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## Inequities in life course criminal legal system sanctions: measuring cumulative involvement

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The impact of incarceration on health is well known. Yet, most studies measure incarceration alone and miss additional exposure to the criminal legal system over time. We evaluated adult criminal legal sanctions – inclusive of arrests, charges, probation, incarceration – from ages 18–35 and inequities by juvenile sanctions and race.

**Methods:** Using the National Longitudinal Survey on Youth 1997, a nationally representative data set of adolescents followed into their mid-thirties (1997–2017), we calculated the mean cumulative count, or the average number of criminal legal events per person per study visit, stratified by juvenile sanctions and race.

**Results:** Of 7024 participants, 1679 experienced 3,075 encounters. There were seven arrests, 30 charges, nine probation encounters, and 13 incarceration events /100 participants by age 35. Juvenile sanctions were most common for Black individuals. Among those experiencing juvenile sanctions, Black and White individuals had similar numbers of encounters, but Black individuals had more arrests and incarceration stays. For those without juvenile encounters, Black individuals had more encounters than White individuals.

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Supplementary materials

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**Conclusions:** Research on health effects of criminal legal sanctions must consider encounters beyond incarceration and focus on life course trajectories and racial inequities.

### Keywords

Criminal legal system; Health equity; Life course; Racial equity

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## Introduction

Youth and adult criminal legal sanctions contribute to poor health and racial health inequities across the life course [1–4]. Health consequences exist for those experiencing incarceration and for those experiencing lower level sanctions (e.g., arrest) [5]. Mass incarceration disproportionately arrests, convicts, imprisons, and supervises Black individuals, thus disproportionately affecting the health of these communities [2, 6]. The system of mass incarceration operates as a form of social and racial control, as it is disproportionately concentrated among Black individuals with a high school education or less, living in historically segregated and disinvested communities [2, 6–9]. Disproportionately Black, low-income communities are heavily overpoliced and experience high levels of community removal and state control via arrest, incarceration, and community supervision (e.g., probation, parole). This high level of community removal and state control results in a disruption of social and family networks, an erosion of social capital, and reduced informal social control, affecting the wellbeing of entire communities [10–12]. Mass incarceration thus compromises the health of those with direct involvement (e.g., heightened mortality risk shortly after incarceration release), the health of their families (e.g., worse child mental health), and the health of communities in which it is concentrated (e.g., COVID-19 incidence, psychiatric morbidity) [1, 4, 10, 13]. Yet, most public health research focuses on imprisonment alone, failing to account for the criminal legal system’s many forms, when individuals encounter this system occurs, and how exposures accumulate over individuals’ lives.

Annually, the United States (US) has approximately 7.6 million arrests, places 2.9 million individuals on probation – a form of community supervision – and houses 1.9 million individuals in carceral facilities [14]. Despite low-level sanctions (e.g., arrest, probation) being more common than incarceration and current encounters precipitating future encounters, most work focuses on incarceration or relies on cross-sectional data [15]. Research often focuses on incarceration because these data are the most granular, updated, and standardized [1, 16]. Furthermore, data are collected in different systems (e.g., arrest data captured by local police departments; state prison data by state Departments of Correction). Additionally, low-level sanction data are inconsistently reported (e.g., probation data are rarely publicly available), making it impossible to track individual pathways through this system. Even nationally representative cohort data often measures incarceration rather than additional system encounters, provides mutually exclusive categories (e.g., prevents individuals from selecting ‘jail’ and ‘probation’ for one arrest), or captures a broader array of criminal legal encounters but not the age at encounters [17, 18]. Recent research used longitudinal cohort data to assess time to first encounter but did not explore repeated sanctions [19]. There remains a need to more deeply understand

lifecourse sanctions from the criminal legal system – inclusive of arrests, charges, probation, incarceration – to elucidate the mechanisms through which this harmful exposure produces health inequities. For example, prior work has postulated that all forms of criminal legal sanctions increase stress, which then worsens health, but work has not assessed how an accumulation of stress from repeated encounters may affect health [4, 5]. A better understanding of these mechanisms can inform policies aimed at intervening on the timing and types of the most health-harming criminal legal sanctions (e.g., banning incarceration for encounters before age 25).

