

# ACJS *today*

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Newsletter



## ACJS Presidential Welcome

### ACJS President Welcome from ACJS President David L. Myers

Greetings ACJS Members:

On March 6, 2026, at our Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I was honored to receive the gavel from President Stephanie Mizrahi and assume the role of president of ACJS. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Stephanie for her outstanding leadership and commitment, as well as to the 2026 program committee and ACJS staff for delivering an excellent conference in Philadelphia.

I have been a member of ACJS since 1996, when I joined as a doctoral student. Over the years, I have had the privilege of serving the organization in a variety of roles and on numerous committees. Becoming president is truly one of the most meaningful highlights of my career. Higher education has provided me with opportunities and experiences I could not have imagined when I began college 40 years ago. While I have served in many leadership roles, I will admit that I did not always fully appreciate what effective leadership entails or how critical it is to education, research, and professional success.

Through personal and professional reflection, I developed the following theme for the 2027 Annual Meeting, which will be held March 30–April 3, 2027, in Orlando, Florida: *Criminal Justice Leadership: Forging Stronger Connections between Research, Education, and Practice*. This theme reflects what has

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become most important to me over the course of my career, as well as the broader challenges facing our society, the future of higher education, and the evolving role of criminal justice as a discipline.

As this theme suggests, leadership in our field should be about building connections, including linking research to practice, faculty to students, and institutions to the communities they serve. At its core, leadership is about connecting people to purpose. My hope is that over the coming year, culminating in our 2027 conference in Orlando, we will engage in a focused and meaningful dialogue about leadership from both scientific and interpersonal perspectives. In doing so, we can strengthen our discipline and help prepare the next generation of leaders within ACJS, criminal justice, and society more broadly.

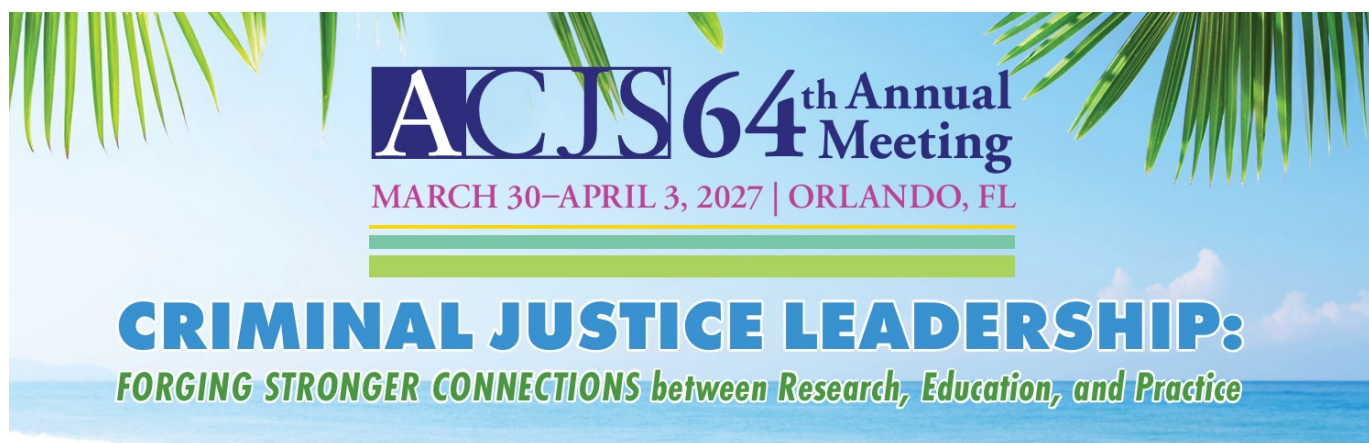
The conference program is being developed with this theme in mind. I would like to sincerely thank program co-chairs Cathy Marcum and Ráchael Powers, along with the entire program committee, for their dedication and ongoing commitment to making the 2027 conference a success. Cathy and Ráchael are exceptional scholars and leaders, and I am deeply grateful for their willingness to serve in this important role.

Finally, in the spirit of "work hard, play hard, and

have fun," and as a long-time Parrothead, I am pleased to share that the Annual Meeting in Orlando will feature an island-inspired, tropical flair. We aim to blend a strong academic program with meaningful professional development opportunities, in a family-friendly and engaging environment that encourages connection, innovation, and the scholarly exchange of ideas. You can also expect Hawaiian shirts, frozen concoction machines, and plenty of Jimmy Buffett music at the Presidential Reception.

As we look ahead, I hope the upcoming year and the 2027 Annual Meeting will focus not only on preparing future leaders but also on enjoying the journey. By fostering evidence-based dialogue, strengthening professional networks, and encouraging collaboration, we can advance informed, ethical, and forward-thinking approaches to criminal justice. Together, we can cultivate leaders who are equipped to navigate complexity, inspire others, and contribute to positive outcomes for individuals and their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve ACJS. Best wishes for a productive and fulfilling summer, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the 2026 regional meetings and in Orlando for the Annual Meeting next spring.





# A Turning Point in the Decline of Criminology as a Discipline? Reflections on the Dismissal of a Leading Criminologist\*

By: *Liqun Cao*

Times have been challenging for academia for quite some time. Some observers characterize the situation as a crisis that has deepened since 2020, when political changes in the United States brought renewed scrutiny to universities. Institutions of higher education have frequently appeared in the headlines, often in connection with grant shortfalls, institutional deficits, program cuts, academic unit mergers, hiring freezes, and layoffs.

As a tenured full professor, news of this sort would not normally trouble me directly. Yet the news that the College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services at the University of Cincinnati decided not to renew the contract of Francis T. Cullen—described in administrative terms as a non-renewal of his appointment as senior research associate—was striking (see Carey, 2025, for additional details). This essay does not attempt to evaluate the internal decision making of the University of Cincinnati; rather, it uses publicly reported events as a starting point for reflecting on broader transformations in higher education. For many within the field, the case invites reflection on whether criminology as an academic discipline may be entering a period of uncertainty. Let me explain why.

According to public reports, the stated reason for the decision was cost reduction. The pandemic placed significant strain on educational institutions

(Hanushek, 2025), and higher education in the United States continues to face financial pressures. Criminal justice programs may be particularly vulnerable because they often rely more heavily on state funding than some other disciplines, such as sociology (Dooley, 2019).

Recent developments across the country illustrate these pressures. For example, Michigan State University, home to one of the oldest criminal justice graduate programs in the United States, has eliminated its on-campus master's degrees, leaving the online option as the primary pathway. In many institutions, criminal justice programs are confronting budgetary constraints in one form or another. At the same time, university administrators increasingly emphasize financial efficiency and managerial approaches to governance that resemble practices in the corporate sector.

In this broader context, the decision regarding Professor Cullen raises questions that extend beyond a single appointment. Universities the size of Cincinnati typically operate with complex financial structures, and personnel decisions may reflect multiple considerations. For observers within the discipline, the case may also prompt reflection about institutional priorities and about how universities balance fiscal considerations with commitments to research excellence and academic leadership.

