

Michael T. Light

Department of Sociology
University of Wisconsin-Madison
8144 William H. Sewell Social Sciences Building
Madison, WI 53706

Phone: 608-262-1217
Email: mlight@ssc.wisc.edu

EDUCATION

- 2013 Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, Sociology
 Dissertation Title: *Punishing the 'Others': Citizenship and Social Control in the United States and Germany.*
- 2010 M.A., The Pennsylvania State University, Criminology
- 2007 B.A., Albion College, Albion, MI, Sociology

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

- 2022- Professor of Sociology and Chicano/Latino Studies, University of Wisconsin
- 2018-2022 Associate Professor of Sociology and Chicano/Latino Studies, University of Wisconsin
- 2017-2018 Assistant Professor of Sociology and Chicano/Latino Studies, University of Wisconsin
- 2013-2017 Assistant Professor of Sociology, Purdue University

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Criminology, Sociology of Law and Punishment, Immigration, Stratification

BOOKS

- Light, Michael T.** *The Color of Punishment*. Under contract with the Russell Sage Foundation
- King, Ryan D. and **Michael T. Light** (editors). *The Oxford Handbook of Sentencing*. Under contract with Oxford University Press.

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS (^denotes graduate student)

- Light, Michael T.** and Avery Warner^. Forthcoming. "Immigration Federalism and Noncitizen Punishment Inequality." *The Oxford Handbook of Sentencing*
- Light, Michael T.** and Avery Warner^. 2025. "Does Immigration Enforcement Exacerbate Racial Inequality Under the Law?" *American Journal of Sociology* 131: 48-110
- Light, Michael T.** and Karl Vachuska^. 2025. "Does Racial Bias Explain the Black-White Sentencing Gap across U.S. Courts?" *Social Problems* 72: 1280-1303
- Light, Michael T.**, Jason Robey and Jungmyung Kim^. 2024. "Citizenship, Legal Status, and Misdemeanor Justice." *Criminology* 62(4): 655-703.

- Light, Michael T.** and Karl Vachuska[^]. 2024. "Increased Homicide Played a Key Role in Driving Black-White Disparities in Life Expectancy During the COVID-19 Pandemic." [*PlosOne*](#)
- Light, Michael T.**, Jungmyung Kim[^] and Laura Bositen[^]. 2024 "The Empirics of Immigration and Violence: Evidence from California and Texas." Pp. 232-48 in *Taking Stock of Homicide: Trends, Emerging Themes, and the Challenges*.
- Light, Michael T.**, Laura Bositen[^] and Jungmyung Kim[^]. 2024. "Did Immigrant Arrest Rates Change During the Trump Administration? Evidence from California and Texas." *Crime & Delinquency* 70(12): 3182-3215.
- Light, Michael T.**, Jason Robey and Jungmyung Kim[^]. 2023. "Noncitizen Justice: The Criminal Case Processing of non-U.S. Citizens in Texas and California." *American Journal of Sociology* 129: 162-226.
- Jason Robey, Michael Massoglia and **Michael T. Light**. 2023. "A Generational Shift: Race and the Declining Lifetime Risk of Incarceration." *Demography* 60 (4): 977–1003.
- Wermink, Hilde, **Michael T. Light**, and Alicja P. Krubnik[^]. 2022 "Pretrial detention and incarceration decisions for foreign nationals: A mixed-methods approach." *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 28: 367-380.
- Light, Michael T.** 2022. "The Declining Significance of Race in Criminal Sentencing: Evidence from U.S. Federal Courts." *Social Forces* 100(3): 1110-1141.
- Light, Michael T.** and Julia Thomas[^]. 2021. "Undocumented Immigration and Terrorism: Is there a Connection?" *Social Science Research* 94: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2020.102512>
- Light, Michael T.*** and Hilde Wermink. 2021. "The Criminal Case Processing of Foreign Nationals in the Netherlands." *European Sociological Review* 37(1): 104-120. (* authorship is alphabetical)
- Light, Michael T.**, Jingying He[^] and Jason Robey[^]. 2020. "Comparing crime rates between undocumented immigrants, lawful immigrants, and native-born U.S. citizens in Texas." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.
<https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2020/12/01/2014704117>
- Light, Michael T.** and Isabel Anadon[^]. 2020. "Immigration and Violent Crime: Triangulating Findings across Diverse Studies." *Marquette Law Review* 103(3): 939-61.
- Light, Michael T.**, Ellen Dinsmore[^], and Michael Massoglia. 2019. "How do Criminal Courts Respond in Times of Crisis? Evidence from 9/11." *American Journal of Sociology* 125: 485-533.
- Light, Michael T.** and Julia Thomas[^]. 2019. "Segregation and Violence Reconsidered: Do Whites Benefit from Residential Segregation?" *American Sociological Review* 84: 690-725.

