



Western Association of Criminal Justice

Wednesday, October 9

11:00am-4:30pm **REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK** **Silver Baron E**

12:30pm **AFTERNOON BEVERAGES** **Silver Baron E**

Sponsored by: Boise State University, Criminal Justice

1:00pm - 1:15pm **OPENING REMARKS** **Silver Baron E**

Shaun Gann, WACJ President

1:15pm-2:00pm **EVENT # 1** **Silver Baron E**

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Current Issues in Policing I

Chair: Arthur Hayden, Kentucky State University

Use of Social Workers by Kentucky Law Enforcement Agencies in Crisis De-escalation

Arthur Hayden, Kentucky State University

The purpose of this exploratory study was to assess the use of social workers in crisis response among law enforcement agencies in Kentucky. Crisis response refers to calls for service to law enforcement due to a mental health and/or substance abuse emergency. Law enforcement officers are routinely dispatched to calls for service, and officers generally are unaware of minute details of those calls until arriving at the scene. Often, as first responders, officers encounter situations that ordinarily do not rise to criminal offenses but, nevertheless, require immediate interventions. These situations, individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse crises, account for up to two-thirds of emergency calls to law enforcement (Neusteter et al., 2020; Lum et al., 2021). Yet, law enforcement responses in these crisis situations sometimes results in “unnecessarily violent and tragic outcomes” (Dee & Pyne, 2022, p. 1, citing Fuller et al., 2015; IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2018) for those whom officers encounter. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (2024) reports 22.8 percent (57.8 million) of adults in the United States experienced mental illness in 2021, while 7.6 percent (19.4 million) experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2021. As a consequence of these encounters, an estimated one-third of fatal shootings by law enforcement officers involve individuals experiencing mental health crisis or who were impaired by substance use (The Editorial Board, 2023). Public demands for professional mental health intervention to assist law enforcement has significantly increased (USA Facts, 2024). As a result, many law enforcement agencies throughout the United States have implemented models to improve crisis response referred to as co-responder programs (LaCivita, 2020). Co-responder models vary but typically include an officer and mental health professional who ride together during a shift, a mental health professional called to the scene by an officer, or mental health professional dispatched without an officer present (LaCivita, 2020). Several Kentucky law enforcement agencies, similar



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to agencies throughout the United States, have implemented co-responder programs, although this study found most Kentucky law enforcement agencies have not and solely rely on training from the academy and continuing education to provide officers with knowledge and skills for crisis response.

When Trained Observers Observe the Unknown

David Sexton, Great Basin College

The phrase "If you see something, say something" originated in the context of public safety and security, particularly in relation to terrorism and crime prevention. It was popularized by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority following the September 11 attacks. The campaign aimed to encourage the public to report suspicious activity to help prevent potential threats. Since its introduction, the phrase has been adopted by various government agencies and organizations across the United States, emphasizing the importance of public awareness and proactive reporting in maintaining security.

But what do you do when what you see is an unrecognizable light in the sky...

2:10pm-3:10pm

EVENT # 2

Silver Baron E

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Programming, Interventions, and Incentives

Chair: Taryn VanderPyl, Western Oregon University

Sex Trafficking of Female Prisoners: Establishing an Intervention

Taryn VanderPyl, Western Oregon University

In response to alarming revelations from adults in custody at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, and confirmed by staff and administration at the prison, a new program was created to focus on incarcerated women who are being recruited or forced into sex trafficking during their time in prison and/or upon their release. Staff and administration are trying to protect the AICs from these predators, but with extreme under-staffing, they are struggling with covering the most basic of needs at this time. Hear how this new program takes some of the burden off prison staff and administration by intervening with these concerns.