Criminal justice has long been described as an “academic cash cow” (Cao, 2020, p. 514), and concerns about student quality have been discussed for decades (Sherman, 1978). When decisions affect highly visible scholars, some faculty members interpret them as signals about how educational quality, reputation, and enrollment considerations are being weighed within contemporary universities.

Higher education traditionally operates under a bicameral model of governance, designed to maintain productive relationships between academic and administrative leadership. In a collegial environment, commitments to shared governance and to the protection of faculty members tend to reinforce one another.

In Professor Cullen's case, the university had earlier made a special arrangement that allowed him to retire and later return as a senior research associate. In that role, he continued to teach two doctoral-level seminars and to pursue research. His scholarly productivity remained remarkable, averaging approximately 15 publications per year. In 2022, he received the Stockholm Prize in Criminology, the most prestigious recognition in the field, and his work has accumulated more than 83,000 citations on Google Scholar. His teaching evaluations were consistently outstanding.

For many colleagues and former students, the decision regarding his appointment generated reflection for several reasons. First, it raises questions about how universities evaluate the continuing contributions of senior scholars. Second, it invites discussion about trust and expectations between faculty members and administrators. Third, it highlights the ways in which highly visible personnel decisions can resonate within the broader academic community.

Two aspects of Professor Cullen's career are worth recalling. First, during the 1990s and early 2000s, he became widely recognized as an influential scholar. Colleagues and students often describe him as an engaging teacher and a supportive mentor. Although he had opportunities elsewhere, he chose to remain at Cincinnati and contributed substantially to building one of the nation's most respected criminology programs.

Second, his work has often reflected values

associated with community, support, and mutual responsibility—principles he has linked to his Catholic faith and to a broader commitment to social justice.

I first came to know Professor Cullen in the fall of 1986 when I entered the University of Cincinnati's Department of Sociology to pursue my master's degree. At that time, his wife, Paula Dubeck, served as chair of the sociology department. Professor Cullen was already known as an engaging lecturer whose classes held students' attention. When I worked on my master's thesis under his supervision, I frequently visited his office on the second floor of the old building known as French Hall, a somewhat dilapidated structure whose dark lobby contrasted sharply with the vibrant intellectual atmosphere inside.

When I later began my PhD studies, the criminal justice program had moved from French Hall into the main building of the college and had become one of its most successful units in terms of grants and research productivity. In 1991, the first cohort of criminal justice PhD students arrived at the university. Although I completed my PhD in sociology in 1993, I witnessed much of the program's growth.

By 2002, when U.S. News & World Report first introduced national rankings for PhD programs in criminology and criminal justice, the University of Cincinnati program debuted at third place nationally. Achieving such a position in a relatively short time was widely regarded as a remarkable institutional accomplishment, and the program maintained a top-tier ranking for many years.

Professor Cullen was widely viewed as one of the most influential figures in that program. Over the course of his career, he served as president of both the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. His

scholarship and leadership brought recognition not only to himself but also to his institution.

Leadership and institutional culture inevitably shape the trajectory of academic programs. Professor Cullen worked closely for many years with department chair Edward J. Latessa, whose emphasis on research and institutional reputation helped define the program's identity. Their collaboration reflected a shared commitment to building a strong criminology program at a public university.

In 2015, when Professor Cullen retired from his tenured position, he agreed to return as a part-time professor and senior research associate, continuing to teach and conduct research. For many faculty members, such arrangements symbolize mutual trust between universities and their most senior scholars.

The recent decision not to renew his appointment, therefore, raises broader questions about governance and legitimacy in academic institutions. From a theoretical perspective, these issues can be examined through the framework of organizational legitimacy developed by Mark C. Suchman (1995), which identifies pragmatic, moral, and cognitive dimensions of legitimacy.

First, pragmatic legitimacy concerns the perceived benefits that organizational actions provide to stakeholders. When prominent scholars depart, students and faculty sometimes worry about potential effects on mentorship, research collaboration, and institutional reputation.

Second, moral legitimacy involves alignment with widely shared professional norms. Many research universities traditionally seek to retain their most productive scholars for as long as they remain active contributors to teaching and research. When decisions depart from that pattern, they may prompt discussion about evolving institutional priorities.

Third, cognitive legitimacy concerns the extent to which organizational decisions appear understandable and taken for granted within a community. In academic settings, transparent communication and consultation are often considered essential to maintaining trust between faculty and administration.

When consultation with faculty is limited—or perceived as limited—shared governance can appear weakened. In such situations, faculty members may feel less connected to institutional decision-making processes, which can in turn affect morale and mutual trust.

There is a certain irony in the fact that Professor Cullen devoted much of his scholarly career to studying social justice and legitimacy. The conclusion of his academic career, therefore, provides an occasion for reflection about how those principles operate within universities themselves. On the surface, this episode may appear to be a single administrative decision. Yet it also occurs within a broader landscape in which higher education is undergoing substantial transformation. Political shifts, financial pressures, and changing governance models are reshaping universities and the traditional authority of the professoriate.

For these reasons, the case has attracted attention within the criminology community. Some scholars may view it as part of a larger conversation about the future of academic disciplines, including criminology. The trajectory of the Cincinnati program also mirrors the broader development of criminology and criminal justice as academic fields in the United States. Over the past half-century, criminology evolved from a relatively small subfield within sociology into a distinct interdisciplinary enterprise with its own doctoral programs, journals, and professional associations. During this period, a number of universities built nationally recognized programs whose influence extended well beyond

their campuses. The growth of these programs helped institutionalize criminology as an academic discipline and contributed to the emergence of a vibrant intellectual community.

In 2001, former Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences president Todd R. Clear suggested that criminal justice as an academic discipline had come of age. A quarter century later, the discipline faces new uncertainties. Whether future historians will view the dismissal of a prominent criminologist as symbolizing a turning point for the discipline remains uncertain. What is clear, however, is that events of this kind ultimately invite the criminology community to reflect on how the discipline can sustain its intellectual vitality in a changing academic environment. Universities, administrators, and faculty members all face increasing pressures—from financial constraints to shifting political expectations—that complicate the governance of academic programs. At the same time, the long-term strength of criminology will depend on maintaining the principles that helped build the field in the first place: rigorous scholarship, mutual

respect within academic institutions, and a shared commitment to educating the next generation of scholars. Only by reaffirming these principles can the discipline continue to thrive even amid institutional uncertainty.

\* The author thanks colleagues who offered comments on earlier drafts.

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**Liqun Cao, Ph.D.** is a Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Ontario Tech University, Canada. He was inducted as an Academy Fellow of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in 2025, and Stanford University's global citation rankings place him among the top 2% of scientists worldwide. Prior to joining Ontario Tech University, he taught for 14 years at Eastern Michigan University. His research interests include criminological theory, gun ownership, police legitimacy, policies addressing ascetic deviance, and race and ethnicity in criminal justice. He is a life member of both the American Society of Criminology and the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.





