



Western Association of Criminal Justice

Wednesday, October 7

11:00am-4:00pm REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK Bordeaux/Claret

12:15pm AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS Bordeaux/Claret

Sponsored by: Sam Houston State University/Criminal Justice

12:45pm - 1:00pm OPENING REMARKS Bordeaux/Claret

Eric Wodahl, WACJ President

1:00pm-2:00pm EVENT # 1 Bordeaux/Claret

ROUNDTABLE: AB 992 and the Future of Criminal Justice Education: Workforce Development, Educational Pathways, and the Evolving Public Safety Profession

Moderator: Sigrid Williams, Norco College

Discussant: Selena McKay-Davis, Norco College

Discussant: Mike Leese, Norco College

Discussant: Kimberly Chism, California State University, Sacramento

Discussant: Abdullah Cihan, California State University, Sacramento

California is entering a transformative period in public safety education. AB 992 has elevated the role of higher education in peace officer preparation while creating opportunities for community colleges, universities, law enforcement agencies, and policymakers to rethink educational pathways into the profession. Simultaneously, community colleges are expanding their role through applied bachelor's degree programs, creating new opportunities to meet critical workforce demands in public safety fields. This roundtable explores how colleges and universities can respond to evolving educational requirements, preparing the next generation of law enforcement professionals, and what criminal justice education might look like over the next decade.

2:10pm-3:00pm EVENT # 2 Bordeaux/Claret

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Policies and Rulings Relating to Criminal Justice

Chair: Timothy Griffin, University of Nevada, Reno

Is Social Behavior a Confounding Factor in Observed Reductions in 'Black Swan Homicides'?

Timothy Griffin, University of Nevada, Reno

In the past five decades, the creation of dozens of child protection laws and programs has been associated with a possible, if small, reduction in child abduction-murders ("Black Swan Homicides") and similar crimes in the US. The author presents basic proxy measures derived



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from the Supplementary Homicide Reports consistent with this possible reduction. However, the author also presents evidence suggesting there is a crucial confounding factor. In short, multiple measures of social behavior suggest American children are less exposed to chances for such victimization, rendering any presumed benefit of these “memorial crime control” laws suspect. Important policy implications are discussed.

Lost in Translation: Geocoding Errors in Crime Mapping

Emilee Arias, University of Nevada, Reno

Emmanuel Barthe, University of Nevada, Reno

This paper examines geocoding errors created in the process of translating police report data into geographic locations. With data from three local municipal police departments we examine the source of potential geocoding problems. We hypothesize these errors will be the result of geocoding verification programs and incorrect input of addresses by law enforcement.

3:10pm-4:00pm

EVENT # 3

Bordeaux/Claret

ROUNDTABLE: Graduate Education and Careers: A Roundtable for Graduate Students in Criminal Justice

Chair & Discussant: Eric Wodahl, University of Wyoming

Discussant: Andrew Giacomazzi, Boise State University

Discussant: Emmanuel Barthe, University of Nevada, Reno

This roundtable will provide a forum for graduate students to discuss graduate education and professional ventures after graduate school. Discussants will offer advice and assist students in navigating through these issues.

4:00pm-5:30pm

EVENT # 4:

Tuscany/Chardonnay

Set-up and Judging for Student Poster Competition

Only presenting students and judges in the room at this time please.

5:30pm

EVENT # 5

Tuscany/Chardonnay

President's Reception & Student Poster Competition/Awards

Sponsored by: Boise State University, Criminal Justice & the College of Education and Public Service



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STUDENT POSTERS

Assessing Service for Victims of Teen Dating Violence in Rural and Frontier Nevada Counties

Jillian Adams, University of Nevada, Reno

Emily Berthelot, University of Nevada, Reno

Adolescent survivors of dating violence may come to the attention of healthcare professionals due to injuries, sexual health concerns, mental health concerns, or routine healthcare appointments. Though literature provides in-depth assessment of teen intimate partner violence (IPV) and victims services surrounding IPV (Madkour et al. 2019), less research has focused on how healthcare professionals in rural/ frontier Nevada counties understand the services available to teen victims and how effective they perceive these services are in helping victims, specifically in rural or frontier Nevada. Due to the largely rural/frontier nature of Nevada, it is important to conduct this research to assess the availability, accessibility, and utilization of services for teen survivors of teen dating violence. Utilizing surveys and interviews, we plan to address this gap in research to assess the efficacy of services provided to teen victims of IPV in rural/frontier Nevada.

