

**PENN STATE**  
*CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH CENTER*

Jeffery Ulmer, Director  
Gary Zajac, Managing Director  
Megan Kurlychek, Associate Director  
Elaine Arseneault, Docket Editor

## *Message from the Director*

Another academic year has come to a close as I write this, and it is an occasion to reflect on all the activities of the Criminal Justice Research Center, both endeavors we traditionally have sponsored, and new endeavors this year. The Penn State College of the Liberal Arts lists among its goals for its Centers and Institutes the following: advancing faculty scholarship; developing the intellectual community at Penn State; supporting undergraduate and/or graduate education; and advancing the reputation of affiliated departments and the College. I am happy to say that the CJRC's core activities foster each of these goals. Our **seed grant program**, including our Social Science Research Institute-funded enhanced seed grants, advances faculty scholarship and frequently lead directly to externally funded research faculty projects. Our **Speaker Series** contributes to the intellectual community of the Department of Sociology and Criminology, as well as other departments and programs. In addition, CJRC administers Penn State's **C3N Criminal Justice Funding**, which advances faculty scholarship at Penn State's Commonwealth Campuses, and develops the intellectual community at Penn State across the Campuses. The CJRC supports graduate assistantships in the Criminology Program, and a postdoctoral scholar. In addition, the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing supports graduate assistantships and postdoctoral scholars, and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections supports a postdoctoral scholar as well. All this supports graduate education, and advances faculty scholarship. Our newly redesigned program of **undergraduate student outreach**, which includes our Career Fair and research internships, together with the Department of Sociology and Criminology, supports undergraduate education. It is truly exciting to serve as Director of such a dynamic and impactful Center.

We wish everyone a happy and safe summer, and we look forward to the next academic year!

*Jeffery Ulmer*  
*CJRC Director*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Criminal Justice Research Center Welcomes New Personnel**

**Helen Pawko** serves as the CJRC-Abington- Administrative Support Assistant for the Greater Philadelphia Office of the Criminal Justice Research Center located at Penn State's Abington campus; she is new to the University. Prior to Penn State, Helen worked in the banking industry as well as Independence Blue Cross before moving to a part time position for a manufacturing company for several years.

### **Criminal Justice Research Center Departures**

**Constanza Paulina Silva Gallardo** was a postdoctoral scholar with the CJRC, where she worked with Dr. Jeremy Staff, CJRC University Park Faculty Affiliate, on research related to adolescent substance abuse. Constanza is currently an Assistant Professor at Society and Health Research Center (CISS) Early Career Researcher at Millennium Nucleus for The Evaluation and Analysis Of Drug Policies (nDP).

**Sam Nur** was part of the core CJRC research staff for the past five years. During his time with us, he worked on a number of high impact projects, including the opioid lawsuit settlement project with Profs. Zajac and Kreager, the homicide case processing study with Profs. Ulmer and Zajac, and several studies with Prof. Sterner at the CJRC branch at Abington. Sam took a leading role in data collection, analyses and project management for these and other projects and made invaluable contributions to all projects that he was involved in. More recently, he also completed his Masters in Public Policy at Penn State. We wish Sam all the best in his future career endeavors as he moves out west to join family. Thanks for all of your great work here Sam!



*Photo from Sam's Farewell Luncheon: Dr. Jeffrey Ulmer, Sam Nur, Dr. Derek Kreager, and Dr. Gary Zajac*

## Researcher Sam Nur Receives Ronald L. Filippelli and Avis L. Kunz Award for Professional Masters Students in the College of the Liberal Arts

Sam Nur, CJRC Researcher recently received the Ronald L. Filippelli and Avis L. Kunz Award for Professional Masters Students in the College of the Liberal Arts. The award is given to a student who has achieved a superior academic record or who manifests promise of outstanding academic success. 2023 is the first year that the College is giving this award. Congrats Sam!

## CJRC is Hiring

The Criminal Justice Research Center in the College of the Liberal Arts is seeking a Research Technologist 1. This position will offer the opportunity for involvement in innovative research projects being conducted or supported by The Criminal Justice Research Center and its affiliate faculty. Apply [here](#).