Probation Client Perceptions of the Quality of the Supervision Relationship and the Potential Influence of Incentive Use

Eric Wodahl, University of Wyoming

Kimberly Schweitzer, University of North Dakota

In June of 2022, a four-year study in partnership with the Denver Adult Probation Department (DAPD) was initiated to explore the influence of incentive use on supervision outcomes. As part of this study, surveys are being administered to probation clients to capture their perceptions of



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the quality their relationship with their supervising officer, as well as their experiences with receiving incentives while under supervision. This paper presents preliminary findings from approximately 400 surveys completed to date. Policy implications, study challenges, and future directions are discussed.

Letters And Learning: Letterwriting as A Tool for the Incarcerated

McKenzie Wood, Weber State University

Writing letters has long been a communication tool for those who are incarcerated. Historically, system-impacted individuals have written letters for one of three purposes: to serve as a makeshift coping mechanism in an isolated environment, to act as a mechanism to inform the "outside" world about inside happenings, or as an opportunity to promote social change. This research explores the pedagogical practice of pen-pal partnerships as a tool for students and imprisoned persons to connect and learn from each other. The pen-pal process, recruitment, outcomes, and limitations will be discussed.

3:15pm-4:30pm

EVENT # 3

Silver Baron E

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Innovations in Criminal Justice Curriculum

Chair: Jennifer Noble, California State University, Sacramento

Anthologizing The Carceral Education Experience with A Jail-Based Inside-Out Program

Jennifer Lanterman, University of Nevada, Reno

Inside-Out Prison Exchange Programs facilitate sustained dialogue between traditional campus-based students and detained or incarcerated students for a semester-long course held in carceral institutions. The group project for the spring 2023 cohort of Inside-Out students who meet at the Washoe County Detention Facility is a semi-self-published piece of community-engaged scholarship focused on education, accountability, and redemption. There is a long history of self-publishing in prisons. In rare instances, campus-based undergraduate classes produce pieces of scholarship. Producing community-engaged scholarship in a jail-based Inside-Out course is uncommon. This presentation explores the semester-long scaffolding process, writing workshops, and peer feedback processes used to develop the anthology and the experiences of students as we embarked on this adventure.

Improving Mentor Confidence: Effects of Mentor Training on University Students in Criminal Justice Youth Mentoring Program

Nancy Brown, California State University, Stanislaus

This study addresses the importance of training university students mentoring K-12 at risk youth in a school-based setting. University students often have no previous mentoring experience prior to participating in a Mentoring Program at CSU Stanislaus. The purpose of this study is to



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examine whether training affects mentor effectiveness, confidence, duration of relationship, and outcomes when training of criminal justice university students is provided prior to beginning the mentor-mentee relationship. The study will employ the method of test-retest to examine if mentor training improves overall effectiveness and better outcomes when mentoring at-risk school-based students. “Mentor training affects mentor retention and youth outcomes. However, there are few, if any, evidence-based training programs” (DuBois & Karcher, 2014, p. 449).

Stimulating Career Development: Assessment of the Effects of Guest Speaker Learning Experiences on Students Enrolled in Criminal Justice College Courses

Sriram Chintakrindi, California State University, Stanislaus

This research study examines the impact of a guest speaker intervention on college students enrolled in criminal justice courses at a mid-sized university in California. Students in the study attended guest speaker presentations ranging from probation officers, correctional officers, academics, and public defenders. Students in the study were required to complete a pre-and post-survey throughout the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters that examined the students’ agreeableness, confidence, and knowledge with regard to their experiences with attending guest speaker opportunities and their knowledge about career pathways and academic concepts while pursuing a college degree. The results from this study indicate that many students find guest speaker opportunities to be both beneficial for advancing their knowledge of the criminal justice system and confidence in pursuing a career in criminal justice.

Enhancing Criminal Justice Curriculum Through Financial Literacy Integration

Jennifer Noble, California State University, Sacramento

Mercedes Valadez, California State University, Sacramento

Integrating financial literacy and wellness in criminal justice education can help students gain lifelong skills that will help support their professional and personal development. This study aims to gain a better understanding about students’ current financial wellbeing and whether financial literacy integration into criminal justice classes has a positive impact on their learning experience. Initial findings from surveys of 244 criminal justice majors suggest that most students found the course enhanced their financial literacy skills, and that the knowledge gained would help them avoid becoming victims of financial crimes and be better prepared to work with victims of financial crimes.