Light, Michael T. and Jason Robey[^]. 2019. "Citizenship and Punishment." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

King, Ryan D. and **Michael T. Light**. 2019. "Have Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Sentencing Declined? *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, edited by Michael Tonry. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Light, Michael T. and Ty Miller[^]. 2018. "Does Undocumented Immigration Increase Violent Crime?" *Criminology* 56: 370-401.

- Featured in multiple news outlets including National Public Radio, Yahoo News, Newsweek, USA Today, and Los Angeles Times.

Light, Michael T. and Joey Marshall[^]. 2018. "On the Weak Mortality Returns of the Prison Boom: Comparing Infant Mortality and Homicide in the Incarceration Ledger." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 59: 3-19.

Light, Michael T. Ty Miller[^], and Brian C. Kelly. 2017. "Undocumented Immigration, Drug Problems, and Driving under the influence (DUI), 1990-2014." *American Journal of Public Health*. 107: 1448-1454.

Light, Michael T. 2017. "Re-examining the Relationship between Latino Immigration and Racial/Ethnic Violence." *Social Science Research* 65: 222-239.

Houle, Jason. N.* and **Michael T. Light**.* 2017. "The Harder they Fall? Sex and Race/Ethnic Specific Suicide Rates in the U.S. Foreclosure Crisis." *Social Science and Medicine* 180: 114-124. (*authorship is alphabetical)

Light, Michael T. 2017. "Punishing the 'Others': Citizenship and State Social Control in the United States and Germany." *European Journal of Sociology* 58: 33-71.

Light, Michael T. and Jeffery T. Ulmer. 2016. "Explaining the Gaps in White, Black and Hispanic Violence since 1990: Accounting for Immigration, Incarceration, and Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 81: 290-315.

- Featured in the *New York Times*.

Light, Michael T. 2016. "The Punishment Consequences of Lacking National Membership in Germany, 1998-2010." *Social Forces* 94: 1385-1408.

Light, Michael T. and John Iceland. 2016. "The Social Context of Racial Boundary Negotiations: Segregation, Hate Crime, and Hispanic Racial Identification in Metropolitan America." *Sociological Science*.

Light, Michael T. 2015. "Legal Inequality's Newest Face." *Contexts* 14: 32-37.

Light, Michael T., Michael Massoglia, and Ryan D. King. 2014. "Citizenship and Punishment: The Salience of National Membership in U.S. Criminal Courts." *American Sociological Review* 79: 825-847. [lead article]

- Featured in multiple news outlets including Yahoo News and U.S. News and World Report. Interviewed on National Public Radio.

Light, Michael T. 2014. "The New Face of Legal Inequality: Noncitizens and the Long-Term Trends in Sentencing Disparities across U.S. District Courts, 1992-2009." *Law & Society Review* 48: 447-478.

Houle, Jason N. and **Michael T. Light**. 2014. "The Home Foreclosure Crisis and Rising Suicide Rates, 2005-2010." *American Journal of Public Health* 104: 1073-1079.

- Featured in multiple news outlets including the Washington Post and Huffington Post. Interviewed on Russia Today – America.

Grundies, Volker and **Michael T. Light**. 2014. "Die Sanktionierung der 'Anderen' in der Bundesrepublik." Pp. 225-239 in: Niggli M.A., Marty L., editors. *Risiken der Sicherheitsgesellschaft Sicherheit, Risiko & Kriminalpolitik*. Mönchengladbach: Forum Verlag Godesberg.

Light, Michael T. and Casey T. Harris. 2012. "Race, Space, and Violence: Exploring Spatial Dependence in Structural Covariates of White and Black Violent Crime in U.S. Counties." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 28: 559-586.

- 1st Prize, American Sociological Association Student Paper Award in the area of Crime, Law, and Deviance.
- 2nd Prize, American Society of Criminology Gene Carte Student Paper Award.