Critically, understanding lifecourse involvement should start in youth and explore racial inequities. Around 700,000 of those impacted by this system are under 18 [20]. Once in the criminal legal system, most individuals re-enter it given the overwhelming prevalence of homelessness, unemployment, and poverty among those impacted by it [21]. Furthermore, community supervision's strict conditions and intense surveillance often lead to reincarceration. Racial inequities also start early with 35% of youth arrests being among Black youth despite Black youth making up 15% of the youth population [22]. Black communities are over-policed and are disproportionately arrested, convicted, placed on probation, and incarcerated [23, 24]. Thus, documenting juvenile sanctions and racial inequities in sanctions is critical when studying how mass incarceration influences health. Our objective was to document previously unexplored patterns of criminal legal sanction type from ages 18 through 35 and to document inequities in these pathways by juvenile sanctions and by race. To do this, we use longitudinal cohort data of individuals born between 1980 and 1985. This is first birth cohort to have a relatively high risk of parental incarceration and to come of age at a time in which the US carceral system grew drastically from a complex combination of the so-called War on Drugs, deinstitutionalization of people with mental illnesses, and punitive sentencing laws including three-strike laws (e.g., mandated life imprisonment for some third sentences) and mandatory minimums (e.g., mandated sentence lengths for some first-time sentences) [1].

## Materials & methods

### Data

This analysis uses the National Longitudinal Survey on Youth 1997 (NLSY97), a longitudinal, nationally representative data set of adolescents (baseline age: 12–17 years) followed into their mid-thirties (1997–2017) [25]. Interviews were conducted annually from 1997 to 2011 and biennially thereafter. The NLSY97 cohort comprises two independent probability samples: a cross-sectional sample and an oversample of Black non-Hispanic and Hispanic respondents.

We restricted analyses to start when individuals were 18. Participants were censored at the last contact before they missed their first visit or when they last provided criminal legal information [26]. The total sample includes 8984 participants. Individuals were excluded from our analysis if they missed a visit before age 18, had missing time-invariant variables or were always missing time-varying variables, did not have a study visit while they were 18, or were missing adult criminal legal data at age 18 (Figure A.1), resulting in an analytic sample of 7024 participants.

## Measures

**Adult criminal legal contact**—Participants were asked at the first study visit about prior arrests. At each follow-up visit, participants were asked about arrests since the last interview, excluding minor traffic violations. For each arrest, they were asked if they were charged, convicted, or pled guilty (Fig. 1). If yes, they were asked if they were incarcerated. If they had not been incarcerated, they were asked if they received probation. We collapsed data into one criminal legal indicator per study visit to create a single variable with mutually exclusive categories representing the most severe conviction reported per study visit. These categories are, in increasing severity: (1) arrest without conviction, (2) charge or conviction without punishment, (3) probation without incarceration, and (4) incarceration in jail (e.g., a facility run by a city, local district, or county that typically houses people sentenced to less than a year of incarceration) or prison (e.g., a facility run by state or federal jurisdiction that typically houses people sentenced to over a year of incarceration).

**Juvenile criminal legal sanctions**—If individuals had any criminal legal contact (e.g., an arrest or more severe encounter) before age 18, we categorized them as having had juvenile criminal legal contact. As the baseline study visit captured any prior sanctions, we capture juvenile histories for all participants.

**Race/Ethnicity**—Race is recorded by NLSY97 as five categories: (1) American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, (2) Asian or Pacific Islander, (3) Black or African American, (4) Other, or (5) White. Asian or Pacific Islander, and White. We categorized as ‘Black’ those that responded ‘Black or African American.’ Ethnicity is recorded by NLSY97 as ‘Hispanic’ for those that identified as Hispanic to a yes/no ethnicity question. We categorized race/ethnicity as the following: Black non-Hispanic, Other Hispanic (hereafter referred to as Hispanic), Other non-Hispanic, and White non-Hispanic.

Racially stratified analyses compare Black non-Hispanic with White non-Hispanic individuals (hereafter referred to as Black and White, respectively). This excludes those selecting ‘Hispanic’ for ethnicity and those selecting American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Other for race ( $N = 1691$ ). We focus on Black individuals given the US criminal legal system’s roots in slavery and its disproportionate impact on individuals descended from those enslaved [6]. We use White as the referent group, as this group receives the least harsh treatment in the criminal legal system. We use race/ethnicity categories as indicators of the sociopolitical realities and histories, not as indicators of biological difference [27, 28].

