

PENN STATE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH CENTER

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Message from the Director

This spring has been a busy time for the Criminal Justice Research Center. Our activities this fall and winter furthered our goals of fostering research excellence, outreach and involvement with criminal justice agencies, and outreach with students. We had an active and competitive round of seed grant applications, and were able to fund four regular seed grants and one enhanced seed grant. I believe that these seed grants are at the core of what the CJRC does, since they incubate new research ideas and pilot studies that can lead to broader external funding and exciting new scholarship. We detail the ones we funded below, and we encourage all research affiliates to continue submitting their research ideas for future seed grant competitions.

We welcomed a new postdoctoral scholar, Dr. Amber Petkus. Our Speaker Series has also continued to contribute to the intellectual community of the Department of Sociology and Criminology, as well as other departments and programs. Finally, we are happy to welcome Dr. Matt Kleiman as the new Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. Dr. Kleiman has been a valuable partner with the Criminal Justice Research Center in his former capacity as Deputy Director of the PCS. We look forward to continuing our very productive research partnership with the PCS under Dr. Kleiman's directorship.

Jeffery Ulmer
CJRC Director

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Criminal Justice Research Center Welcomes New Personnel

Dr. Amber Petkus is a Postdoctoral Scholar for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and Penn State's Criminal Justice Research Center. Broadly, her research examines the practices, policies, and impacts of American correctional and sentencing systems for both adult and juvenile populations. She is especially interested in projects that involve partnerships with practitioners and community members, aim to translate research to practice, and advance evidence-based correctional science. Dr. Petkus received her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from the University of Cincinnati, with a concentration in Corrections. Both her master's (criminal justice) and bachelor's (psychology) degrees were obtained from Michigan State University. When she's not working, Amber enjoys traveling and hiking with her two dogs.



Criminology Speaker Series- Fall 2023 Recap

The Criminology Speaker Series for fall 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.

["The Other Side of the Crime Equation: Theorizing Victimization and Vulnerability"](#)– Dr. Chris Schreck

["What Happens When We Die? Death Investigation Beyond Hollywood"](#)- Dr. Jason Brooks

["Politics, Religion, Education, and Views of Capital Punishment"](#)– Dr. Amy Anderson

Darrell Steffensmeier receives American Society of Criminology Award

Darrell Steffensmeier, John Kramer Professor of Sociology and Criminology and CJRC faculty affiliate, recently received the [American Society of Criminology's \(ASC\) 2023 Edwin H. Sutherland Award](#). "Established in 1960, the award recognizes outstanding scholarship within the field of criminology. According to ASC, the award "may be based on a single outstanding book or work, on a series of theoretical or research contributions, or on the accumulated contributions by a senior scholar."

[Read more about Dr. Steffensmeier's achievements here.](#)

Annual American Society of Criminology Meeting Conference Presentations

The following is a list of the presentations given by the Criminal Justice Research Center researchers at the Annual American Society of Criminology Meeting in Philadelphia, PA in November.

- Changes in the Age Distribution of Arrests in Pennsylvania and Their Impact on the Age-Sentencing Relationship, Jeffery Ulmer (CJRC Director) and Ashley Rodriguez (CJRC Graduate Student)
- Value in Longitudinal Research: A Life Course Perspective on the Consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Megan Bears Augustyn (Florida State University), Megan Kurlychek, (CJRC Associate Director), and Kimberly L. Henry, (Colorado State University / Colorado School of Public Health)
- The Sentencing of Youthful Offenders, Yu Du, (PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar at the CJRC) and Megan Kurlychek (CJRC Associate Director)
- Location, Location, Location: Examining the Impact of Out-of-State/Out-of-County Offenders on Sentencing Practices, Yu Du, (PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar at the CJRC), Matthew Kleiman, (Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing Executive Director), and Miranda A. Galvin, (PA Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Scholar Alumni, now at Towson University)
- Incarcerated Until Proven Guilty? An Exploration of Racial Disparities in Pretrial Confinement, Julia Dillavou (CJRC Graduate Student)
- Do Different Marijuana Legalization Approaches Affect Crime Differently?, Yiwen Zhang (CJRC Graduate Student)
- Incarceration in Context: An Analysis of the Impact of County Characteristics on the Use of Jail and Prison Sentences, Emerson Waite (PA Commission on Sentencing Graduate Student at the CJRC)
- The Status of Illegal and Offshore Online Gambling in Pennsylvania, Gillian Russell, (CJRC-Abington-Assistant Research Professor), Glenn E. Sterner (CJRC- Abington - Faculty Lead), Miranda Kaye (The Pennsylvania State University), and Kayla Lopez (Research Specialist, CJRC Abington)
- Development and Validation of the Relative Disadvantage Tool, Evan Lowder (George Mason University), Spencer Lawson (UMASS Medical School), Ebony Ruhland (Rutgers University), Ashley Rodriguez (CJRC Graduate Student), Peyton Frye (George Mason University), and Madeline McPherson (George Mason University)
- Pandemic Justice: A Grounded Theory Examination of Disparities in Virtual Bond Hearings, Ashley Rodriguez, (CJRC Graduate Student), Avery Worrell (University of South Carolina), and Christi Metcalfe (University of South Carolina)
- Intelligence Networks: Expanding Local Rural Drug Intelligence Capacity, Glenn E. Sterner (CJRC - Abington - Faculty Lead), Andrew Hochstetler (Iowa State University), David Peters (Iowa State University), and Shannon Monnat (Syracuse University)
- A Social Network Analysis of Campaign Contributions in Pennsylvania Criminal Justice Elections, John D. Crum (Juniata College, and former CJRC Researcher) and Glenn E. Sterner (CJRC- Abington - Faculty Lead)