Ulmer, Jeffery T., **Michael T. Light**, and John Kramer. 2011. "Racial Disparity in the Wake of the Booker/Fanfan Decision: An Alternative Analysis to the USSC's 2010 Report." *Criminology & Public Policy* 10: 1077-1118.

Ulmer, Jeffery T., **Michael T. Light**, and John Kramer. 2011. "Does Increased Judicial Discretion Lead to Increased Disparity? The "Liberation" of Judicial Sentencing Discretion In the Wake of the Booker/Fanfan Decision." *Justice Quarterly* 28: 799-837.

Ulmer, Jeffery T. and **Michael T. Light**. 2010. "Federal Case Processing and Sentencing Before and After the Booker/Fanfan Decision: Little Has Changed." *Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice* 14:143-178.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Light, Michael T. 2016. "Ice Detainers, Crime and the Criminal Justice System." *PICO National Network Agenda for Ending Mass Incarceration & Criminalization*. Available at <http://www.livefreeusa.org/reports/>

Light, Michael T. 2016. Review of Leila Kavar's *Contesting Immigration Policy in Court: Legal Activism and its Radiating Effects in the United States and France*. *Law and Politics* 26:152-54.

Junck, Angie and **Michael T. Light**. 2015. "No, Immigration is not the Cause of Violent Crime." *ABA Criminal Justice Section Newsletter* 24(1): 4-5.

Light, Michael T. 2015. Review of Sara Wakefield and Christopher Wildeman's *Children of the Prison Boom: Mass Incarceration and the Future of American Inequality*. *Contemporary Sociology* 44: 730-731.

Light, Michael T. "[When it comes to U.S. punishment, noncitizens may be the new face of legal inequality](#)." USAPP—American Politics and Policy Blog. London School of Economics.

Light, Michael T., Mark Hugo Lopez and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. 2014. "[The Rise of Federal Immigration Crimes](#)." Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, March.

- Featured in multiple news outlets including the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Ulmer, Jeffery T. and **Michael T. Light**. 2013. "The USSC's 2012 Booker Report's Characterization of the Penn State Studies: Setting the Record Straight." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 25: 290-292.

Ulmer, Jeffery T. and **Michael T. Light**. 2011. "Beyond Disparity: Changes in Federal Sentencing Post-Booker and Gall." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 23(5):333-341.

Lopez, Mark Hugo and **Michael T. Light**. "[A Rising Share: Hispanics and Federal Crime](#)," Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C. (February 18, 2009).

- Featured in over 280 news outlets including the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the States News Service, and the Associated Press.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Light, Michael T. and Lars Højsgaard Anderson. "Deportation's Fallout: Evidence from Denmark." (Revise and resubmit at the *American Journal of Sociology*)

Robey, Jason and Michael T. Light. "The New Reality of Incarceration: Why Imprisonment Rates and Racial Disparities Are Declining." (Revise and resubmit at *Nature*)

Firebaugh, Glenn and Michael T. Light. "The Outsized Impact of Behavioral Causes of Death on Longevity in the U.S.: Comparing Total and per Death Years of Life Lost." (Revise and resubmit at *Socius*)

Light, Michael T. and Jason Robey. "Reform, Discretion, and Discrimination: Trends in Racial Inequalities for Felonies and Misdemeanors in Texas" (draft available)

HONORS, AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

2023-28 H.I. Romnes Faculty Fellowship, UW-Madison

2021-23 Vilas Associate Professorship, UW-Madison

2022 Max Planck Visiting Scholarship, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law. Freiburg, Germany. International competitive research fellowship: €2100.

- 2021 Department of Sociology's Award for Excellence in Teaching, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- 2015 Warwick Visiting Fellowship, School of Law at the University of Warwick. Coventry, UK. International competitive research fellowship: £1000.
- 2014 Max Planck Visiting Scholarship, Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law. Freiburg, Germany. International competitive research fellowship: €2100
- 2014 Darryl Evans Award for Teaching Excellence. Department of Sociology, Purdue University.
- 2013 Distinguished Young Alumni Award. Albion College.
- 2012-13 Crawford Family Fellowship in Ethical Inquiry, Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University. College-wide competitive fellowship: \$16,425 stipend and full tuition.
- 2012-13 Fellow, Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University.
- 2012 Visiting Research Scholar, Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law. Freiburg, Germany.
- 2012 Rock Ethics Dissertation Research Award, Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University. \$1,000.
- 2010 1st Prize, American Sociological Association Student Paper Award in the area of Crime, Law, and Deviance: "Race, Space, and Violence: Exploring Spatial Dependence in Structural Covariates of White and Black Violent Crime in U.S. Counties." (with Casey T. Harris)
- 2010 2nd Prize, American Society of Criminology Gene Carte Student Paper Award: "Race, Space, and Violence: Exploring Spatial Dependence in Structural Covariates of White and Black Violent Crime in U.S. Counties." (with Casey T. Harris)