## Statistical analyses

We compared the frequency of criminal legal encounters between groups over time using the Mean Cumulative Count (MCC) [29]. The equation for the MCC is located in the appendix (Equation A.1). The MCC is an estimator of the average number of individual encounters by each age. We used the MCC to calculate and compare between groups the average number of criminal legal events by each observed age starting at age 18.

The average number of encounters per person was estimated for total criminal legal sanctions and for each type over time. Time was measured using continuous age. Stratified analyses include stratification by race and juvenile sanctions. In all analyses, death was treated as a competing event. The bootstrap percentile method with 500 repetitions was used to calculate 95% confidence intervals [30]. The difference in MCC for each strata was calculated with White non-juvenile sanctioned as the referent category; the delta method was used to calculate 95% confidence intervals [31].

All analyses used baseline sampling weights to account for oversampling of Black and Hispanic individuals in survey design. To account for potentially informative loss to follow-up by observed characteristics, we used stabilized inverse probability of censoring weights, [32]. including covariates thought to be associated with censoring and criminal legal sanctions, as those censored may have an increased likelihood of criminal legal sanctions [33]. These variables included time-fixed (i.e., race/ethnicity, juvenile sanctions, sex at birth, parental education) and time-varying variables (i.e., education, employment, marital status, self-reported health, self-reported drug use, being the victim of a crime, having a household member incarcerated). Censoring weights were estimated separately for each stratified sample. Baseline sampling and censoring weights were multiplied together for the final weights [34].

There is no missingness for race/ethnicity. Data on juvenile sanctions and on variables included in censoring weights were missing for less than 5%. Under the assumption that these variables did not substantively change when missing, missing information was forward-filled and then back-filled for time-varying variables.

## Results

### Demographic characteristics

There were 7024 participants in our analytic sample, followed for a total of 71,731 person-years, with a median of 12 years of follow-up (Figure A.2). Over two-thirds were White, 12% were Hispanic, 15% were Black, and 5% were Other non-Hispanic (Table 1). Before age 18, 15% of the sample experienced juvenile criminal legal sanctions; this was higher for Black (18%) than for White (14%) respondents. For variables used to construct the censoring weights, at age 18, a higher proportion of Black participants had a parent that had not completed high school (26%) than White participants (12%). While 14% of participants had not worked in the past year, this was higher for Black (25%) than White (10%) participants.

### Adult criminal legal encounters

One-quarter of the population ( $N=1679$ ) experienced at least one adult criminal legal encounter; 3075 encounters were reported by age 35 (Table 2). Among those with adult sanctions, most (55%) had one encounter, 25% had two encounters, and 20% had three or more. Among those with adult sanctions, one-quarter had encounters ending in arrest. Around two-thirds had at least one encounter ending with a charge or conviction without a sentence, 22% had at least one encounter ending in probation, and 26% had at least one

encounter ending in incarceration in a jail or prison. More Black than White participants experienced adult sanctions (28% vs. 23%). Among those with adult sanctions, Black participants experienced a higher proportion of encounters that ended in arrest or that led to incarceration in a jail or prison whereas non-Black participants experienced more encounters that ended a charge without a sentence or in probation without incarceration.

### **MCC of adult criminal legal encounters**

By age 24, participants experienced an average of 37 criminal legal encounters /100 individuals (Table A.1). This increased to 52 encounters /100 by age 30 and 62 encounters /100 by age 35. The proportion of encounters ending in arrest or probation remained low relative to the proportion ending in incarceration in jail or prison. However, while the number of encounters ending in arrest increased only slightly from age 18–35, those ending in probation almost doubled. From ages 18–35, encounters resulting in a charge alone were the most common followed by incarceration in jail or prison. While the portion of encounters that result in charges alone or probation stayed relatively constant, the proportion that resulted in arrest alone decreased while the proportion that result in incarceration in jail or prison increased (Figure A.3).

