



Western Association of Criminal Justice

Wednesday, October 8

11:00am-4:30pm **REGISTRATION/HOSPITALITY DESK** **Emerald Bay 123**

12:30pm **AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS** **Emerald Bay 123**
Sponsored by: Weber State University

1:00pm - 1:15pm **OPENING REMARKS** **Emerald Bay 123**
Kelly Menck, WACJ President

1:15pm-2:00pm **EVENT # 1** **Emerald Bay 123**
ROUNDTABLE: WACJ: Future Possibilities
Moderator: Andrew Giacomazzi, Boise State University

The Western Association of Criminal Justice (WACJ) is one of 5 regional affiliates of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. In this session, the current WACJ Board brainstorms with WACJ participants ideas for future conferences—ways to increase membership and participation, preferences for future conference content, and ideas for other conference models.

2:10pm-3:00pm **EVENT # 2** **Emerald Bay 123**
PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Using Research to Inform Criminal Justice Policy
Cody Jorgensen, Boise State University

Examining the Effect of Permit-less Carry Laws on Violent Crime Rates
Cody Jorgensen, Boise State University

In recent years, many states have loosened regulations regarding carrying a concealed firearm. Permit-less carry laws allow citizens who are legally allowed to own firearms to carry a concealed firearm in public without obtaining a permit. This trend is an evolution of right-to-carry legislation that swept the United States beginning in the late 1980s. Research tends to find that right-to-carry laws increase violent crime. This study examines the effect of permit-less carry laws, independent of right-to-carry laws, on violent crime rates in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, and Wyoming, the first states to adopt permit-less carry legislation, using a 50 state panel data set from years 1995 to 2019. The synthetic control method was employed to find that permit-less carry laws were associated with an increase in aggravated assault in Alaska but generally not associated with variations in violent crime rates in the other states. In sum, moving from right-to-carry to permit-less carry was not found to cause an additional increase in violence on top of existing right-to-carry laws.



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Utilizing Behavioral Health Data to Analyze Cost Savings/Financial Impact in a Public Safety Agency

Leslie Taylor, Broward Sheriff's Office

Stacey Ming, Broward Sheriff's Office

Broward Sheriff's Office has established two successful behavioral health programs. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program was developed in early 2010 while the Co-Responder Team program was established with an initial grant funding in 2021 from the Department of Justice COPS Office. This study will take a cost-based approach to assess a CIT and Co-Responder Program's savings to Broward County and to health and justice systems. It will review behavioral health call data from 2022 - 2025 current by highlighting diversions from hospitals and formal criminal processing and show significant cost savings for Broward communities.

3:10pm-4:00pm

EVENT # 3

Emerald Bay 123

PAPER PRESENTATIONS: Innovations in Justice Research

Chair: Jessica Hull, Boise State University

The Use of Spatial Analysis and Community Characteristics to Understand Sexual Violence

Jessica Hull, Boise State University

Ashley Fansher, University of North Dakota

Sara Zedaker, University of Houston-Victoria

This study explores the geographic clustering of sexual assault incidents in a large Midwestern city by analyzing 9 years of police reports alongside U.S. Census tract data. Using geographic analyses methods, the research investigates the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and outcomes in the criminal justice system, including arrests, case submissions to district attorneys, and charges filed. Key findings indicate that socioeconomic factors, such as education levels, unemployment rates, and male population density, significantly predict the spatial distribution and outcomes of reported sexual assaults. Arrests were more likely in cases involving known suspects or current/former romantic partners, while stranger-perpetrated cases showed less progression through the justice system. Spatial analyses revealed clustering in areas with high male density and low education attainment. The study concludes that neighborhood-level factors significantly influence both the occurrence and judicial processing of sexual assaults. The findings enhance our understanding of the spatial dynamics of sexual violence and offer insights into policy development and crime prevention strategies.



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Finding Comparable Peers: A Data-Driven Framework for Law Enforcement Agencies in Washington State

Yin Zhang, Center for Interdisciplinary Statistical Education and Research, Washington State University

Wooyoung Kim, Center for Interdisciplinary Statistical Education and Research, Washington State University

Comparing a law enforcement agency to valid peers is essential for evidence-based decision-making. We present a data-driven framework to identify comparable peers among Washington State law enforcement agencies using data from the Washington State Data Exchange for Public Safety (WADEPS). Employing organizational, operational, and contextual factors, the framework identifies empirically grounded peer groups that enhance benchmarking, resource allocation, and performance assessment. Furthermore, one can set the weights to give higher importance to any selected subset of indicators. This framework enables stakeholders to analyze performance, evaluate training, and contextualize use-of-force data, thereby promoting transparency, accountability, and improved public safety outcomes.

