the nation that have suffocated community voice, rendering political uprisings in open streets the only option. But what if community members like Darnella Frazier or Ramsey Orta—who recorded the police killings of George Floyd and Eric Garner—had not captured and posted their videos on social media? What if police had set the narrative first by releasing surveillance or body-cam footage? How would the movement for police transformation differ today?

In a manuscript called “Social Media, Selective Transparency, and Pursuing Legitimation of Police Violence,” which received CJDD's graduate student paper award, I examine the role of social media in shaping how we remember police (mis)conduct. While research has focused on social media as a transformative tool for social movements, state actors like police can leverage the very same attributes of social media to advance institutional interests. I argue that, beyond digital surveillance, social media affords police the technological capacity to pursue (a) daily socialization of online audiences to police's worldview and (b) legitimation in the aftermath of contested police violence. I make this argument by adopting a qualitative approach to “big data” sources—specifically, Twitter data from America's largest police force, the NYPD. I analyze (1) all 3,167 tweets the NYPD posted in 2018; (2) the 778 Twitter replies to their most contested fatal shooting that year; and (3) all 139 news articles covering this shooting.

One important finding reveals how police can leverage social media to independently release curated content key to legitimizing police violence. For example, in the aftermath of the NYPD's most contested fatal shooting in 2018, the NYPD released a video montage of excerpted security footage and 911 quotes. Despite the irrelevance of such footage (responding officers observed neither the footage nor the underlying interactions in the video before arriving on scene and firing) and the selectively quoted 911 calls, the NYPD's annotated Twitter video inverted the online approval rate of police's actions and became the shooting's defining framework and visual anchor. Online posters and mass media diffused the video through actions like sharing screenshots and referencing the video's contents in subsequent coverage. This case reveals how social media reduces police reliance on mass media for news production and can facilitate diffusion of a crafted presentation of events. It shows the consequences of “successful” legitimation of police violence—as collective action around Saheed Vassell remained primarily local and detached from the national movements around Michael Brown, Eric Garner, George Floyd, and several others. Thus, in the high-stakes aftermath of controversial violence, the social media activity of police—not just protesters—has implications for our social memories and social justice.

Put Some Respek on Their Names: Conducting Qualitative Research with Black Children of Incarceration

Dr. Bahiyyah Muhammad, Dr. Britany Gatewood, and Sydni Turner of Howard University

Why Does Respek Have To Do With Research?

Definition (“Put some respek on my name”): Referred above as (Re)spek*, expands upon the english dictionary word (Respect). Through the spelling and pronunciation as “*respek*” it signifies urgency in addressing an individual and setting the record straight. Here the disrespect leads to an individual not having any interest in furthering the conversation. Leading to the questions: Are you finished? Or Are you done?

In other words, meaning a situation where someone was disrespected or lied to. The offending party has a misunderstanding of their character and there can be no further discussion because of this. They completely misconstrued the factual information and offended who the person is and where they come from.

Why Is Respect (aka Respek) Important When Researching Black Families?

Respect is an unspoken characteristic that guides intimate interactions in and within the Black community. Respect is seen as an honor code, that when broken has lifelong effects. When conducting research, respect is NOT something that scholars are trained to see as being an important component of their work. When not planned properly, the actions of researchers can come across as disrespectful and/or tone deaf. In other words, researchers have or show an “obtuse insensitivity or lack of perception” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tone-deaf>). In these instances, those conducting studies engage with racially different communities in ways that go against their traditional codes of the streets.

This blog is a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that serves to remind both researchers and practitioners that extra precautions must be taken in order to gain a dynamic understanding about children of incarcerated parents. As such, having an in-depth and full scope of theoretical frameworks that attempt to describe the population is not enough. In addition to that understanding, one must engage directly-impacted individuals. Specifically, those with lived experiences should be included in all phases of the research process. They are the true experts. Therefore, they must be compensated for their leadership role on projects and their engagement within your programming. For example, it is recommended that children of incarcerated parents and other directly-impacted individuals be brought into the research team as consultants or research associates.