### **MCC of adult criminal legal encounters by race and juvenile sanctions**

Patterns of adult criminal legal encounters varied widely by number and type when considering the intersection of race and juvenile criminal legal sanctions (Table A.2; Fig. 2). By age 35, Black and White individuals with juvenile sanctions had a similar number of encounters. Both Black and White individuals with juvenile sanctions had over double the encounters than Black and White individuals without juvenile sanctions. The difference in sanctions was the most pronounced between White individuals with and without juvenile sanctions. White individuals with juvenile sanctions experienced, on average, 121 more criminal legal encounters /100 people by age 35 than their White non-juvenile sanctioned counterparts (Table A.3; Figure A.4).

Despite Black and White individuals with juvenile sanctions having a similar number of encounters, there are large disparities by type of encounter. Across strata of juvenile sanctions, Black individuals consistently had a larger proportion of sanctions that did not progress beyond arrest compared to White individuals. However, if charged, Black individuals experienced around double the incarceration stays in jail or prison compared to White individuals. Over time, probation was the only type of sanction experienced similarly for multiple groups with both Black and White individuals without juvenile sanctions experiencing between seven and eight probation encounters /100 people by age 35.

## **Discussion**

Our study expands on previous research, confirming that the criminal legal system has a large but highly unequal presence in society along sociodemographic lines and that this unequal presence expands throughout the life course [19, 35]. Among those with adult sanctions, 45% had two or more encounters, and much of this was experienced by age 30. Among those with adult sanctions, by age 35, most participants' experienced at least

one charge without punishment as their most severe encounter at a given wave followed by incarceration, arrest, and probation. The high proportion of those experiencing multiple encounters and encounters other than incarceration point to the necessity of documenting each criminal legal encounter a person experiences and of documenting all encounter types.

Adult sanctions are not random, with Black individuals impacted by juvenile sanctions being differentially punished in adulthood relative to White individuals experiencing juvenile sanctions. While White individuals with juvenile sanctions had the highest number of adult encounters /100 individuals, their adult sanction type was less severe than for Black individuals with juvenile sanctions. Black individuals with juvenile sanctions had nearly double the incarceration encounters compared to White juvenile-sanctioned individuals. Furthermore, Black individuals with juvenile sanctions had more encounters at each age ending in arrest compared to White juvenile-sanctioned individuals. Given the detrimental effect that incarceration and arrests have on individual and community health, the amount and nature of contact experienced by Black individuals with juvenile sanctions are alarming for public health [1, 4, 5, 10]. By only capturing incarceration and neglecting arrests and other forms of criminal legal contact, which disproportionately affect Black individuals with juvenile sanctions, much of public health research underestimates a health-harming exposure experienced by a group facing multiple structural disadvantages. Additionally, among those without juvenile sanctions, Black individuals experienced more each criminal legal encounter type at each adult age compared to White individuals except for probation, for which these groups had a similar number of encounters. The different amounts of criminal legal encounters experienced by Black and White individuals with and without juvenile sanctions highlight the need to stratify data by meaningfully different population groups to fully capture the distribution of harmful exposures [36].

The criminal legal system is mechanism through which structural racism, the totality of ways that societal systems foster racial discrimination and reinforce disparities, operates and contributes to health inequity [2, 8]. Viewing the criminal legal system through the lens of structural racism is critically important to understanding the system's differential impacts by race. The harsher treatment of Black individuals with and without juvenile sanctions echoes prior literature tracing how discriminatory criminal legal policies and practices have unjustifiably targeted Black communities [35]. The frequency of criminal legal encounters that ended in arrest for Black adults also highlight unequal treatment; Black adults are five times as likely as White adults to have experienced unfair police stops [37]. Unequal treatment is important to capture, as it is associated with poor physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes [38].

Contact during adolescence is also important, serving as a turning point in individuals' lives, shaping lifelong patterns of criminal legal sanctions, and, subsequently, health and well-being [19]. However, race and juvenile sanctions cannot be assessed separately. While 14% of White participants had experienced juvenile sanctions, 18% of Black participants had. These 18% of Black participants had a disproportionate number of adult arrests and incarceration stays. The trajectory of intense criminal legal sanctions among this group emphasizes the need to assess cumulative effects of sanctions when assessing ties between criminal legal encounters and health inequities throughout the life course. Given that each

criminal legal contact can worsen health, assessing the effect of a single criminal legal sanction (e.g., an arrest at age 30) on health may miss, for example, an accumulation of stress and poor health stemming from earlier criminal legal sanctions (e.g., a juvenile probation sentence at age 16; an incarceration sentence at age 20;) that cause the arrest at age 30 to have a particularly health harming effect. However, ignoring this individual's pathway through the system misses important context for understanding the harms of the criminal legal system and that it is the repeated involvement at multiple levels of the criminal legal system that have resulted in poor health.