## CJRC Advisory Board Meeting

The 2023 CJRC Advisory Board Meeting took place May 16th. We welcomed new members, Dr. Deborah Ehrenthal, Dr. Bryanna Fox, and Dr. Michael Light. Director Jeff Ulmer gave introductory remarks and an overview of the CJRC's activities and new seed grant awards, followed by reports from Associate Director Megan Kurlychek on the ongoing research activity with the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. Joy Vincent-Killian reported on this year's undergraduate Career Expo, new outreach efforts involving undergraduate students in research, and the CJRC Speakers Series. We then had a valuable open discussion among the Advisory Board members about ways for the CJRC to increase its funding from external sources, collaborate with criminology/criminal justice research centers at other universities, and develop alumni support for CJRC initiatives.

## Glenn Sterner, CJRC - Abington - Faculty Lead at Penn State Abington, Receives Emerging Faculty Award for Engaged Scholarship

Glenn Sterner, CJRC - Abington - Faculty Lead at Penn State Abington, received the 2023 Outreach and Online Education Emerging Faculty Award for Engaged Scholarship. "The Emerging Faculty Outreach Award is a University-wide honor that recognizes early-career tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members whose work has significant potential to advance engaged scholarship through teaching, research and/or service. Their engaged scholarship work shows significant potential to influence societal issues on local, regional or national levels." Congrats Glenn!

Read more about Glenn's contributions [here](#).

## CJRC Graduate Student Assistant, Yiwen Zhang, Receives Awards

Yiwen Zhang, CJRC Graduate Student, received the Dissertation Support Award from the Liberal Arts Research and Graduate Studies Office at Penn State. Yiwen also received a travel scholarship to attend the National Research Center hosted by the National Institute of Justice in Arlington, VA. Congrats Yiwen!

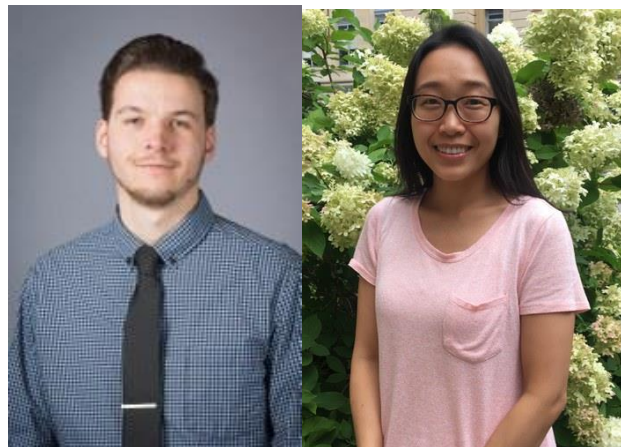
## CJRC 2023 Graduate Student Research Award

The CJRC received four outstanding applications for our 2023 Graduate Student Summer Research Award program, which provides a summer stipend for work on a specific study. We were able to make the following two awards based on available funding:

Jessie Slepicka- "A meso-level analysis of clearance rates and arrest rate inequality: Differential patterns by race, 1980-2016" Dr. Darrell Steffensmeier, Advisor

Yiwen Zhang – "Do "Plea Rewards" Exist in Prison? Disparity in Prison Disciplinary Sanction Decisions" Dr. Holly Nguyen, Advisor

Jessie and Yiwen are both in the Department of Sociology and Criminology. We congratulate them both on their successful submissions and we look forward to reporting on their results in a future Docket.



*Jessie Slepicka and Yiwen Zhang*

## CJRC Graduate Student Assistants Win Criminology Paper Competition

CJRC Graduate Student Assistants, Yiwen Zhang and Julia Dillavou, were winners in the published paper category for 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Criminology Paper Competition within the department. Congrats Yiwen and Julia!

Yiwen Zhang ["Did the Prison Industrial Complex Deliver on Its Promise? Prison Proliferation and Employment in Rural America"](#)

Julia Dillavou ["Solidarity or Solitude? Correlates of Incarceration and the Peer Networks of Imprisoned Women"](#)

## Criminology Speaker Series- Spring 2023

The Criminology Speaker Series for the academic year 2022-2023 featured a diverse range of speakers who shared their research and expertise on assorted topics in criminology. In case you missed any of the presentations we encourage you to view them below. Stay tuned for our fall speaker series lineup announcement over the summer.