FUNDED RESEARCH

- 2022-23 University of Wisconsin-Madison Fall Competition Grant. "The Geography of Noncitizen Injustice." (PI) \$20,828.
- 2021-23 "The Effects of Deportation on Family Members." Rockwool Foundation (Co-PI) \$107,475.
- 2021-22 "Colorism and Criminal Case Processing." Russell Sage Foundation. (PI) \$46,781.
- 2020-22 "Undocumented Immigration, Crime, and Recidivism: Evidence from Texas." National Institute of Justice. (PI) \$396,194. (Award 2019-R2-CX-0058).
- 2020-21 University of Wisconsin-Madison Fall Competition Grant. "Unauthorized Immigration and Crime in Texas." (PI) \$41,878.
- 2019-21 "Immigration, Legal Status, and Criminal Adjudication in State Courts." National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences Program Grant. (PI) \$315,558. (SES Award # 1849297)
- 2019-20 "Criminal Justice and the German Refugee Crisis." Funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD Centers of Excellence Program). Faculty Theme Leader €20,000.

- 2018-19 University of Wisconsin-Madison Fall Competition Grant. “The Impact of Legal Counsel in Immigration Court.” (PI) \$42,173
- 2016-17 Michael T. Light (PI) and Ty Miller (supported student investigator). “Drugs, DUI, and Crime? What Are the Effects of Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado?” National Institute of Justice, Graduate Research Fellowship. \$32,000.
- 2015 Global Synergy Faculty Research Grant, Purdue University. “Legal Inequality in an International Perspective: Evidence from the Netherlands.” (PI) \$15,000.
- 2014 Principal Investigator, Purdue Research Foundation (PRF) Summer Faculty Grant. “Judicial Tenure, Political Ideology and Criminal Court Decision-Making.” \$8,000.
- 2012-13 National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant. “Punishing the ‘Others’: Understanding Citizenship through Punishment in the United States and Germany.” \$18,074 (SES-1226453).
- 2011 Principal Investigator, “The International Use of Incarceration.” Pennsylvania State University, Mary O’Neill Marsh Student Enhancement Fund in Crime, Law, and Justice Grant. \$1,100.

INVITED TALKS

- 2025 University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. “Deportation’s Fallout: Evidence from Denmark” Colloquium talk presented at the Department of Sociology.
- 2024 University of Maryland. “Does Immigration Enforcement Exacerbate Racial Inequality Under the Law?” Paper presented at the Maryland Population Research Center.
- 2023 Harvard University. Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality, and Social Policy. “Citizenship, Legal Status, and Misdemeanor Justice.” Paper presented at the Inequality and Social Policy Seminar Series.
- 2022 California Public Defenders Association. “Noncitizens and the Racial Justice Act.” Virtual presentation.
- 2021 Max Planck Institute for the Study of Crime, Security and Law. “Noncitizen Justice: The Criminal Case Processing of Non-U.S. Citizens in Texas and California.” Paper presented virtually.
- 2019 Academy of Criminal Justice Science. “Federal Criminal Justice Data: A Research Agenda.” Panel presentation organized by the Urban Institute. Baltimore, MD.
- 2016 Northwestern University, Pritzker School of Law. “Citizenship and Punishment: The Salience of National Membership in U.S. Courts.” Lawyering and Race in the 21st Century: A Panel Discussion on Citizenship Status, Identity, and Our Legal Systems.
- 2016 American Bar Association Continuing Legal Education Webinar. “Overcoming Implicit Bias Against Non-Citizen Defendants.”
- 2015 Indiana University, Department of Criminal Justice. “Re-Examining the Relationship between Latino Immigration and Racial/Ethnic Violence.”

- 2015 Warwick University School of Law. “Punishing the ‘Others’: Citizenship and Social Control in the United States and Germany.”