In this blog we write about lessons learned from conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with a national sample of Black children of incarcerated parents. We begin by providing further contextualization of how we came to this research, techniques used and why ongoing planning is important when conducting research with individuals from different racial backgrounds than study interviewer and/or principle investigator. In this article we seek to challenge readers to critically think about their framing, implementation and dissemination of research studies prior to engaging with subjects. One must be fully aware of their reasoning for embarking upon the study and have clear understanding of their unconscious framing, questioning, probing and engagements during the study. It should be the goal of each member of the research team to refrain from moving forward with studies that incorporate implicit bias, racist undertones and/or uphold negative myths about a population one is not a member of.

How We Came To This: Our Planning, Techniques and Research Methodology

Because of the respect we hold for ourselves and those communities that are made of residents who resemble Black and Brown people, we took extra precautions in engaging in our current qualitative research project with families affected by mass incarceration. Specifically, the frame of our study was strategically constructed in a manner that allowed for the resilience among children of incarcerated parents to be discussed, highlighted and uplifted. This is a direct result of how we see the “population” and our need to assure that we put respect on their names. Respect is not just about how you enter a community and engage with them. It is also about how you compensate for your inside sources and subjects. How you interpret your research findings and how you disseminate your research findings.

The R-E-S-P-E-C-T Principles of Researcher-Subject Engagement

R: Requirements for directly impacted

For too long, the voice of Black people has been stolen, resulting in the lack of credit for their contributions to research studies. Instead of speaking for study subjects, researchers are obligated to allow participants to use their own voices to share their narratives and lived experiences. In doing so, each individual becomes humanized by having control and power over their story, opposed to being solely known as an identification number within the study. For example, the research study, Success and Resilience Among Children of Incarcerated Parents, held a three day digital conference exclusively consisting of Black directly impacted participants who highlighted their excellence through various methods. Stories were shared of past instances where directly impacted individuals were required to use certain language when speaking on panels. “When I speak on certain panels they want you to use certain words. I shouldn’t have to be forced to say I’m a girl of color, nor a black woman.” Researchers, practitioners, and funding agencies, do not guide the language or programming for these individuals as a means to repurpose and make palatable for white people. It is disrespectful and results in directly impacted individuals turning down opportunities to participate. In our study, each participant held the researchers to a higher regard for stepping back and creating a platform that gave them control to amplify their Black voice on their own terms.

E: Experts in the Field

What is the definition of an expert? - a person who has a comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of or skill in a particular area. In academia, an expanded definition of expert is mandatory when determining “*who are considered the experts?*” and “*why are they considered experts.*” Research scholars, by default, are often deemed “the experts” by way of educational experience, publications, and scholarship. Regardless of attained learned experiences, it is the researcher’s responsibility to recognize directly impacted individuals as experts. Researchers must change the way they think as they have been fed false narratives in regards to the definition of an expert. All study participants are experts within the respected research field as they have extensive lived experiences. Researchers need to “put some respect on the names” of directly impacted individuals through the identification as an expert and hold your colleagues accountable to do so also.

S: Sample and Social Media

When conducting research studies with directly impacted individuals, snowball sampling and the use of social media are essential to gaining study participants. Through snowball sampling, directly impacted individuals can recruit others who are also experts on the research topic to participate in the study. Researchers should ensure they are adapting to new research methodologies when probing for study samples. When conducting research with directly impacted individuals, researchers typically obtain study samples from correctional facilities. However, in the age of technological advancement, researchers should use social media as a means to promote the research study and draw attention to potential study participants. Due to the Black communities lack of access to the ivory towers, social media can be used as a way to stay connected and deliver information to the community. Directly impacted individuals use social media as a platform to post positive pictures with their parents and share life achievements and accomplishments with followers. By changing the standards of research procurement this will open the opportunity to display positive perspectives within the study.

P: Pay the Participants

PSA: It is imperative to respect all participants through compensation for their contributions in research studies. Payment for participation in research should be just and fair including how much money research

subjects receive, and what subjects receive payment for, such as their time, inconvenience, discomfort, or some other consideration. In addition, as experts, study participants should be included in all stages of the research process. As such, they should also be compensated for their engagement and leadership roles on projects and with programs. For example, it is recommended to bring them on as consultants because they are experts. In addition, these individuals are capable of and should be offered the opportunity to serve on advisory committees, executive boards, research studies, and as advisors or mentors.