The highly variable reach of the criminal legal system by race and juvenile sanctions emphasizes the need for public health to account for the type and number of encounters someone experiences throughout their life. While advocates and media reporters have more fully encapsulated the many types of criminal legal encounters and the system's repetitive nature, most quantitative public health analyses have not [14]. Research that reduces individuals' criminal legal encounters to their first encounters or to incarceration alone excludes repeat events or harmful lower level encounters that could have severe health implications. When assessing the effect of the criminal legal system on health outcomes, it is important that epidemiologists and other public health researchers think critically about the type (e.g., arrest, probation), timing (e.g., adolescence, early adulthood), and accumulation of sanctions that are most salient to their research question and how these sanctions differentially affect different groups.

### Limitations

This analysis has multiple limitations. First, due to questionnaire skip patterns, only those who were not incarcerated were asked probation questions. Thus, these analyses capture probation when it is an individual's sole sentence. While an important aspect of probation, future work should also capture post-incarceration probation. Similarly, we are unable to distinguish between jail and prison incarceration, which are substantively different and for which length of incarceration varies. Additionally, our analysis only considered one encounter per person per wave, the most severe encounter, and did not account for length of incarceration or probation. Furthermore, we computed the average number of encounters per person, so we did not distinguish between one person with many annual encounters versus many people with one encounter. The distribution of adult encounters is skewed, with a small number of people experiencing many encounters. This includes encounters that do not result in incarceration or probation as those accused were not guilty. This pattern of repeated encounters is likely important for health but could not be investigated. Furthermore, prior research has found that those with many repeat encounters, particularly with many repeat arrests, are prone to under-reporting [39]. Due to individuals being ages 12–17 at baseline, we collapse juvenile sanctions into a binary indicator rather than calculating the average number of encounters by age starting at age 12. We are also unable to capture key components of the criminal legal system, including police surveillance and stops that did not result in an arrest, or time spent in immigration detention. Lastly, while we stratified results by juvenile sanctions and by race, there are additional population categories, for whom these experiences likely differ. For example, these results are mostly driven by men's criminal legal encounters, but there are also inequities in criminal legal encounters among women.



The limitations described above likely underestimate the racial inequities in criminal legal sanctions over the life course. First, the skip pattern exclusion of post-incarceration probation severely underestimates probation rates and racial inequity in probation. Probation is more common than incarceration and disparately affects Black populations with 13% of the US population being Black but 30% of adults on probation being Black [14, 24]. Second, when multiple encounters were reported in a wave, we documented the most severe encounter. As Black individuals experience the most frequent encounters, our results are likely an underestimation of racial differences in another kind of criminal legal sanction that may be especially health-harming: frequent, repeated arrests, charges, and/or incarcerations [40]. Relatedly, those serving long incarceration sentences are ineligible for new arrests. As Black individuals experience the longest incarceration sentences, our results are likely an underestimation of racial differences in the kinds of sanctions that may be especially health-harming, which include lengthy incarcerations [40]. Third, by collapsing juvenile sanctions into a binary, by not capturing all forms of criminal legal system (e.g., police surveillance, immigration detention), and by not stratifying by additional population groups (e.g., gender, additional race and ethnicity categories – including the overrepresentation of Indigenous communities in the criminal legal system), we do not fully capture the amount of criminal legal sanctions for groups with disproportionate numbers of encounters [41].

## Conclusion

The criminal legal system has a pervasive, long-term, and inequitable presence in our society that varies by race and juvenile sanctions. Future health equity research on the health effects of criminal legal sanctions must consider encounters beyond incarceration, life course involvement, and the racial disparities embedded in the system. Through understanding the type and timing of sanctions, we can create policies and interventions that intervene on prevalent, health-harming criminal legal encounters early in the life course, ultimately disrupting the connection between criminal legal system contact and health.

## Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

## Abbreviations:

|               |                                            |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>US</b>     | United States                              |
| <b>NLSY97</b> | National longitudinal survey on youth 1997 |
| <b>MCC</b>    | Mean Cumulative Count                      |

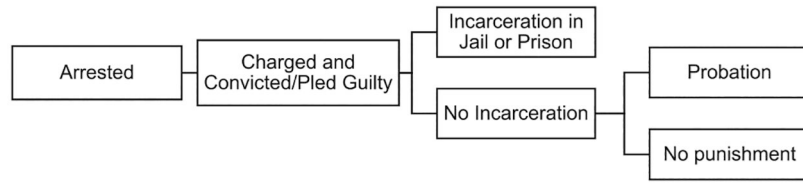
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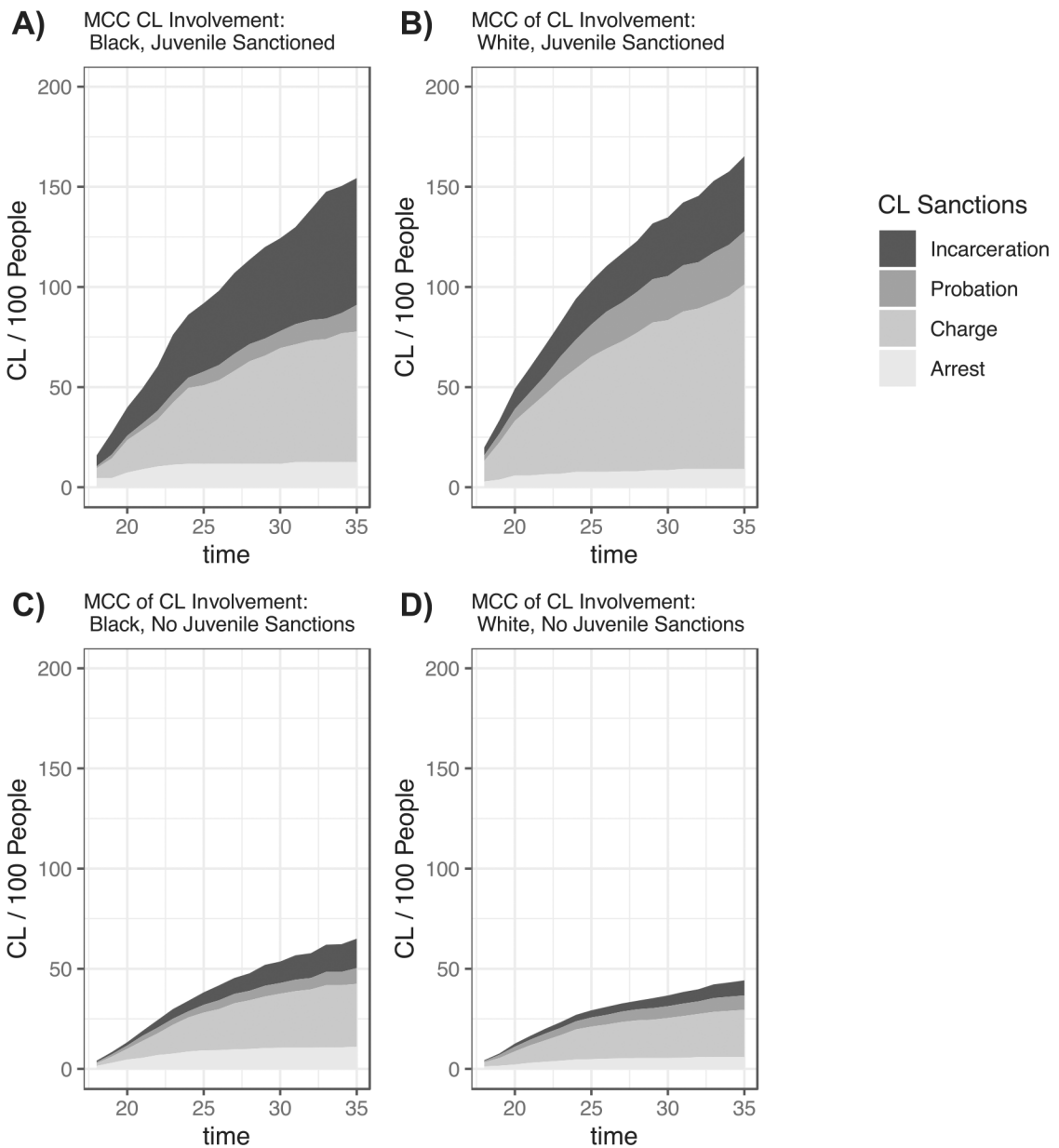
**Fig. 1.**  
Flow of criminal legal questions NLSY97.