Barton, S. M., Hogan, N. L., & Lambert, E. G. (Eds.). (2026). *Research handbook on criminal justice employees: Job satisfaction, attitudes and behaviors*. Edward Elgar Publishing.  
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035332625>

This book features several members of ACJS.

**Sharon Gandarilla-Javier, Ph.D.** was the 2026 Donal E.J. MacNamara Award winner. This award is given annually to an instructor or an assistant professor who has significant scholarly contribution in the preceding two years to the fields of criminal justice or criminology.

**Jennifer Feitel** published an article in the *International Journal of Law and Society*.

Feitel, J. L. (2026). Faculty self-efficacy regarding a potential active shooter event: A case study of a northeastern university. *International Journal of Law and Society*, 9(1), 116-131. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijls.20260901.22>

**Dr. Natasha N. Johnson** has had two journal articles accepted for publication as book chapters:

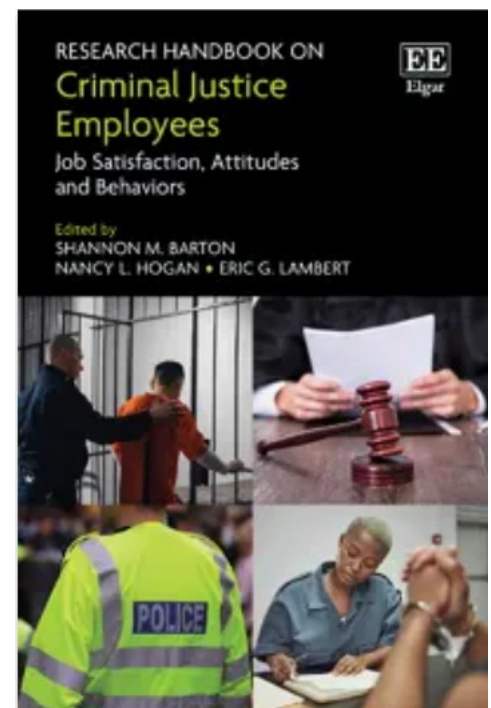
Johnson, N. N., & Johnson, T. L. (2025). Passing the baton: Extending the power of FLCs through a newly inducted criminal justice learning center. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 36(1), 62-85). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2024.2383660>  
 ...Is now also chapter 4 in the forthcoming (May 18) book, Marcum, C. D. (Ed.). (2026). *Diversity, equity and inclusion in criminal justice education*. Taylor & Francis. <https://www.routledge.com/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-in-Criminal-Justice-Education/Marcum/p/book/9781041316428>

Johnson, C., & Johnson, N. N. (2025). Effectively executing a CJ study abroad experience at one R1 university in the southeastern United States. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 36(3), 393-414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2025.2485961>  
 ...Is now also Chapter 1 in the forthcoming (May 18) book, Marcum C. D. (Ed.). (2026). *Study abroad and cultural exchange in criminal justice education*. Taylor & Francis. <https://www.routledge.com/Study-Abroad-and-Cultural-Exchange-in-Criminal-Justice-Education/Marcum/p/book/9781041316411>

*Introduction to American Corrections*, by **Steven E. Barkan**, Michael Rocque, and Amber L. Beckley and published by FlatWorld (<https://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/engage/catalog/titles?search=corrections>), has won the Most Promising New Textbook Award from the Textbook and Academic Authors Association.

**Kevin Courtright** published the following book chapter:

Systematic suspicion: Offender control and reformation as portrayed in *Escape from Alcatraz* and *Straight Time*, pp. 133-146 [invited book chapter] (with Ihor J. Bemko) for *Crime films of the 1970s: Contemporary perspectives*, edited by David A. Mackey, Eric S. See, & Sarah A. See, Bloomsbury Publishing.





**Professor Kevin Courtright** (Criminal Justice, History and Politics) and Gary Cornelius '74 were invited by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) to deliver a presentation on their latest research on offender manipulation to the "Travelling Leadership" team of approximately 150 administrative leaders within the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections on Thursday, April 9th. Delivered at the PADOC Training Academy in Elizabethtown, their research supports the 3rd edition of *The Art of the Con* which is slated to be published this fall. The first two editions of the book were authored by Cornelius. Cornelius and Courtright hope to continue their research into the world of offender manipulation with additional research this summer and fall. This is the 2nd presentation that Cornelius and Courtright have made at the PADOC Training Academy.

**Paul Sutton, Ph.D.**, is assembling a series of life-course documentaries about a number of high profile inmates that he has met over the past decades in his various prison projects. The series will feature long discussions with men who have spent most of their lives in prison -- all the way from a "spoiled rich kid gone bad", to a Mexican-mafia hitman who now works to rehabilitate offenders upon release, to a troubled offender who, at all, witnessed his mother's murder and suffered the guilt resulting from his father's scorn (a father who was in prison at the time of the murder) for not having intervened to prevent that killing. As tragic ironies go, that offender was then, for years, sexually assaulted and humiliated by his aunt. Each of the men in the series has overcome nearly insuperable obstacles to become incredible models of citizenship. The series will be called "CON-versations".



# Addiction is Distributed Evenly. Infrastructure is Not: Implications for Criminal Justice Outcomes

By: *Brandon Burley*

Substance use disorders are not confined to any one type of community. Urban centers, suburban neighborhoods, and rural towns experience addiction at comparable rates. Yet outcomes following addiction treatment vary significantly depending on geography. For students of criminal justice and public policy, this disparity raises an important question: Why do similarly situated individuals experience vastly different justice outcomes after treatment or release?

The answer often lies not in individual motivation, but in access to recovery infrastructure.

Recovery is a long-term process that depends on continuity, stability, and proximity to support. When recovery systems are unevenly distributed—concentrated in urban centers and sparse elsewhere—justice outcomes follow predictable patterns. Relapse, homelessness, technical violations, and reincarceration become more likely in communities with limited recovery capacity. This article examines how geographic disparities in recovery infrastructure shape criminal justice outcomes and why this issue deserves closer attention in criminal justice education.

## Recovery as a Systems Issue, Not a Moral One

Public discourse around addiction frequently emphasizes personal responsibility. While individual effort matters, decades of research demonstrate that recovery success is deeply

influenced by environmental factors, including housing stability, employment access, transportation, and peer support (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020).

Recovery does not occur in isolation. Early recovery is especially fragile, marked by high relapse risk, economic instability, and social disconnection. In communities with dense recovery infrastructure, setbacks can be absorbed. Individuals may reengage quickly through nearby meetings, peer recovery coaching, transitional housing, or outpatient treatment. In communities with limited infrastructure, the same setback can spiral into crisis.

From a systems perspective, this is not a failure of will. It is a failure of access.

## Geographic Concentration of Recovery Infrastructure

Across the United States, recovery services are disproportionately clustered in metropolitan areas. Treatment facilities, recovery housing, nonprofit headquarters, and peer support organizations are more likely to be located where population density supports staffing and funding. Smaller cities and rural communities often rely on a patchwork of volunteer-led programs, faith-based initiatives, and limited outpatient services.