[“Nonacademic Career Panel”](#) – Ted Greenfelder, Dr. Julia Laskorunsky, and Dr. Rory Monaghan

[“Contextual Inequality and Sentencing”](#) – Dr. Laura Beckman

[“The Professional Motivations of Police Officers”](#) -Dr. Aaron Chalfin

[“Exiled in America: Life on the Margins in a Residential Motel”](#) – Dr. Christopher Dum

## **OUTREACH AND ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES**

### Internships and Research Assistantships

We are proud to share with you the latest news on internships and research assistantships for the past academic year.

In the past academic year, we helped 56 students search for internships for the FA22/SP23 semesters. We are excited to announce that out of these students, 20 have been hired for their desired positions, and we are still waiting for offers for four students who have already completed their post-interview process.

Also, we received 32 applications for research assistantships for the FA22/SP23 semester. Out of these, the department has successfully hired 12 research assistants to work alongside our faculty members on various research projects including Criminal Justice Research Center seed funding. We are proud to have undergraduates working on research studies with faculty, and we are confident that they will contribute to the research projects they are involved in.

Applications and professor requests are being accepted for research assistantships for the fall 2023 semester. Faculty can email Joy Vincent-Killian, Outreach and Enrichment Coordinator, at [jkv1@psu.edu](mailto:jkv1@psu.edu), directly for more information. Students can email Joy for the application link and to schedule a time to meet with her for an intake interview.



## **CAMPUS CONNECTIONS**

### **2023 New Commonwealth Campus Center-Nodes Funded Projects**

The Commonwealth Campus Center-Nodes (C3N) initiative engages faculty from across Penn State who are conducting criminal justice research as part of the Criminal Justice C3N (CJ C3N). A main goal of the broader C3N program is to foster faculty relationships across Penn State in support of Commonwealth Campus faculty research activities by increasing Commonwealth Campus faculty connections with research resources available at UP. This month we would like to highlight the 2023 seed grant funded projects.

**Digital Literacy: Curriculum Model Development to Reduce Recidivism-** Dr. Jennifer Breese, (Program Head Cybersecurity Operations and Analytics, Assistant Professor, Cybersecurity Operations and Analytics; Information Sciences and Technology, C3N Faculty Affiliate at Penn State Greater Allegheny) will conduct research that seeks to provide a Digital Literacy course preparing adult offenders for reconciliation with the community. The increasing use of technology and digital literacy for work purposes has become a predictor of successful employment; however, understanding basic security, privacy, and online citizenship is paramount to the way people live and communicate reducing recidivism rates.

**Understanding Criminal Offending and Mortality Using CJARS and Disparities in American Communities (MDAC) Data-** Dr. Siyu Liu (Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, School of Public Affairs, C3N Faculty Affiliate at Penn State Harrisburg) will work on a project that aims to use Criminal Justice Administrative Records System (CJARS) data linked with Mortality Disparities in American Communities (MDAC) data to examine desistance patterns and mortality risks among different demographic groups taking into account exposure time in population-based samples.

**What is the Role of Drug Courts in the Era of Drug Policy Reform?-** Dr. Jennifer Murphy, (Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, C3N Faculty Affiliate at Penn State Berks) will work on a pilot study to investigate how adult drug courts have responded to various criminal justice reforms, especially those in the past ten years, and what role drug courts play in current drug policy. Given that there are still more than 4000 drug courts operating in the United States, it is important to understand who they are targeting, how they work, and how they have adjusted to changes in local, state, and federal criminal justice policies.

**You're a Warrior: Understanding the Role of Narrative in Police Training and Culture-** Dr. Kurt Fowler, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, C3N Faculty Affiliate at Penn State Abington, will investigate the internal mechanisms of decision making among police officers through the lenses of training, culture, and narrative. This research seeks to better understand the role these elements play on the impact of training and police decision making, specifically, during use of force incidents.

## **CORRECTIONS AND RE-ENTRY**

### **Justice Education Week: Reentry Simulation**

On April 20, as part of Justice Education Week, the Penn State Restorative Justice Initiative hosted a Reentry Simulation in the HUB. The reentry simulation highlights the challenges formerly incarcerated individuals face, including finding transportation, obtaining identification, and securing employment. Centre County Reentry Coalition CJRC representative, Elaine Arsenault, volunteered at the reentry simulation where participants go through a month in the life of a returning citizen and then debrief as a group about the challenges. Many individuals who participate in the reentry simulation find the experience impactful.