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- 2025 Michael T. Light and Jason Robey. “Explaining the Decline in Incarceration Rates and Racial Disparities in Imprisonment.” Paper presented at the 2025 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Washington, DC.
- 2024 Michael T. Light and Avery Warner. “The Color of Punishment: Skin Color, Afrocentric Features, and Criminal Case Processing.” Paper presented at the 2024 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- 2024 Anderson, Lars Højsgaard and Michael T. Light. “Deportation’s Fallout: Causal Evidence from Denmark.” Paper presented at the 2024 Population Association of America Annual Conference, Columbus, OH.
- 2023 Michael T. Light, Jason Robey, Jungmyung Kim. “Citizenship and Misdemeanor Justice.” Paper presented at the 2023 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2023 Light, Michael T. and Noah Hirschl. Racial/Ethnic Inequality in Punishment: Comparing Self-Reported Race to Perceived Race. Paper presented at the 2023 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2023 Michael T. Light, Jungmyung Kim and Jason Robey. “Why are Noncitizens and Undocumented Immigrants Punished More Harshly?” Paper presented at the 2023 American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- 2022 Light, Michael T. and Avery Warner. “Does Immigration Enforcement Exacerbate Racial Inequalities in Criminal Law Enforcement? Evidence from Secure Communities.” Paper presented at the 2022 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- 2022 Light, Michael T., Jungmyung Kim and Laura Bositen. “The Empirics of Immigration and Violence: Evidence from California and Texas.” Paper presented at the 2022 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- 2022 Michael T. Light, Jason Robey, Jungmyung Kim. “Citizenship and Misdemeanor Justice.” Paper presented at the 2022 American Sociological Association Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2022 Michael T. Light, Jason Robey, Jungmyung Kim. “Noncitizen Justice: The Criminal Case Processing of non-U.S. Citizens in Texas and California. Paper presented at the Midwest Migration, Ethnicity, and Race Conference, Detroit, MI.
- 2021 Michael T. Light, Jason Robey, Jungmyung Kim. “Noncitizen Justice: The Criminal Case Processing of non-U.S. Citizens in Texas and California. Paper presented at the 2021 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Chicago, IL.
- 2019 Michael T. Light, Jason Robey, Jungmyung Kim, and Julia Thomas. “Immigration Status and Criminal Adjudication in State Courts.” Paper presented at the 2019 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA.

- 2019 Michael T. Light and Julia Thomas. "Segregation and Violence Reconsidered: Do Whites Benefit from Residential Segregation?" Paper presented at the RC28 Social Stratification conference, Princeton University.
- 2019 Ryan King and Michael T. Light. "The Declining Significance of Race in Criminal Sentencing." Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Conference, New York, NY.
- 2018 Michael T. Light and Julia Thomas. "Undocumented Immigration, Terrorism, and Hate Crime." Paper to be presented at the 2018 American Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA.
- 2018 Michael T. Light and Julia Thomas. "Segregation and Violence Reconsidered: Do Whites Benefit from Residential Segregation?" Paper presented at the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Wisconsin-Madison

SOC 441: Criminology

SOC 440: Ethnicity, Race, and Justice

SOC 443: Immigration, Crime, and Enforcement

SOC 875: Professional Writing for Sociologists

Purdue University

SOC 609: Crime, Law and Punishment

SOC 419: Sociology of Law

SOC 324: Criminology

Pennsylvania State University

CRIM 451: Race, Crime, and Justice (summer)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Department

2022- Director of Graduate Studies

2018-19 Undergraduate Curriculum, Program Planning & Assessment; Web & Online Outreach

2017-18 Evaluation and Improvement of Instruction; Web & Online Outreach

Discipline

2020-22 Editorial Board, *Law & Social Inquiry*

2017-20 Editorial Board, *Social Science Research*

2018-20 Editorial Board, *American Sociological Review*

2019 Panel Member, National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences

2014 American Society of Criminology Program Chair, San Francisco Conference

Journal Referee

American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Law & Society Review, Criminology, Social Problems, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, Law & Policy, Justice Quarterly, American Journal of Public Health, Journal of Urban Health, The Sociological Quarterly, Housing Studies, Homicide Studies, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Population Research and Policy Review, Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, Race and Justice.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2014- Border Criminologies Research Network, Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford
2014- Crimmigration Control International Net of Studies (CINETs) Research Network
2008- American Sociological Association
2008- American Society of Criminology