Funding mechanisms reinforce this imbalance. State and federal grants frequently prioritize population size rather than geographic coverage. Short-term funding emphasizes treatment entry and overdose response, while long-term recovery supports—such as housing, transportation, and peer engagement—remain underfunded. As a result, recovery capacity may look sufficient on paper while remaining inaccessible in practice.

For criminal justice systems operating in these areas, the implications are significant.

## Downstream Effects on the Criminal Justice System

When recovery infrastructure is weak, justice systems absorb the consequences. Disrupted recovery increases emergency department utilization, contributes to homelessness, and elevates the likelihood of justice involvement. For individuals under community supervision, recovery instability often leads directly to technical violations.

Missed treatment appointments, inability to maintain housing, transportation barriers, and relapse-related noncompliance frequently trigger revocations. Importantly, these violations are often administrative rather than criminal in nature. Individuals are returned to custody not for new offenses but for failing to comply with conditions that assume stable access to services.

This dynamic contributes to jail churn and supervision overload. Probation and parole officers manage caseloads shaped less by risk than by instability. Facilities house individuals whose primary challenge is unmet recovery needs rather than public safety threats. Over time, this erodes system efficiency and undermines the stated goals of rehabilitation and recidivism reduction.

## A Regional Case Example: East Tennessee

East Tennessee illustrates this pattern clearly. Knoxville, the region's largest city, hosts a dense network of treatment providers, recovery nonprofits, and supportive services. Individuals seeking recovery in the city have multiple entry points and redundancy when services fail.

Surrounding communities such as Oak Ridge and other smaller municipalities face similar rates of addiction but operate with far fewer resources.

Recovery efforts in these areas depend heavily on consistent but limited programs, including peer-led and volunteer-based initiatives. While these programs provide essential continuity and accountability, they lack the capacity to absorb disruptions caused by relapse, housing loss, or transportation barriers.

When recovery collapses in these communities, individuals are more likely to cycle into emergency services, homelessness, or justice involvement. The difference in outcomes is not explained by motivation or diagnosis, but by geography.

## Implications for Criminal Justice Education

For criminal justice students, this issue challenges common assumptions about accountability and compliance. It highlights the importance of examining how policy design and infrastructure distribution shape individual behavior.

Several instructional questions emerge:

- How should criminal justice systems measure recovery capacity: by number of providers or by continuity across regions?
- What happens when supervision conditions assume access that does not exist?
- How do funding formulas and service placement decisions affect justice outcomes indirectly?
- Where should responsibility lie when compliance failures are structurally predictable?

These questions are particularly relevant in courses on corrections, community supervision, reentry, public administration, and criminological theory. Understanding recovery as infrastructure rather than intervention helps students analyze justice outcomes through a systems lens rather than a moral one.

## Policy and Practice Considerations

Addressing geographic disparities in recovery infrastructure does not require abandoning accountability. It requires aligning expectations with reality. Regional coordination, shared recovery resources, and integration between justice agencies and recovery providers can mitigate service gaps. Importantly, these approaches emphasize stabilization rather than punishment.

From a criminal justice standpoint, recovery stability functions as a form of informal social control. When individuals have consistent access to support, employment pathways, and housing, compliance becomes achievable. When access is fragmented, failure becomes predictable.

## Conclusion

Addiction is distributed relatively evenly across

communities. Recovery infrastructure is not. This imbalance shapes justice outcomes in ways that are often misunderstood or misattributed to individual behavior.

For criminal justice professionals, policymakers, and students, recognizing recovery as a structural variable rather than a personal trait is essential. Justice systems cannot achieve long-term reductions in recidivism without addressing the geographic realities that govern recovery success.

In the context of criminal justice, where someone lives often matters as much as what they do.

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**Brandon Burley, M.P.A.**, is a criminal justice educator, retired law enforcement detective, and former U.S. Marine. He teaches criminal justice, government, economics, and ethics, and writes on criminal justice systems, recidivism, public policy, and recovery infrastructure. His work has appeared in academic, policy, and national public-interest publications.



## JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

### **Perceptions and Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Among Criminal Justice Students**

Brooke Nodeland, Mark Saber, & Robert Wall

Published Online: March 6, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2640902>

### **Cybercrime Training for Police Officers: A Survey of Colorado Local Law Enforcement Agencies**

Vivian Guetler, Kyle C. Ward, & Felix Junior Appiah Kubi

Published Online: March 10, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2642260>

### **Strengths, Experiences, and Learning Support Needs of System-Impacted Students in Criminology and Law**

George Christopher Dertadian, Andy Kaladelfos, Phillip Wadds,

Sharleigh Crittenden, Tina McPhee, & Lukas Carey

Published Online: March 18, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2643397>

### **Utilizing and Detecting AI in Higher Education: A Reflection from an Online, Asynchronous, Criminal Justice Course**

Makayla Burden

Published Online: March 28, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2646601>

### **Cybercrime Education in U.S. Criminology and Criminal Justice Doctoral Programs: Curricula, Faculty, Capacity, and Interdisciplinary Challenges**

Ling Wu, Yuchen Wang, Claire Seungeun Lee, Wei Li, James

Zhang, & Xinyue Ye

Published Online: March 28, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2648029>

### **Moral Values and Demographic Predictors of Attitudes Toward Criminal Justice Policies: Evidence from Criminology Students in the Philippines**

Mary Grace Lumidao Salvador

Published Online: April 1, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2652303>

### **Navigating Generative AI in Cybercrime Education: An Exploratory Study of Adoption, Self-Efficacy, and Ethics**

Hannarae Lee

Published Online: April 8, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2654600>

### **Using an Escape Room to Develop Collaborative Skills in Criminology Students: Evidence from a Quasi-Experimental Study**

Gaëlle Brotto & Iris Lim

Published Online: April 10, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2655389>

### **Authenticity, Care, and Relationships, Ethical Decision-Making in Criminal Justice Education**

Robert Bradford Lehmann & Kurt Stemhagen

Published Online: April 13, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2654598>

### **Integrating Team-Based Learning (TBL) into Cybercrime Education**

Brooke Nodeland

Published Online: April 13, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2654581>

### **Elder Abuse in Undergraduate Criminal Justice and Criminology Curricula: A Content Analysis of Course Syllabi and Textbooks**

Deneil D. Christian

Published Online: April 16, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2655951>



**Utilizing the "True Crime Podcast" Format to Teach Criminology Theories**

Kristie Boyett

Published Online: April 21, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2655937>

**Facilitating Student Participation in Criminal Justice Voluntary Work in the United Kingdom: A Pilot Study**

Emma Burt

Published Online: April 22, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2661290>

**Future Professionals and Gendered Violence: Education and Perspectives of Australian Criminology and Law Students**

Shannon Dodd & Stefani Vasil

Published Online: April 24, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2660725>

**AI's Type: Unintended Consequences of Using AI Generated Images in Political Science Research**

Elizabeth A. Tillman & Ryann D. Donlon

Published Online: April 25, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2026.2660723>