## **TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION**

### **Seed Grant Award: Geographic Heterogeneity in Opioid Use in the Wake of COVID-19 and Cannabis' Potential for Harm Reduction**

Dr. Louisa Holmes, Assistant Professor of Geography and Demography, will collect survey data from individuals who use opioids, those in recovery from opioid use disorder, and those who use cannabis in the Northern, North Central, and Central Appalachian States. This research will focus on describing how ongoing COVID-related stressors may be associated with opioid use frequency, use of prescription versus illicit opioids, and barriers to obtaining substance use treatment. In addition, this research will investigate concurrent and simultaneous co-use of opioids with cannabis and illicit drugs, assess to what degree those who use opioids or are in recovery from opioid use disorder (OUD) view or use cannabis as a substitute to opioids for pain management, evaluate differences by state cannabis legalization policies in opioid-cannabis co-use and cannabis substitution, and measure differences in opioid use, opioid co-use, and substance use treatment availability and uptake across a very rural to urban spectrum.

## CJRC Researchers Publish in *The American Journal of Accountable Care*

A new article was recently published in *The American Journal of Accountable Care* titled “A Multistakeholder Effort in Pennsylvania to Improve the Accuracy of Reporting Fatal Drug Overdoses.” The authors include Yunfeng Shi, Associate Professor of Health Policy and Administration, Glenn Sterner, CJRC – Abington – Faculty Lead, Kelly Wolgast, Associate Teaching Professor; Assistant Dean for Outreach & Professional Development, Laina McInerney, PSU student, Varidhi Duggal, MRO Corporation, Hannah Earley, PSU student, Isabella Rater, PSU student, Kristine Gonnella, Public Health Management Cooperation, and Elaine Arsenault, CJRC Researcher.

Read the journal article [here](#).

[Penn State News Article](#)

## CJRC Faculty Affiliate, Sarah Brothers, and Colleagues Publish in *Harm Reduction Journal*

A new article was recently published in *Harm Reduction Journal*, titled “Patient Experiences of Methadone Treatment Changes During the First Wave of COVID-19: A National Community Driven Survey.” The authors include Sarah Brothers, CJRC Faculty Affiliate, Adam Palayew, Caty Simon, Abby Coulter, Knina Strichartz, Nick Voyles, and Louise Vincent. The Criminal Justice Research Center supported part of this work through a 2021 seed grant award for the “Organized Knowledge Production by People who Use Drugs: Ethical Collaborative Research in Theory and Practice During the Overdose Epidemic” project.

Read the article [here](#).

## **COURTS AND SENTENCING**

### Seed Grant Award: Probation Duration: System Diversion or Entrapment

Dr. Megan C. Kurlychek (Professor of Sociology, Criminology, and Public Policy and Associate Director of the CJRC) and collaborator Dr. Matthew Kleiman (Deputy Director, The Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing) will conduct research to develop a detailed understanding of the structuring of probation sentences and how these determinations may be linked with individual success or failure. When an individual is sentenced to probation, they can receive very long sentences and also receive numerous conditions of probation with which they must comply. Many of these conditions, (such as the requirement to pay for probation supervision), may represent an undue burden, particularly on marginalized individuals. This study attempts through a pilot research project in a single county in Pennsylvania to further investigate probation sentence structures, outcomes and racial/ethnic disparities.



## CJRC Director Presents at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference on the Death Penalty

Dr. Jeffery Ulmer, CJRC Director, gave a presentation titled, "Victim Race, Gender, and Geographic Arbitrariness: Death Penalty Prosecution and Sentencing in Pennsylvania" at the 2nd Annual Conference on the Death Penalty at Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, April 4, 2023. The conference was sponsored by Lamar University's Center for Death Penalty Studies. Dr. Ulmer's presentation summarized findings from his and Gary Zajac's recent NSF-funded research on murder prosecution and sentencing, as well as their studies of the death penalty in Pennsylvania with Dr. John Kramer. Dr. Ulmer's presentation also noted that this research has greatly benefitted from CJRC support and resources over the years.

Other notable speakers at the conference included Distinguished Speakers Dr. Austin Sarat and Dr. Franklin Zimring, as well as Keynote Speaker Robert Dunham, Director of the Death Penalty Information Center, <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/>.



## Dorothy Du, PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar, Publishes in the *University of Baltimore Law Review*

PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar, Dorothy Du, published an article in the *University of Baltimore Law Review*. The article is titled "The Effect of Defendant Gender on Jurors' Decision-Making." Read the article [here](#).