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**Fig. 2.** Mean Cumulative Count (MCC) of Criminal Legal (CL) Sanctions per 100 people by Sanction Type, Race, and Juvenile Sanctions, Beginning at Age 18, NLSY97 (1997–2017)<sup>a</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Excludes those selecting Hispanic ethnicity and American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Other race.

**Table 1**

Demographic variables at age 18 NLSY97\*

|                                               | Total |       | Black non-hispanic |       | White non-hispanic |       |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|                                               | N     | %     | N                  | %     | N                  | %     |
| <b>Stratifying Variables</b>                  |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| <i>Race/Ethnicity</i>                         |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Black Non-Hispanic                            | 1844  | 15.31 |                    |       |                    |       |
| Other Hispanic                                | 1440  | 12.41 |                    |       |                    |       |
| Other Non-Hispanic                            | 251   | 4.90  |                    |       |                    |       |
| White Non-Hispanic                            | 3489  | 67.39 |                    |       |                    |       |
| <i>Juvenile Criminal Legal Sanctions</i>      |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Yes                                           | 1068  | 14.75 | 314                | 18.16 | 488                | 13.87 |
| No                                            | 5956  | 85.25 | 1530               | 81.84 | 3001               | 86.13 |
| <i>Censoring Weight Variables<sup>†</sup></i> |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| <i>Sex at birth</i>                           |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Male                                          | 3522  | 50.45 | 896                | 49.71 | 1781               | 50.27 |
| Female                                        | 3502  | 49.55 | 948                | 50.29 | 1708               | 49.73 |
| <i>Parental Education</i>                     |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| None                                          | 71    | 0.67  | 42                 | 2.08  | 12                 | 0.35  |
| Less than High School                         | 1628  | 17.90 | 460                | 23.99 | 408                | 11.76 |
| High School                                   | 2528  | 35.98 | 798                | 42.43 | 1269               | 36.41 |
| Greater than High School                      | 2797  | 45.44 | 544                | 31.50 | 1800               | 51.49 |
| <i>Education</i>                              |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| High School, GED, or higher                   | 6068  | 87.99 | 1528               | 83.05 | 3133               | 89.75 |
| Less than High School                         | 956   | 12.01 | 316                | 16.95 | 356                | 10.25 |
| <i>Employment Status</i>                      |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Weeks worked in the past year                 |       |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| 0                                             | 1149  | 13.69 | 466                | 24.91 | 333                | 9.57  |
| 1–5                                           | 273   | 3.50  | 97                 | 4.80  | 106                | 3.07  |
| 6–10                                          | 484   | 6.43  | 167                | 8.99  | 199                | 5.70  |

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|                               | Total    |       | Black non-hispanic |       | White non-hispanic |       |
|-------------------------------|----------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|                               | N        | %     | N                  | %     | N                  | %     |
|                               | N = 7024 |       | N = 1844           |       | N = 3489           |       |
| 11-15                         | 463      | 6.30  | 132                | 6.92  | 215                | 6.12  |
| 16-20                         | 443      | 5.95  | 121                | 6.54  | 194                | 5.53  |
| 21-25                         | 396      | 5.55  | 101                | 5.43  | 189                | 5.43  |
| 26-30                         | 480      | 6.85  | 131                | 7.07  | 248                | 7.07  |
| 31-35                         | 538      | 7.96  | 136                | 7.56  | 291                | 8.31  |
| 36-40                         | 384      | 5.97  | 78                 | 4.41  | 221                | 6.39  |
| 41-45                         | 405      | 5.91  | 80                 | 4.36  | 222                | 6.26  |
| 46-50                         | 477      | 7.54  | 78                 | 4.04  | 304                | 8.71  |
| 51 +                          | 1532     | 24.34 | 257                | 14.97 | 967                | 27.84 |
| <i>Marital Status</i>         |          |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Married                       | 107      | 1.54  | 4                  | 0.19  | 58                 | 1.65  |
| Not Married                   | 6917     | 98.46 | 1840               | 99.81 | 3431               | 98.35 |
| <i>Self Reported Health</i>   |          |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Excellent                     | 2526     | 36.01 | 694                | 37.39 | 1276               | 36.39 |
| Very Good                     | 2364     | 34.83 | 546                | 29.85 | 1254               | 36.15 |
| Good                          | 1713     | 23.89 | 450                | 24.47 | 805                | 23.00 |
| Fair                          | 385      | 4.84  | 143                | 7.73  | 141                | 4.08  |
| Poor                          | 36       | 0.43  | 11                 | 0.56  | 13                 | 0.37  |
| <i>Self Reported Drug Use</i> |          |       |                    |       |                    |       |
| Yes                           | 570      | 9.28  | 51                 | 2.66  | 374                | 10.83 |
| No                            | 6454     | 90.72 | 1793               | 97.34 | 3115               | 89.17 |