**JUSTICE QUARTERLY**

**Online Harassment, Negative Affect, and Suicidal Ideation Among Korean Adolescents: A Gender-Differentiated Test of General Strain Theory (GST)**

Sohee Jung & Brent R. Klein

Published Online: March 7, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2026.2638367>

**Structural Racism and the Segregation of Violence in Ethnoracial Neighborhoods**

Thomas L. McNulty, Paul E. Bellair, Man-Kit Lei, & Arlana Henry

Published Online: March 7, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2026.2638370>

**The Interorganizational Effects of Reform Prosecution Declination Policies**

Nicholas Goldrosen

Published Online: March 14, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2026.2643212>

**JUSTICE EVALUATION JOURNAL**

**Relationship Quality and Prison Visitation: Examining Contemporary Modes of Contact in Prison Settings**

Nancy Rodriguez & Lacey N Pappas

Published Online: March 20, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/24751979.2026.2646839>

**An Implementation Science Approach to Assess Law Enforcement Deflection Programs**

Stanley N Ratemo, Emily Suiter, Kyle McLean, Naomi Shneibaum, & Bryan Lee Miller

Published Online: April 2, 2026

<https://doi.org/10.1080/24751979.2026.2651743>

**Recent Publications:  
February 26, 2026 - April 29, 2026**





## Joe Sim's

# *What Do We Know and What Should We Do About Abolishing Prisons?*

SAGE

ISBN: 9781529684605

Review by Tiffany Kyei  
Middle Georgia State University



### Introduction

The global landscape of criminal justice is currently defined by a profound paradox: While prison populations continue to surge in many regions, the public's confidence in the carceral state as a tool for safety and rehabilitation has reached a historic low point. "Thirty-nine states showed growth in the sentenced prison populations from 2022 to 2023, with seven states adding at least 1,000 persons" (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2024).

Within this climate of skepticism, Joe Sim's *What Do We Know and What Should We Do About Abolishing Prisons?* arrives not as a call for reform, but as a rigorous demand for dissolution. Sim, a veteran scholar of penal policy, argues that the two-century-old experiment of the modern prison is a malignant force that has fundamentally failed to fulfill its stated goals of deterrence and social repair. Two other goals have justified the prison's existence: deterrence and incapacitation. These goals have also been criticized (Sim, 2025, p.15).

This review explores Sim's deconstruction of "liberal reformism" (p. 9) and his evidence-based case for an abolitionist future. Most importantly, this review assesses the book's utility in Middle Georgia State University's Introduction to Criminology course (CRJU

2316), where it serves as a vital pedagogical tool for challenging the foundational assumptions of social control and state power.

### Book Description

Sim's primary objective is to dismantle the reformist delusion that with enough funding, better training, or humane architecture, the prison system can be fixed. He begins by tracing the persistent failure of the carceral project, noting that despite two centuries of innovative reforms, the institution remains a site of state-sponsored violence. For undergraduate students taking the Introduction to Criminology course, this section of the book is a masterclass in critical penology. Sim argues that the prison does not exist to reduce crime, but rather to manage the surplus population originated by neoliberal economic policies and social norms. This perspective aligns with how "High crime rates are regarded as a normal social fact, and crime-avoidance becomes an organizing principle of everyday life" as described by Garland and Sparks (2000).

A concept in the text is Sim's discussion of "social murder" (pp. 38–39). Drawing on Engels, Sim expands this definition to include the slow, systemic death caused by incarceration, the loss of

community ties, the destruction of physical health, and the psychological state that occurs behind bars. He provides a strong critique of the dangerousness myth, providing evidence that most people who are held in custody pose little threat to public safety, while the crimes affecting the environment and tied to state corruption remain largely unpunished and unconstrained.

The second half of the book moves from critique to construction. Sim does not call for the opening of gates without a plan; he outlines a pragmatic abolitionist program (p. 98). This includes immediate “non-reformist reforms” such as a moratorium on new prison construction, the decriminalization of drug offenses, and the redistribution of correctional budgets to community-led harm reduction and transformative justice initiatives. This section provides a roadmap for classroom debates, and it moves the conversation from the abstract “what if” to the concrete “how.”

### Curriculum Applicability

For an instructor of CRJU 2316, Sim’s text serves as a pedagogical shift. While introductory textbooks, such as *Criminology* by Adler et al. (2022), typically provide a broad survey of biological, psychological, and sociological theories, they often treat the “reaction to crime” (the prison) as a neutral, corrective measure. Sim challenges this neutrality. By integrating this book into a syllabus, an instructor can transition students from the basic comprehension of street crime to a sophisticated critique of conflict theory. Sim’s work illustrates the core of the conflict perspective: that the law is not a reflection of a social consensus, but rather a tool used by those in power to control those without it.

In a classroom setting, this allows for a discussion on restorative justice versus retributive justice. Instead of merely defining these terms, students can use Sim’s abolitionist program (p. 97) as a case

study to debate whether true justice can ever be achieved within a punitive framework. The text also breathes life into the concept of white-collar crime and the “crimes of the powerful.” Most students enter an introductory course with a police procedural bias, which is the idea that crime is something that happens in dark alleys. Sim redirects the sociological gaze toward state-sanctioned harms, such as environmental racism and corporate negligence. By encouraging students to ask why a person stealing a loaf of bread can be massively affected by the legal system while a corporation poisoning a water supply faces a fine, Sim encourages the high-level critical thinking that defines the criminology discipline. For the CRJU 2316 student, Sim’s book is not just a reading assignment; it is a challenge to the assumptions of the American legal system. It provides the “critical” part in critical criminology, moving the curriculum beyond the memorization of dates and definitions toward a deep, structural analysis of social justice.

### Student Level and Implementation

*What Do We Know and What Should We Do About Abolishing Prisons?* is most effectively positioned for sophomores and juniors in the undergraduate program. While the concept is accessible and avoids the exhaustive list of legal terms that often overwhelms undergraduates, the conceptual shift it demands requires an understanding of the three pillars of justice. A student who has already completed Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJU 1110) will find Sim’s deconstruction of the carceral state more impactful because they will possess the baseline knowledge of how the system is intended to function.

For instructors, the book will serve as an excellent and distinct primary text for a flipped classroom model. Rather than lecturing students on the failings of the penal system, an instructor can assign Sim’s chapters on “social murder” and ask students to

develop a rebuttal or a defense based on contemporary recidivism data. This encourages students to move beyond passive memorization and into the realm of criminological evaluation. By presenting abolition not as a utopia but as a policy alternative, Sim provides the intellectual stage necessary for students to become informed critics of the systems they may one day lead as researchers, educators, and professionals.

## Conclusion

Joe Sim has provided the field with a rare gift: a theoretically grounded and unapologetically critical approach that is also deeply teachable. For the ACJS community, this book is an essential addition

to any criminology syllabus that seeks to move beyond the norm. It does not just ask what we know about prisons; it asks if we have the moral courage to act on that knowledge. For CRJU 2316 Introduction to Criminology, it is nothing short of a transformative approach.