4:30pm-5:30pm

Event # 4:

Silver Baron C & D

Set-up and Judging for Student Poster Competition

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



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EVENT # 5

President's Reception, Student Poster Competition & Awards

5:30pm

Silver Baron C & D



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STUDENT POSTERS

The Impact of Thwarted Belongingness on Suicidal Behaviors Among Jailed Women

Dayana Escobedo, Weber State University

Thwarted belongingness is an interpersonal risk factor linked to both suicide and suicidal ideations. While belongingness has long been studied in the general population, less is known about how feelings of belonging and inclusion interact among incarcerated populations. Of specific interest is the role thwarted belongingness plays in the suicidal behaviors of imprisoned females. The current study examines data from over 140 system-impacted women who attempted suicide during their time incarcerated. Homeless upon intake, mental health treatment, and legal status all emerge as significant factors related to sense of belonging. Prevention efforts and correctional policies will also be discussed.

A Case Study of Cultural Marxism: Conspiracy, Extremism, and Hate

Ariel Meyer, Washington State University

Monica Miller, University of Nevada, Reno

This article uses a case study example of Cultural Marxism (CM) to demonstrate the interconnectedness of conspiracy theories, extremism, and hate as related to recent conservative laws and policies. CM is a conspiracy theory that a group of people (including, notably Jews) are waging a “culture war” against conservative/traditional Christian family values. The article’s purpose is to introduce the concepts of conspiracy beliefs, extremism, and hate—and how these can affect laws, policies, politics, and citizens. Understanding the overall mindset, goals, and values of people who believe the CM conspiracy helps explain how hateful and extreme policies are justified and rationalized.

“Poor Excuses” or Difficult Life Situations? A Mixed Methods Analysis of Interactions Within a Mental Health Court

Madi Uhrig, University of Nevada, Reno

Emily Berthelot, University of Nevada, Reno

This study examines interactions within a mental health court (MHC) to determine if there is differential treatment of the court’s male and female participants by the courtroom workgroup. These interactions, which have taken place during observed court hearings, have been measured through an observed interaction measure where the lower the number, the more negative the interactions are between the participants and the courtroom workgroup. These quantitative measures in combination with qualitative examinations through focal concerns theory and attribution theory suggest the general presence of some differential treatment of male and female participants in the observed MHC.



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The Effects of Perpetrator Accounts on Rape Allegations and Abortion Access

Ava Doyle, University of Nevada, Reno

Laura Pazos, University of Nevada, Reno

Monica Miller, University of Nevada, Reno

Daniella Cash, Sam Houston State University

The recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has eliminated women's constitutional right to abortion, leaving states to regulate abortion access. Some states now permit abortions under certain conditions including pregnancy resulting from rape. The credibility of a rape account can significantly influence whether a woman is granted access to an abortion. Research has shown that the type of account an alleged perpetrator provides on a situation affects how others perceive their guilt and involvement¹. This study explores how the perpetrator's account of the sexual encounter affects the perceived credibility of the victim and, consequently, her access to abortion. Participants were presented with one of four accounts given by the perpetrator—apology, excuse, justification, or denial. Data is currently being collected.

The Sociology and Psychology of QAnon: Inputs and Outputs

Jaydon Mullins, University of Nevada, Reno

Monica Miller, University of Nevada, Reno

The conspiracy group QAnon took the world by storm in the months leading up to and following the 2020 election. The meteoric rise of the group following the January 6th insurrection caused many scholars to study the makeup of the group and what sociological and psychological factors contribute to one's membership. The present work examined QAnon as a case study to determine what sociological and psychological factors influence individuals to believe in conspiracy groups. The consequences of these beliefs in QAnon from familial relationships to national security threats are discussed.