E: Executive Team Members Who Identify As Black

Black researchers investigating social phenomena in the Black community are deemed as illegitimate because they are seen to have bias or use qualitative methods to get in-depth research. Within the academy, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are not viewed as prestigious as Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). However, Black researchers have knowledge of the culture and have lived experiences similar to the community, which gives them the ability to catch nuances and microlevel behaviors which others may miss. By having Black researchers within leadership, not as tokens, will give the data a richer analysis and push it further by taking considerations than with non-Black teams. Making Black graduate students more a part of the research by allowing them to be first authors or adding questions to your survey instruments will not detract from your research at the same time it will elevate theirs. This means not to give all of the labor to Black researchers but also educate yourself on the topic simultaneously.

C: Cultural Differences

Researchers like to consider themselves as having a “beginner’s eye” and are objective, however, scholarship has shown how researcher bias can easily infiltrate the data. Researchers of the criminal (in)justice system bring their own bias that are rooted in patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity. There are cultural differences that may seem as positive or negative depending on one’s background. Ethnocentrism permeates criminology and sociology, and biological determinism is still incorporated into analysis and findings within data. Even with longitudinal data collection, extended time spent in the “field” does not equate to one’s ability to translate research findings culturally correct. As researchers, whites and non-Blacks need to be aware of the differences of their own culture versus the Black community they are studying. If the information which is being shared by the Black community makes you uncomfortable or it is shocking then you do not know enough about the population you are studying. In these instances, you should see “Executive Team.”

T: Trust and The Lack of It

The Black community has been deceived, manipulated, and exploited by researchers, “white coats,” and academics for generations. There is a lack of trust because of years of abuse and the appropriation of language and ideas. What some refer to as “culture vulturing”. Because of this, researchers choose subjects that are “safe” or comfortable with, which is not a representation of the population as a whole. It is the role of the researcher to make the participant comfortable and not the other way around. If you find yourself removed from your comfort zone as a result of what you are hearing, you are not ready for that study. When conducting qualitative studies your interviewees responses should not offend you or be seen as offensive. Remember, this study is not about you and if you cannot get out the way, this raises major ethical concerns. Research should not be forced on either side.

Black Lives Matter and Children of Incarcerated Parents

Throughout our research, we have heard about their experiences being a child of an incarcerated parent. Participants stated that researchers are not putting faces or names to the statistics about COIP. Therefore it doesn’t humanize the population that is being studied because a number has no soul or connection. This humanization is what the current Movement for Black Lives is asking for. Although researchers may use the same terminology as their study subject, that does not exclude them from perpetuating negative stereotypes and bias. It is impossible to articulate things that you know nothing about.

As a researcher in academia, there are numerous roles and responsibilities when conducting studies with directly impacted individuals. These individuals, more specifically Black, yearn for their voices to be heard but are silenced every day due to societal injustices in America.

Readings from Gary T. Marx

Dr. Marx is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at M.I.T. He has researched and published in the areas of race and ethnicity, collective behavior and social movements, law and society and surveillance studies. Marx was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by our Division in 2011.

Some articles from www.garymarx.net that sadly are still relevant today are listed below. Some recent personal and professional takes on studying the issues are at Morente, Fran, and Gary T. Marx. "I Break in Order to Reveal". Fran Morente Interview with Gary T. Marx." *Society* 56, no. 5 (2019): 427-444. <http://web.mit.edu/gtmarx/www/morente-marx.html>

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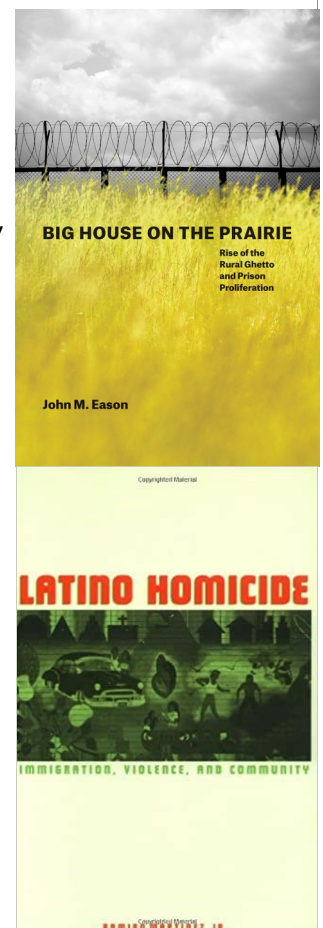
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