

PRESS RELEASE

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**Special Issue of *Criminology & Public Policy*
Examines Prosecutors and Prosecutorial Decision Making**

Prosecutors play an important role in determining the outcomes of court cases in the United States. In a special issue of *Criminology & Public Policy*, the Editors-in-Chief have compiled articles on prosecutors and prosecutorial decision making. The issue features thought-provoking and timely studies from leading researchers in the field.

Criminology & Public Policy, the flagship policy and practice journal of the American Society of Criminology (ASC), is edited by Professors Ojmarrh Mitchell (University of California, Irvine), and Jacinta M. Gau (University of Central Florida).

“Various reforms in criminal justice have expanded the influence of prosecutors, giving them significant discretionary control over key aspects of case processing and outcomes,” says Mitchell, professor of criminology, law, and society at UC Irvine as well as former vice president of the ASC. “Yet limited access to prosecutorial data has obscured the decision-making processes of these key players, hindering efforts to examine how they wield their discretion.”

“In this special issue, we present eight rigorous, empirical investigations that shed light on various components of prosecutors’ work in charging decisions, case declinations, diversion, plea bargaining, and sentencing,” adds Gau, professor of criminal justice at UCF.

The articles in the special issue include:

- [“Progressive Prosecution in Context: Examining the Impact of Prosecutorial Administration Change on Case-Processing Patterns and Racial Disparities”](#) examines how a change in prosecutorial administration affects charging and plea-bargaining practices, as well as racial and ethnic disparities in jurisdictions. The findings suggest that prosecutors have the power to shift established norms, but the extent of the change depends on organizational contexts and dynamics.
- [“Examining the Effect of Indiana Prosecutor-Led Diversion Programs on Recidivism Outcomes: A Case of Two Jurisdictions”](#) considers the effectiveness of prosecutor-led diversion programs in Indiana. The programs were associated with reduced recidivism and participation lessened the effect of race on future criminal justice contact.
- [“Evaluating Performances Pretrial: The Role of Defendant Performances in Prosecutors’ Plea Bargaining Decisions”](#) assesses how prosecutors evaluated defendants’ pretrial performances during plea bargaining. Defendants with fewer financial resources face challenges meeting pretrial expectations, leading to inequalities in their ability to get more favorable plea offers, suggesting the need for policies that address inequalities in access to health care and social services.
- [“The Prosecutor’s Cut: Body-Worn Camera Evidence and Criminal Case Dispositions”](#) examines how evidence from body-worn cameras (BWCs) affects prosecutorial decision making and case outcomes. BWC evidence had significant effects on case processing outcomes, but these depended on characteristics of the offense.

- [“The Impact of Prosecutors’ Office Caseloads on Case Processing Outcomes”](#) uses data from Colorado prosecutors’ offices to investigate the impact of caseload pressure on plea and charge reduction rates. Prosecutors’ offices resolved fewer cases via guilty plea in weeks when caseload was higher, especially in misdemeanor cases.
- [“A Longitudinal Examination of the Effects of Drug Policy Shifts on PCS Charging Practices in Oregon”](#) studies the impact of recent Oregon policies related to the possession of controlled substances on initial charges, bargaining, dismissals, and convictions. Prosecutors largely adopted the new changes in their charging practices, with charge severity remaining constant.
- [“Pulling Back the Curtain: A Mixed-Methods Study of Prosecutorial Discretion in Probation Conditions and Revocations”](#) explores how and why prosecutors recommended conditions or pursued technical revocations from across the United States based on a range of sources. Prosecutorial authority for recommending conditions is often vaguely defined, leaving a regulatory vacuum that allows for variation within and between states.
- [“Prosecutorial Power in Probation: Discretion, Violations, and the Pathway to Incarceration”](#) assesses how prosecutorial discretion works within the courtroom workgroup to shape probation in the context of mass supervision. Based on interviews in a mid-sized U.S. jurisdiction, they concluded that prosecutors played a central but largely overlooked role in shaping probation outcomes at both sentencing and revocation, suggesting the need for policy changes.

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