OUTREACH AND ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

As we step into the season of spring, as your Outreach and Enrichment Coordinator I am excited to share our lineup of our events that reach Penn State undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, alumni, and the public.

Speaker Series: Non-Academic Career Panel (February 9) Alexia Cooper and Lizabeth Remrey: Kicking off our spring events was the popular Non-Academic Career Panel. Our Department of Justice panelists shared their unique journeys and experiences, providing valuable perspectives on diverse career paths outside the traditional academic route.

Speaker Series: Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing Postdoctoral Dr. Dorothy Yu Du (March 13): In March, we host in person and virtually, Dr. Dorothy Yu Du as she shares insights into “Emerging Evidence on Brain Development and Its Impact on the Judicial Sentencing of Youthful Offenders.” Her expertise will shed light on aspects of the criminal justice system for juveniles. [Register Here.](#)

Speaker Series: Professor Colleen Berryessa from Rutgers (April 5): April brings another highlight to our Speaker Series with Professor Colleen Berryessa from Rutgers School of Criminal Justice. She will present in person and virtually. Join us as she delves into discussions on sentencing trends and bias with her talk “Modeling ‘Remorse Bias’ in the Sentencing of Violent Offenses.” Dr. Berryessa’s research and approach consider how psychological processes, attitudes, and social contexts affect the criminal justice system, particularly related to courts, sentencing, and forms of punishment. [Register Here.](#)

Internship Engagement Update

Our commitment to providing enriching internship experiences remains strong. Over the fall of 2023 through February 2024, we have coached and supported 71 students, resulting in 10 successful hires into spring and summer internships. Many more students are currently navigating interviews, background checks, and polygraph tests, highlighting the real-world impact of our internship program. Internships aid students in career discovery and post-graduation employment opportunities.

Criminal Justice Expo Career Fair (September 26)

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for the Criminal Justice Expo Career Fair on September 26th at HUB - Robeson Center’s Alumni Hall. With 60 agency tables expected, this event promises to be a fantastic opportunity for networking and career exploration. 24 tables are reserved, indicating an elevated level of interest and participation. Agencies include Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), PA State Police, Supreme Court of the United States Police, Baltimore County, MD Police Department, Blair County District Attorney's Office, Anne Arundel, MD County Police, Clinton County Probation, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recruiting, Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County, Crawford County Courts, Dauphin County Human Resources, Loudoun County, VA Sheriff's, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Police Department, Montgomery County VA Police Department, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Prince William County, VA Police Department.

As we embark on these enriching experiences, we invite you to engage, participate, and make the most of the opportunities presented. Connect with us on LinkedIn for up-to-date event registration, student spotlights and news: Penn State Department of Sociology and Criminology and directly with Joy Vincent-Killian, Coordinator.

CORRECTIONS AND RE-ENTRY

Seed Grant Award: Probation Experiences and Challenges in Rural Pennsylvania Communities

Pam Wilcox (Professor of Sociology and Criminology) will conduct an analysis of pilot data on probation service provision and client experiences in rural Pennsylvania in order to gain a preliminary understanding of the challenges facing rural community-based corrections.

TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

Establishing a Collegiate Recovery Program at Penn State Abington

Penn State Abington, renowned for its diverse student body and commuter-centric atmosphere, faces the challenge of limited access to substance use disorder treatment services. In response, the Criminal Justice Research Center at Penn State Abington has secured \$100,000 in funding to establish a Collegiate Recovery Program. This program aims to address the needs of students affected by substance use disorder, either directly or indirectly, and those in recovery. This program will be a partnership with Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS), and the Penn State Abington campus is dedicated to providing a confidential programming space, prioritizing a supportive environment. The Collegiate Recovery team, under the direction of Dr. Glenn Sterner (Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Penn State Abington, Criminal Justice Research Center) and coordination by Professor Michael Lavetsky (Program Chair of Rehabilitation and Human Services Program at Penn State Abington, Licensed Counselor), will leverage the successful model of the Collegiate Recovery Community at University Park to tailor the program to fit Penn State Abington's community needs effectively. This comprehensive approach, including outreach efforts, recovery support services, and event hosting, aims to foster a supportive environment conducive to recovery on campus.

Seed Grant Award: Household Substance Use Bans and Youth Susceptibility to Vaping, Smoking, and Cannabis Use

Jeremy Staff (Professor of Criminology, Sociology, and Demography) with Co-Investigator Jessica Mongilio (Graduate Student in the Department of Sociology and Criminology) will use nationally-representative longitudinal data to assess the impact of household bans on vaping, smoking, and cannabis use on youth susceptibility, age of onset, and past year use of e-cigarettes, tobacco cigarettes, and cannabis.

CJRC Faculty Affiliate, Sarah Brothers, Presented at the Rock Ethics Institute Colloquium

Sarah Brothers, CJRC Faculty Affiliate, presented at the Rock Ethics Institute Colloquium on December 5. The talk, "Community Driven Research with People who Use Drugs: Ethical Implications of Collaborative Research During Multiple Epidemics" examined the ethical implications of developing and implementing a primarily virtual Community Driven Research (CDR) project in collaboration with National Survivors Union (NSU), the American national drug users union, during COVID-19. The Criminal Justice Research Center supported part of this work through a 2021 seed grant award for "Organized Knowledge Production by People who Use Drugs: Ethical Collaborative Research in Theory and Practice During the Overdose Epidemic."

COURTS AND SENTENCING

New Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing

Dr. Matthew Kleiman has recently been selected to serve as the new Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. He succeeds Mark Bergstrom, who retired after a distinguished 30-plus-year tenure. Dr. Kleiman has been with the Commission for over five years, having most recently served as the Commission's Senior Deputy Director where he was responsible for providing leadership and oversight to the Research and Data Analysis and Applications and Information Technology Units. Additionally, he promoted research partnerships with The Pennsylvania State University (PSU) and other institutions and criminal justice partners in the Commonwealth. As Executive Director he looks forward to continuing to build upon the past successes of the partnership between the Commission and the Criminal Justice Research Center.

Prior to joining the Commission Dr. Kleiman worked for nearly two decades at the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) where he collaborated with judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and court staff across the United States and the world to improve the administration of justice. While at NCSC he worked on the development of resource assessment models, program evaluations, the implementation of court-specific performance measures, and improving the rule of law, including projects in Bulgaria, Kosovo, Serbia, Tunisia, and the West Bank. He holds a doctorate in political science from Michigan State University and is a Clinical Professor of Criminology at PSU. He currently serves as the Vice President of the National Association of Sentencing Commissions.

Seed Grant Award: Examining the Role of Drug Courts in an Era of Reform

Jennifer Murphy (Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Penn State Berks) will conduct 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.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION

Enhanced Seed Grant Award: Consumer Racial Profiling in Canada: A Pilot Study

Shaun L. Gabbidon, (Distinguished Professor of Criminal Justice, Penn State Harrisburg) and External Collaborators, Kareem Jordan (Associate Professor of Justice, Law and Criminology, American University) and Akwasi Owusu-Bempah (Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto Mississauga) will examine the prevalence and scope of Consumer Racial Profiling (CRP) in Canada. CRP is defined as the act of discriminating against consumers, by retailers, based upon their race or ethnicity. The team will survey the CRP experiences of a diverse sample of Canadians.

Seed Grant Award: A Pack of Lone Wolves: Understanding the Link Between Incel Culture and Mass Violence Events

Kurt Fowler (Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Penn State Abington) will examine the cultural pipeline that leads to individual behaviors. By examining the language of Incel culture, its prescriptive values, and the narratives of mass violence manifestos, this research will uncover a social process that starts with enculturation and ends with individual acts of mass violence.

Piece by CJRC Associate Director, Megan Kurlychek, Featured in *The Conversation*

Megan Kurlychek, CJRC Associate Director, recently wrote a piece for *The Conversation* regarding intent to invoke stop and frisk policies in Philadelphia.

[Read the Article Here](#)

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March 2024