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**Tiffany Kyei** is a doctoral student in public safety with a security analytics concentration track (within the department of Psychology and Criminal Justice). She is a graduate research assistant at Middle Georgia State University. Lastly, Tiffany is the founder of "TheVoiceSafe", which is a social media advocacy platform dedicated to advancing victim awareness, violence prevention, and public safety education. Her research interests include gender-based violence and violence against children, which disproportionately affects women, girls, and young children. This is not an issue in one nation, but rather a global crisis. Tiffany's goal is to contribute to a movement that exemplifies justice, empowers survivors, and advances victim advocacy through awareness, education, and prevention.



# The Human Side of Arrest Decisions: Emotional Labor and Psychological Stress in Law Enforcement

By: *Shanee Ellington*

## Introduction

Police officers face many situations that demand quick decision making with potentially dire consequences. One of these decisions is whether to make arrests. It not only determines what happens in each situation but also speaks to values within criminal justice at the social level. Although standards that govern this process and the steps that accompany it have been examined, much less is understood about the emotional and psychological consequences of arrest decision making for officers (Lee & Wu, 2024). This paper examines this critical aspect of policing and uses the most recent studies within the discipline and the adjacent fields of psychology and organizational studies to do so.

## Policing as Emotional Labor

Policing has recently been characterized in the literature as a profession that requires emotional labor. A process that requires the police to control their emotions to fulfill their organizational objectives is called emotional labor. It is not simply the police officers controlling their emotions (Grandey & Melloy, 2017). It is doing so within the context of a high-stress and unpredictable criminal justice contact.

The most up-to-date research employing surveys of active officers shows that emotional labor is strongly correlated with burnout, a complex

syndrome that consists of exhaustion and disengagement from work roles (Hopkins et al., 2023). Particularly, those officers who perform emotional work of a higher order, such as regulating emotional responses of compassion in law enforcement, experience higher burnout and stress outcomes (Hopkins et al., 2023).

Those who are required to unify internal empathy and external control, particularly in the heat of the moment with the use of arrest powers, most often find themselves in a state of self-conflict. These emotional demands are not peripheral; they shape how officers perceive the people they serve and how they conceive of their role in the system (Andersen et al., 2015). Officers experience emotional work when they must balance empathy toward victims, compliance with the law, community expectations, and the enforcement of order.

## The Psychological Challenges of Arrest Decisions

An arrest decision is both the product of probable cause and constitutional reasoning and an instance of psychological conflict for the officer. For instance, an arrest in a mental health crisis, a domestic dispute, or a low-level offense is a decision that creates psychological stress for officers, resulting in procedural anguish. Decisions such as these, in the context of an ambiguous arrest scenario, seem to shift the balance from legal analysis to moral reasoning and contextual understanding (Todak & James, 2018).

The existing stress and psychological distress literature characterizes law enforcement as an occupation that precipitates excessive psychological distress and related symptoms (Lee & Wu, 2024). These are primarily the result of stress associated with exposure to traumatic experiences.

Research examining occupational stress points to the fact that these emotional and psychological demands do not simply disappear as the officer drives away from the incident (Violanti et al., 2018). The demands contribute to an emotional strain drawn from, or depleted of, wellness and job satisfaction and affect decision making in the future.

## Culture and Organizational Discretion

Police culture often values decisiveness and control, where officers are expected to quickly resolve a situation and remain confident. However, this culture can discourage open emotional vulnerability as a psychological weakness (Baker et al., 2023). The police role is shaped not only by the legal context but the degree to which organizations foster or inhibit emotional health.

Positive leadership and departmental support are important for the shaping of the psychological responses of officers. Improved emotional regulation and reduced burnout are associated with police agencies that have supportive structures that allow officers to share emotional experiences and access mental health support and receive performance feedback (Jetelina et al., 2020).

In addition, the research on police discretion, including the decision to make an arrest or provide a non-arrest alternative response, emphasizes the role of emotional regulation in the interpretation of the uncertain situational factors and the decision of the officers on a particular course of action (Todak & James, 2018). The ability of officers to manage emotions in a particular situation is associated with effective problem-solving and the absence of overtly aggressive behavior (Andersen et al., 2018).

## Training, Education, and Emotional Intelligence

Law enforcement training curricula have focused on

the legal, tactical, and procedural aspects of policing. Those remain important, but adding emotional intelligence, ethical decision making, and stress management training to the curricula will increase preparedness for the emotional aspects of policing.

Experiencing scenarios that integrate emotional regulation and reflection exercises, such as bias recognition, acute stress management, empathy, and legal criteria, assist officers in acquiring appropriate cognitive and emotional skills for complex decision making (Andersen et al., 2018). The literature indicates that individuals with higher emotional intelligence perform better in crisis de-escalation and conflict resolution. Given that these skills are critical for the emotional well-being of officers and the quality of interactions with the community, it is important to strengthen these skills (Andersen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, recent studies endorse the need for the integration of peer support, structured wellness programs, and officer-centered dialogues into ongoing professional development. These initiatives target the mitigation of stress but also enhance the strengthening of ethical reasoning and discretionary judgment (Jetelina et al., 2020).

## Consequences for Research and Practice

The recognition of emotional labor, stress, and decision-making regarding arrest as interconnected phenomena opens some opportunities for development and innovation within the field of criminal justice, as follows:

1: Increased phenomenological research:

The field needs more phenomenological studies to understand the emotional and labor aspects experienced by officers when making arrest decisions (Todak & James, 2018).

2: Emotional wellness as one of the indicators

of professional performance and officer support tools could be integrated by criminal justice agencies into their policy frameworks (Jetelina et al., 2020).

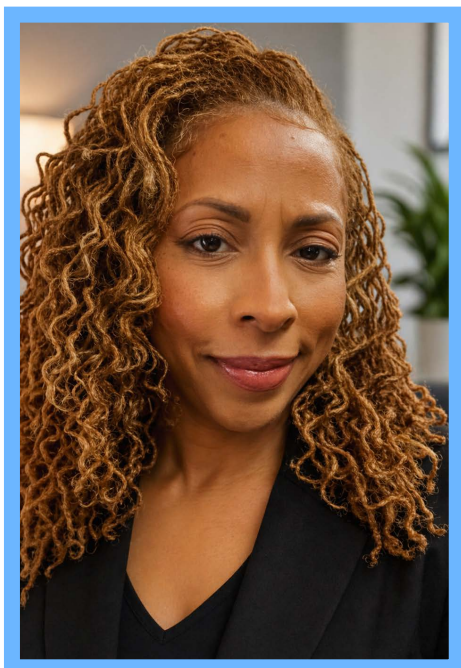
3: Developing emotional intelligence, ethical decision making, and psychological resilience should be integrated into the curriculum of criminal justice programs.

4: The cultivation of a departmental culture that acknowledges emotional experiences as an integral part of professional performance should be prioritized by the leadership (Baker et al., 2023).

Recognizing police officers as emotional individuals, instead of simply procedural actors, would allow the field of criminal justice to better serve the needs of officers and the public.