4:00pm-5:30pm

Event # 4:

Pre Function Area 1 & 2

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

**(Sponsored by Boise State University, Criminal Justice and
the School of Public Service)**

&

Student Poster Competition Awards

(Sponsored by: Springer and WACJ)

5:30pm

Pre Function Area 1 & 2



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STUDENT POSTERS

Federal Consent Decrees: A Descriptive Analysis

Kody Arnold, University of Nevada, Reno

Tianna Stanley, University of Nevada, Reno

Kaden Evans, University of Nevada, Reno

This poster is a descriptive analysis of Federal Consent Decrees since their inception in 1994. It explains the origins, mechanism, and aims of consent decrees. It examines all of the jurisdictions that were subject to consent decrees by department demographics, geographic locations, nature of problems that needed addressing, and the desired outcomes. Case studies are highlighted to demonstrate the metrics and data collection required by the Federal Government. Finally, the outcomes of departments that completed their decrees are discussed.

Objectivity vs Subjectivity: How Does Evidence Type Affect Judgements of Guilt

Natalie Barretto, University of Nevada, Reno

When attributing guilt judgments, legal actors (e.g., police, jurors) weigh different evidence types—but it is unclear exactly how. There is thus ambiguity regarding which evidence types are most convincing of guilt or innocence. Research suggests that forensic evidence (e.g., DNA, fingerprint) is weighted substantially in assessments of guilt. Consistent with this, participants from our study judged confession evidence, DNA evidence, and video facial identification (VFI) evidence as most indicative of guilt after reading a vignette. Findings reveal misalignments between objective and subjective evaluations of evidence strength, revealing how different evidence types influence suspects being found guilty or innocent.

From Disclosure to Documentation: Evidentiary Practices in Intimate Partner Violence Cases

Sami B. Coleman, University of California, Los Angeles

Cale Fitzgerald, Washington State University

Alaric Holly, California State University, Long Beach

Crawford v. Washington (2004) restricts the use of out-of-court testimonial evidence, increasing the importance of tangible documentation in intimate partner violence (IPV) cases. In Washington state, police officers are not required to collect photographic evidence or establish timelines (RCW 10.99.30), despite research showing such practices support prosecution and improve survivors' perceptions of the legal system. Analyzing 317 police body-worn camera videos using systematic social event modeling revealed significant variation in documentation practices. Our findings suggest a need for statewide policy guidelines to standardize documentation, to strengthen criminal justice responses and case outcomes, and to support survivor autonomy in IPV cases.



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Alternative Fingerprint Exemplar Methodology

Nicholas Jensen, Weber State University

Traditional methods for obtaining fingerprint or palm print exemplars for criminal investigations involve ink or digital capture systems. Traditional methods may not be effective with difficult populations such as older people or people who have worked with their hands. Traditional methods may miss important friction ridge detail or may introduce pressure distortion in an attempt to ensure the entire palm is in contact with the paper or digital pad. Photography of friction ridges is a non-invasive alternative to traditional methods. This research is not intended to replace traditional methods, but to provide options to obtain the best possible exemplars.

The Effect of Politician Defendants on Jury Decision Making

Jaydon Mullins, University of Nevada, Reno

Kylie Kulak, University of Nevada, Reno

Monica Miller, University of Nevada, Reno

The conclusion of the first criminal trial of a former United States president has raised questions about the integrity of the criminal justice system. Jurors could be influenced to be lenient toward defendants of their own political affiliation and punitive toward defendants of the opposing affiliation. Alternatively, the inverse effect could be true. Participants ($n = 242$) were presented with a vignette of a criminal court case. The defendant was randomly assigned to be either a democrat, republican, or a nonpartisan politician. The results could indicate potential political intergroup biases that pervade the criminal justice system and require immediate attention.