No Choice in Death: An Ethical Analysis of Execution Method

Emilee Arias, University of Nevada, Reno

This paper analyzes the right for death row inmates to choose their execution method. As the lethal injection paradigm decomposes, state policies have diverged, with some allowing inmates to select their method of execution. Using deontology, utilitarianism, and Rawlsian social justice theory, this analysis argues that states should prohibit inmate choice based on personal preference while maintaining a narrow evidentiary exception for documented medical conditions. The proposed policy shift ensures a structured statutory default that protects the dignity of all stakeholders while limiting exceptions to cases of preventable, medically documented suffering.

Confirming versus Exonerating Evidence: Are Judgments of Guilt Related to Evidence Type?

Natalie Barretto, University of Nevada, Reno

The purpose of this study is to understand how evidence type influence how people evaluate evidence indicating a suspect's guilt or innocence. We conducted an online experiment, in which evidence type and evidentiary direction (exonerating or innocent) were manipulated as within-subjects factors and framing (guilty versus innocent) of the suspect was treated as a between-subjects factor. After providing consent, each participant read 20 vignettes, 10 with incriminating evidence and 10 with exonerating evidence. Results revealed a significant main effect of



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evidence type, a significant main effect of evidentiary direction, and a significant effect of framing¹. These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between evidentiary direction and framing.

Fear of Police: Preliminary Findings on Trust, Contact, and Action

Laura Flynn, University of Nevada, Reno

Emily Berthelot, University of Nevada, Reno

Brangelitee Orozco Ayala, University of Nevada, Reno

Prior research has explored the consequences of distrust and fear of police but has yet to examine the emotional experiences of fear itself. Using semi-structure interviews ($n \approx 10$), preliminary findings summarize the frequency with which salient concepts and experiences appear across interviews, providing an initial descriptive map of the data prior to formal coding and thematic analysis. Emerging findings suggest that participants rarely describe trust and distrust dichotomously. Instead, they described conditional trust, strategic compliance, selective contact, and desire for accountability. By examining the emotional experience of fear, the study helps understand how individuals manage contact with an institution they may simultaneously view as necessary and potentially harmful.

Emotional Dynamics in Domestic Violence Police Interactions: A Dyadic, Event-Level Analysis of Emotional Expression and Communication

Ariangelys Morales, Washington State University

David Makin, Washington State University

Police officers frequently encounter emotionally charged situations during interactions with the public. This exploratory study examines the dynamics of domestic violence encounters by first documenting the frequency and nature of emotional expression, both positive and negative, observed during these interactions. Rather than treating emotion as something that exists only within individuals, this study looks at how emotion unfolds between people, focusing on how participants influence each other over time. By using systematic social event modeling (SSEM) on 100 body-worn camera footages from a Pacific Northwest police department, we identify event-level emotional cues displayed by all participants, including their type, source, and timing within the interaction. We then look at how these expression shape officer communication patterns, including empathy-based and antagonistic responses, and how those responses influence outcomes such as escalation, compliance, and victim safety. On top of that, this study considers how officers respond to opportunities to provide support or resources, and whether these responses vary depending on the emotional intensity of the interaction. For example, does an officer's communication style change when faced with a highly emotional victim? By taking a staged, theory-informed approach, this research highlights emotion as a dynamic, interactional process rather than a static trait, and the findings have implications for trauma-informed policing, de-escalation training, and policy development.