\* Percentages are based on weighted data to account for sampling design.

<sup>†</sup> Being the victim of a crime and having an incarcerated household member were not asked at age 18.

**Table 2**

Type and amount of adult criminal legal encounters in NLSY97\*

|                                                  | Total           |       | Black           |       | White           |       |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
|                                                  | N               | %     | N               | %     | N               | %     |
| <b>Among full sample</b>                         | <b>N = 7024</b> |       | <b>N = 1844</b> |       | <b>N = 3489</b> |       |
| <i>Any Adult Criminal Legal Sanctions</i>        |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| Yes                                              | 1679            | 23.66 | 498             | 27.80 | 812             | 23.19 |
| No                                               | 5345            | 76.34 | 1346            | 72.20 | 2677            | 76.81 |
| Among Criminal Legal Involved                    | N = 1679        |       | N = 498         |       | N = 812         |       |
| <i>Number of Any Criminal Legal Encounters †</i> |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| 1                                                | 931             | 55.40 | 274             | 54.47 | 444             | 54.74 |
| 2                                                | 416             | 25.04 | 118             | 23.86 | 210             | 25.63 |
| 3 or more                                        | 332             | 19.57 | 106             | 21.66 | 158             | 19.63 |
| <i>Number of Arrests ‡</i>                       |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| 0                                                | 1233            | 75.25 | 344             | 70.25 | 640             | 78.70 |
| 1                                                | 430             | 23.98 | 145             | 27.77 | 169             | 20.90 |
| 2                                                | 15              | 0.74  | 8               | 1.80  | 3               | 0.40  |
| 3 or more                                        | 1               | 0.03  | 1               | 0.18  | 0               | 0.00  |
| <i>Number of Charges ‡</i>                       |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| 0                                                | 611             | 35.11 | 189             | 38.65 | 266             | 32.58 |
| 1                                                | 738             | 44.52 | 219             | 43.47 | 367             | 45.33 |
| 2                                                | 233             | 14.55 | 55              | 10.99 | 131             | 16.23 |
| 3 or more                                        | 97              | 5.82  | 35              | 6.88  | 48              | 5.86  |
| <i>Number of Probation Sentences ‡</i>           |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| 0                                                | 1337            | 78.36 | 415             | 82.91 | 616             | 76.02 |
| 1                                                | 291             | 18.14 | 75              | 15.47 | 160             | 19.53 |
| 2                                                | 44              | 2.98  | 7               | 1.49  | 30              | 3.71  |
| 3 or more                                        | 7               | 0.51  | 1               | 0.13  | 6               | 0.74  |
| <i>Number of Incarceration Sentences ‡</i>       |                 |       |                 |       |                 |       |
| 0                                                | 1225            | 74.42 | 344             | 67.70 | 619             | 76.25 |



|                          | Total           |       | Black           |       | White           |       |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
|                          | N               | %     | N               | %     | N               | %     |
| <b>Among full sample</b> | <b>N = 7024</b> |       | <b>N = 1844</b> |       | <b>N = 3489</b> |       |
| 1                        | 315             | 17.84 | 105             | 21.18 | 138             | 17.07 |
| 2                        | 92              | 5.26  | 30              | 6.65  | 40              | 4.79  |
| 3 or more                | 47              | 2.48  | 19              | 4.46  | 15              | 1.89  |

\* Percentages are based on weighted data to account for sampling design.

<sup>†</sup> Sum of all types of sanctions below.

<sup>‡</sup> As most severe sentence in a given wave of data collection.