Dorothy Du, PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar, Publishes in the  
*Rutgers Journal of Law & Public Policy*

PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar, Dorothy Du, published an article in the *Rutgers Journal of Law & Public Policy*. The article is titled "The Effect of Neuro-evidence on Jurors' Decision Making" Read the article [here](#).

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION**

**Enhanced Seed Grant Award: Racial Resentment Writ Large: Understanding Americans' Attitudes Toward Criminal Justice Institutions and Reforms**

Dr. Eric Silver (Professor of Sociology and Criminology) and Co-Investigators Dr. John Iceland (Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Demography) and Dr. Kerby Goff (Postdoctoral Fellow at Rice University) will examine racial resentment by and toward Blacks, Whites, Latinos, and Asians, and systemic racism beliefs as drivers of Americans' attitudes toward criminal justice institutions and reforms. The team will survey nationally representative samples, the data will include information on Americans' attitudes toward police, police reform, bail reform, drug decriminalization, gun control, decarceration, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Stop Asian Hate movement, and punitiveness toward white collar offenders.

**Seed Grant Award: Big Data and Violence Diffusion across US Communities: Was Diffusion Exacerbated or Weakened during the Covid-19 Pandemic?**

Dr. Corina Graif (Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminology) and Collaborating Investigator Christopher Seto (Assistant Professor of Sociology at Purdue University) will aim to address two main research questions: To what extent violence diffuses from a community to another? More specifically, to what extent homicide and other violent incidents in one (origin) place can contribute to new such events in other (destination) places that are connected through population mobility flows. The second aim is to address what extent violence diffusion was exacerbated or weakened by the Covid-19 pandemic?

## Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Releases Report on Impact of Online Gambling in Pennsylvania

The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs released a report on the impact of online gambling in Pennsylvania. This project was done through the Criminal Justice Research Center- Abington. The authors include Dr. Glenn Sterner, CJRC – Abington – Faculty Lead, Gillian Russell, CJRC-Abington Assistant Research Professor, Miranda P. Kaye, Director of the Social Science Research Institute's Survey Research Center, and Mikael B. Ahlgren, Director of Gaming Initiatives, The Pennsylvania State University.

[View The Pennsylvania Interactive Gaming Assessment: Online Gambling Report 2022](#)

## Gillian Russell, CJRC-Abington- Assistant Research Professor, Highlights the Interactive Gaming Project

Gillian Russell is an Assistant Research Professor with the Criminal Justice Research Center at Penn State Abington. Gillian's primary research interests are the influences of cognition on addictive behaviors (including both behavioral addictions and substance related addictions). Her secondary line of research is investigating the intersecting worlds of gambling and video gaming and factors that influence engagement in or problems with either behavior. She is currently acting as the project coordinator for the Interactive Gaming project, an annual assessment of the impacts of online gambling (also referred to as interactive gaming) being legalized in the state of Pennsylvania.

Gillian and colleagues recently published their work in *International Gambling* in an article titled "[Prevalence and predictors of illegal gambling in Canada.](#)" In addition, Gillian has presented on the Interactive Gaming project at the following conferences:

- Russell, G., Sterner, G, Kaye, M., & Ahlgren, M. (2023) Examining the Impacts of Legalized Online Gambling in Pennsylvania: Results From the Second Interactive Gaming Assessment. Dauphin County Addictions Conference.
- Russell, G., Sterner, G, Kaye, M., & Ahlgren, M. (2023) Gambling in Non-Metropolitan Statistical Area's Within Pennsylvania. Alberta Gambling Research Institute's 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, Banff, Canada.
- Russell, G., Sterner, G, Kaye, M., & Ahlgren, M. (2023) Online Gambling in Pennsylvania: Results of the Interactive Gaming Assessment Two Years In. The CCGP Statewide East Conference

Michael LaForest, PA Department of Corrections Postdoctoral Scholar, Publishes in  
*Journal of Human Capital*

A new article was recently published in *Journal of Human Capital*, titled “The Effects of High School Career and Technical Education on Employment, Wages, and Educational Attainment.” Michael LaForest, PA Department of Corrections Postdoctoral Scholar is the author.

Read the article [here](#).

Criminal Justice Research Center

The Pennsylvania State University  
211 Oswald Tower  
University Park, PA 16802  
814-867-3292

<https://cjrc.la.psu.edu>

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