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From Classroom to Courtroom: Examining Criminal Justice Students' Learning Through Court Observation

Estefany Perez Robles, University of Nevada, Reno

Regan Bahmer, University of Nevada, Reno

Naomi Ramstad, University of Nevada, Reno

Criminal justice students and their understanding of court room procedures is dictated by their coursework and experience with court rooms. The proposed study will evaluate the relationships between students understanding of court room procedures and its translation to their understanding of real courtroom experiences. By examining these relationships, our study aims to understand if criminal justice curriculums surrounding court procedures should require real world participation in courtrooms to further student's understandings. This approach might identify important factors that can help contribute to the outcomes of future and current criminal justice students.

"Rethinking Masculinity" Positive Program at CSP Solano

Madison Price, California State University, Sacramento

Past research demonstrates that successful prison programming is effective at reducing recidivism. This presentation is about one such successful program. Upon an initial meeting with approximately 50 incarcerated men at California State Prison, Solano, I discovered that many of them were interested in learning how to navigate healthy relationships, form healthy boundaries in various settings, and better support their children while incarcerated. In response, I developed and facilitated a 14-week course centered on healthy masculinity, communication, and emotional development. The course examined masculinity, power dynamics, boundaries, and trauma-informed behavior in interpersonal relationships. Through readings, group discussions, and interactive activities, participants learned to: identify toxic versus healthy masculinity traits, understand power dynamics in relationships, define and respect boundaries and consent, develop conflict resolution and emotional regulation skills, reflect on personal experiences to promote accountability and empathy, & explore positive masculinity and fatherhood, emphasizing care, respect, and equality. The program's goal was to reduce interpersonal violence, promote gender-responsible behavior, and strengthen reentry outcomes by fostering emotional awareness and healthier relationship models.

Conspiracies And Their Correlation To Violence And Terrorism

Naomi Ramstad, University of Nevada, Reno

The growing prominence of conspiracy theories has raised concerns about their potential relationship to violence and terrorism. This proposed study will draw on moral disengagement theory to critically examine associations between conspiracy beliefs, violent behavior, and terrorist ideologies. By examining these relationships, the study aims to clarify how conspiracy



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beliefs may be linked to violence and contribute to understand the associated risks. It will also consider whether moral disengagement mechanisms help explain why some individuals translate conspiratorial beliefs into support for violence or terrorism. This approach may identify important factors that distinguish passive belief from active endorsement of violence.

Exploring Safety, Justice, and Resource Awareness: Older Adults' Perceptions of Elder Abuse and Neglect in Rural Communities: Preliminary Findings

Sophia Stefani, University of Nevada, Reno

Jessica Peterson, University of Canterbury

This study examines elder abuse in a rural Oregon (USA) county by surveying adults aged 55 and older about their perceptions of elder abuse and neglect, safety concerns, and justice-related needs. The findings are intended to inform prevention, outreach, and policy efforts that are sensitive to the challenges of rural settings. While the project is rooted in one U.S. county, the issues it addresses are relevant to rural contexts globally. This study contributes to a broader understanding of elder abuse and underscores the need for tailored strategies to protect and support older adults in rural communities.

Who Gets In? Mapping State Policy on Validated Screening Tools in Treatment Courts

Jasmine Wong-Fortunato, University of Nevada, Reno

Mia Abboud Holbrook, University of Nevada, Reno

Treatment courts work best when validated screening identifies the right participants. The 2026 All Rise Adult Treatment Court Best Practice Standards identify specific validated screening and assessment tools, yet no study has examined whether state policy directs courts to use them. Using legal mapping methods, this study codes statutes, court rules, and statewide treatment court standards in all 50 states for which tools are named, whether each is mandated or recommended, and whether each is assigned to its intended purpose. This poster presents the study's rationale, design, and coding framework, establishing a baseline for aligning state policy with national standards.