## Conclusion

There is an overemphasis on the need to get the law right and on the procedural right when it comes to arrests within the discourse of criminal justice, and the focus needs to shift to the psychology and emotional dimensions of policing as equally needed. Arrests involve a multitude of complex, and interconnected, relational phenomena that serve to



**Shanee Ellington, PhD**, is a scholar in Criminal Justice whose research examines the psychological and emotional dimensions of law enforcement decision-making. Her work focuses on how arrest decisions impact officers, with particular attention to emotional labor, occupational stress, and organizational culture within policing institutions. She is committed to advancing research that informs ethical practice, strengthens officer wellness, and improves outcomes in police-community interactions.

shape the community, but also the police themselves. There is an emerging body of research that supports the assertion that emotional exhaustion, stress, and emotional intelligence, as a construct, are critical factors in determining how officers make decisions in these high-stakes encounters.

For criminal justice as a discipline, understanding the emotions involved in policing means transcending the boundaries of the mechanics and the law (Hopkins et al., 2023; Lee & Wu, 2024). It underscores the importance of understanding emotion in policing, as it informs ethical decision-making, shapes police and community relationships, impacts officers' well-being, and ultimately advances the goals of justice and public safety.

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Please email questions to Ben Stickle at: [ben.stickle@mtsu.edu](mailto:ben.stickle@mtsu.edu)



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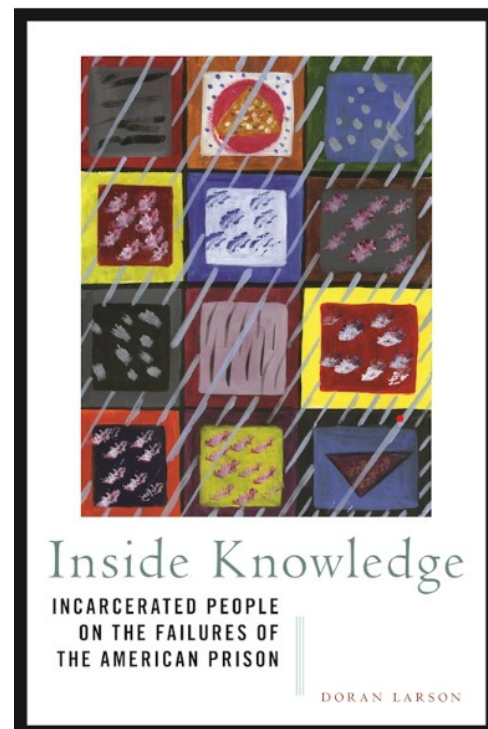
## Doran Larson's *Inside Knowledge: Incarcerated People on the Failures of the American Prison*

NYU Press  
ISBN: 9781479818006

Review by Chayne Wild  
Virginia Tech

In December of 2025, Doran Larson's book, *Inside Knowledge: Incarcerated People on the Failures of the American Prison*, was awarded the prestigious Outstanding Academic Title Choice Award. Out of more than 13,000 submissions, this placed the book in the top 3%, as determined by the awardees, for scholarly excellence, significant contribution, and "value as an important—often the first—treatment of their subject" ("Larson's Inside Knowledge," 2025).

Larson outlines the ongoing American Prison Writing Archive (APWA) project, funded by a Mellon Grant and currently hosted at Johns Hopkins University. The archive, accessible online at [prisonwitness.org](http://prisonwitness.org), currently has more than 4,000 submissions (and growing) of firsthand accounts by incarcerated people across the United States. The collection covers a wide demographic range and is a powerful resource for amassing the voices of the voiceless into an "archive from below" or what Larson calls a "shadow canon," echoing writing witness practices hundreds of years old. Larson writes, "These voices join a history of prison testimony nearly as old as the nation itself" (Larson, 2026, p. 3). The APWA represents a continuation of Larson's ongoing project of gathering prison witness stories, such as those expressed in his earlier book, *Fourth City* (2014). The rapid and ongoing extension of the archive is thanks to technology and access. He writes that the effects of



APWA to digitally scan and update materials as they arrive, "has made possible a breadth and living depth of documentation of the human experience of incarceration impossible before the digital age" (Larson, 2026, p. 8).

Typically, conversations about prisons happen among outside experts or from within the paradigms of the state and its agents, including, for example, prison boosters and wardens. The problem with such experts is that they rarely, if ever, account for the voices of those who most intimately know what prison is actually like: incarcerated people themselves. Larson argues that reviewing the archival sources—and the dire warnings, fears, frustrations, and abuses articulated therein—undermines the foundational premises of imprisonment itself, which are rehabilitation, containment, deterrence, and retribution (Larson, 2026, p. 54). In other words, the archives, in prisoners' own words, detail how prisons fail to meet their foundational ideals.

An introductory chapter provides an overview of the development of prison literature dating back some 220 years and highlighting the emergence of

radical Black literature such as George Jackson's *Soledad Brother* (1971). The subsequent chapters each critique the four justifications for prisons by drawing on numerous examples from prisoners' writings. In the conclusion, Larson posits future directions for the Prison Witness Collective, which "seeks to make prison witnesses not only accessible but unavoidable by journalists who shape much of the public debate, scholars and teachers whose work influences thinking in practice, legal professionals, legislators, and a public that both consumes hours of skewed popular media on legal system practices and also votes" (Larson, 2026, p. 218).

Larson further argues that the archive itself can be a useful pedagogical tool, as he has used it for writing and reflection exercises assigned to his students (Larson, 2026, p. 222). This book is suitable for undergraduates; while the content from the archive writers is often visceral, raw, and heartbreaking, the book is written in a way that is also less pretentious than "typical" academic books and textbooks.

Larson's goal is to challenge dominant narratives by lifting up the voices of those oppressed by the carceral system. The book exists between a call for revolutionary abolition and hope for more reformist changes. As Larson has argued elsewhere in *Fourth City*, the prison population across the U.S. has a largely homogeneous experience of extreme degradation, dehumanization, and deprivation. Yet, each person's account of how prison objectifies, contains, surveils, and ultimately destroys people and their communities is unique, with Larson giving sufficient weight to alternative perspectives. The book serves as a great introduction to the archive that can be used for data-driven projects, journalism, and so on.

Indeed, Larson posits a handful of possible future projects and mentions a series of books planned to

be released in the coming years by various authors using the archive as source material. Specialists in fields as diverse as criminology, political science, sociology, and law will all find moving and impactful takeaways that ultimately question the existence of prisons and suggest creative new directions for thinking about the role of incarceration in the U.S. and the value of human witness more generally. Larson likens the archival project to the continued significance of slave narratives and Holocaust witness accounts. The book succinctly highlights some of the most pressing problems facing people, families, and communities affected by the devastating turmoil of U.S. prisons, while humanizing these issues by offering them directly from the mouths—and pens—of the incarcerated themselves.