Examining the Relationship Between School Quality and Incarceration: The School-to-Prison Pipeline in Northern Nevada

Brangelitee Orozco Ayala, University of Nevada, Reno

Disparities in school quality and educational opportunities contribute to school failure, potentially increasing the likelihood of crime and even making it necessary for survival (Pesta, 2018). These disparities, however, are not applied evenly across school districts. Urban schools with greater Black, Hispanic, and poor student populations are more likely to be disadvantaged relative to their suburban counterparts, which is related to punitive responses (rather than restorative responses) to student misbehavior (Ann Payne & Welch, 2010). While studies have shown that adult incarceration may result from structural racism in schools (recognized as the school-to-prison pipeline), the relationship between school suspension in adolescence and later interactions with the criminal justice system remains poorly resolved (Novak, 2019). Further, the relationship between real and perceived disadvantage and dropping out has not been fully explored. A better understanding of this pipeline could lead to policy changes and reduced incarceration rates. This study examines the perceptions and experiences of high school-aged residents in the Reno/Sparks area. It compares them with the perceptions and experiences of



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inmates in the Washoe County Regional Detention Facility (WCRDF). The study employs two different data collection strategies. For the high school-aged youth, data were collected via snowball sampling, wherein respondents were provided with a QR code that led to a Qualtrics survey, which they then shared with their friends. The inmates from the WCRDF completed and returned paper surveys. The data was used to test the interconnections between school discipline and incarceration, and to identify the impact of real and perceived disadvantage on school failure and ultimately the school-to-prison pipeline.

Examining the Doing Gap in Sexual Assault Prevention Education

Haylee Oyler, Weber State University

Sexual assault is a prevalent and deeply troubling issue. In response, programs aiming to provide evidence-based education have been developed and implemented to prevent sexual victimization and offending. Using a mixed method approach, this study examined what barriers or limitations hinder prevention programs from effectively implementing knowledge, otherwise known as the doing gap. Results revealed various barriers facilitators face, including cultural, political, and financial restraints. However, facilitators also recognized successes such as positive social communication, connecting participants to community resources, engaging youth in conversations, and cultivating positive social change in their communities. Implications for practice will be discussed.

Lurking Punitiveness: An Examination of Public Perceptions of Death Penalty Abolition

John Toulouse, University of Nevada, Reno

Emily Berthelot, University of Nevada, Reno

Timothy Griffin, University of Nevada, Reno

Research on the Marshall Hypothesis finds that exposure to death penalty realities reduces support, though some respondents maintain punitive, pro-death-penalty views despite abolitionist arguments. No research has examined the resilience of opposition. We introduce the concept of Lurking Punitiveness—the possibility that self-identified abolitionists may reconsider when faced with a heinous, unquestionably guilty offender. Using cross-sectional survey data, we show that opposition can be as malleable as support, if not more. This is evidenced by some respondents abandoning abolition under extreme conditions. These findings challenge the assumption that declining death penalty support ensures a stable trajectory toward abolition in the United States.



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The Effect of Quality-of-Life Ordinances on Perceptions of Police Legitimacy among Homeless Populations

Katherine Wilson McCoy, University of Central Florida

As of January 2024, an estimated 770,000 Americans were experiencing homelessness, an 18% increase from the previous year (Casey, 2024). In Central Florida alone, nearly 3,000 individuals were identified as homeless during the same period (Homeless Services Continuum of Care, 2024). In response, many legislators and city officials have enacted quality-of-life (QOL) ordinances restricting activities commonly associated with people experiencing homelessness (PEH), such as sleeping in public spaces, public urination, and trespassing. Florida House Bill 1365, for example, prohibits public camping and sleeping on public property without authorization. Critics argue such measures disproportionately target marginalized groups by criminalizing life-sustaining activities. Prior research suggests that repeated interactions with law enforcement, whether positive or negative, can erode trust, often rooted in past negative encounters or perceptions of systemic bias. These dynamics undermine police legitimacy, or the belief that law enforcement exercises its authority fairly, respectfully, and within appropriate bounds. This study investigates how the enforcement of QOL ordinances influences perceptions of police legitimacy among PEH in Central Florida. Data will be drawn from six years of municipal ordinance violation records obtained from the Orange County Clerk of Courts, paired with focus group interviews of PEH receiving services from a local nonprofit day shelter. Quantitative analyses will use regression models to assess potential disparities in enforcement based on race, gender, and arrest location. Qualitative findings will provide in-depth context, illustrating how PEH navigate enforcement encounters. Together, these methods aim to advance understanding of how criminalization policies affect trust in law enforcement among vulnerable populations.