

Editorial Comment

This issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* addresses the collateral consequences of criminal sanctions. Such consequences are wide-ranging, encompassing limitations on employment, education, housing, travel, immigration status, firearms ownership, political participation, public assistance, and family rights, to name just a few.

In some cases, the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction may be far more severe and enduring than the sanctions imposed at sentencing. For example, legal immigrants may be deported for relatively minor offenses and permanently excluded from the United States. Similarly, workers may be forever barred from their chosen occupations and parents may face formal termination of their parental rights. Nevertheless, despite the rapid growth of such consequences and their likely effect on crime and reintegration, they have only recently drawn sustained attention from criminologists (e.g., Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002; Uggen & Manza, 2002).

Each of the five articles in this issue creatively explores the scope, effect, or meaning of collateral consequences. First, Patricia Harris and Kimberly Keller consider the perspectives of employers as well as convicted offenders in their treatment of criminal background checks in employment decisions. In the second article, Johnna Christian takes up the consequences for families. She offers a rich qualitative analysis that provides a rare glimpse into the lives of the wives, girlfriends, and relatives who “ride the bus” to visit male prisoners.

The next two articles ask vital questions about how collateral consequences are experienced by those subject to them. Because no group faces greater stigma than sex offenders, such consequences play an especially important role for those convicted of sex offenses. Jill Levenson and Leo Cotter survey convicted sex offenders in Florida and Richard Tewksbury reports on sex offender registration in Kentucky. Both articles show that community notification practices are linked to stress, harassment, and extreme social isolation for the offenders. Whatever their potential benefits to communities,

community notification thus presents important challenges for the effective reintegration of the most stigmatized offenders.

The special issue concludes with Darren Wheelock's overarching review of the racial effect of collateral consequences. This article concludes the issue on a programmatic note, offering an overview and agenda for addressing the broader effects of collateral consequences on social inequality.

Whereas each article contributes to the emerging literature on collateral consequences, they also provide a fresh perspective on the contemporary form and content of punishment in the United States. Scholars and practitioners are increasingly turning their attention to the legions of prisoners reentering our communities each year (Petersilia, 2003). Further studies are clearly needed to critically appraise the sanctions that prevent them from working, voting, and ultimately taking their place at the table with other citizens in good standing.

— Christopher Uggen

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