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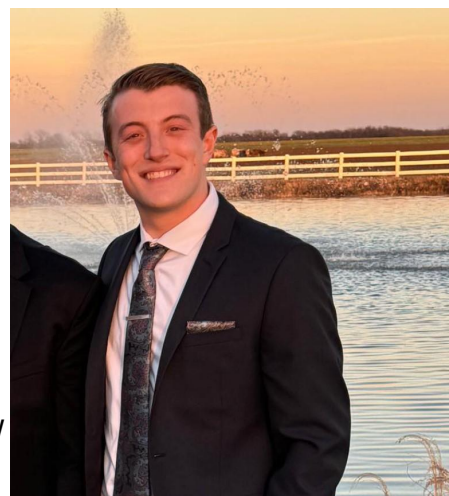


**Chayne Wild** is a Ph.D. student in the ASPECT program at Virginia Tech. Holding an M.A. in Political Science from Colorado State University, his research examines carceral studies and the systemic intersections of technology and resistance. He is currently completing his dissertation, *Digital Chains*.

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**Outstanding Service Award:**

The Outstanding Service Award is given to individuals who are deemed deserving of special recognition for their outstanding contribution to the Police Section. This award was established to honor those who have provided significant service to the Police Section.

**Winner: Jeff Bumgarner, Ph.D.**

Jeff Bumgarner, Ph.D., is a professor and director of the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Texas State University. He holds a BA in political science from the University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign, an MA in public administration and policy from Northern Illinois University, and a Ph.D. in organization development from the University of Minnesota, the focus of which was on criminal justice organizational contexts. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of 10 different books and many articles and book chapters. His scholarly interests include federal law enforcement, homeland security, and federal crime policy. In addition to his academic experience, Dr Bumgarner has several years of experience in local and federal law enforcement.



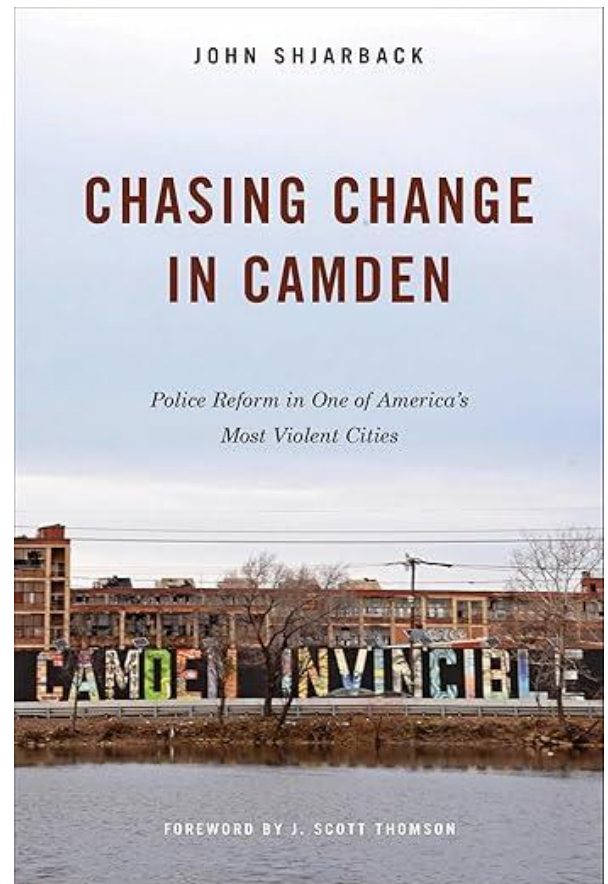
### **Best Policing Book of Year:**

The Best Policing Book of the Year Award recognizes a significant book publication that has substantially contributed to the understanding, development, or practice of policing. This award celebrates authors who have provided fresh insights, rigorous research, and innovative perspectives on law enforcement.

### **Winner: *Chasing Camden* by John Shjarback**

John Shjarback is an Associate Professor in the Department of Law and Justice Studies at Rowan University. He earned his B.S. from Penn State University, M.A. from Monmouth University, and Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Arizona State University.

Dr. Shjarback has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and technical reports focused on police–citizen interactions, race and ethnicity, use of force, and accountability. A strong advocate of public criminology, he has written op-eds for outlets including *The Washington Post*, *New York Daily News*, and *The Dallas Morning News*. He actively collaborates with law enforcement agencies on research and evaluation projects, and his work has informed policy discussions and legislative efforts across multiple states. He is a member of the American Society of Criminology and the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing, and he received the ASC Division of Policing’s Early Career Award in 2021.





### **Pracademic Excellence Award:**

The Emerging Police Pracademic Excellence Award recognizes a police practitioner who champions evidence-based practice and research in policing. This award celebrates those who bridge the gap between academia and practical law enforcement, applying scientific research to real-world policing strategies. It aims to recognize recent achievements in the field and is not a lifetime achievement award.

### **Winner: Lt. Jennifer Hall, Ph.D., Louisville Metro Police Department**

Lieutenant Jennifer Hall has served the citizens of Louisville for 20 years with the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) in a variety of roles. She is currently assigned to the Career Development Unit and serves as the Police Training Officer Coordinator within the LMPD Training Division. Previously, she served as a detective in the Crimes Against Children Unit. Lt. Hall

holds a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Eastern Kentucky University, an M.A. in Sociology, and a Ph.D. in Applied Sociology from the University of Louisville. Her doctoral research examined the effectiveness of a community policing initiative within LMPD, focusing on the relationship between public perceptions of law enforcement and officers' perceptions of community opinion.

Her professional and scholarly interests center on police training and curriculum reform, particularly in shaping new officers' communication, decision-making, intervention skills, and organizational mindset to positively influence police culture.



### **Emerging Policing Scholar:**

The Emerging Policing Scholar Achievement Award recognizes an outstanding early career scholar who has shown remarkable potential and achievement in producing quality research in the field of policing. This award is intended to celebrate the future leaders in policing scholarship, encouraging continued excellence and innovation.

### **Winner: Ian Adams, Ph.D.**

Ian T. Adams is a leading scholar of policing. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina. His applied research focuses on the practical concerns of police practitioners, with a specific interest in technology, policy, behavior, and use-of-force in law enforcement.



**O.W. Wilson Award:**

The O.W. Wilson is the section's most prestigious and flagship award. Given to recognize outstanding contributions to police education, research, and practice.

**Winner: Wesley Skogan, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor, Northwestern University**



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Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Newsletter

## EDITOR

**Samantha M. Gavin, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor

Department of Sociology and

Criminology

St. Bonaventure University

Plassmann Hall 330

3261 W. State St.

St. Bonaventure NY 14778

sgavin@sbu.edu

## NATIONAL OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**John L. Worrall**

acjsexecutivedirector@acjs.org

## ASSOCIATION MANAGER

**Letiscia Perrin**

manager@acjs.org

## MAILING ADDRESS

### ACJS

P. O. Box 960 Greenbelt

Maryland 20770

## OFFICE LOCATION

7339 Hanover Parkway, Suite A

Greenbelt, MD 20768-0960

301-446-63

800-757-ACJS (2257)

Fax: 301-446-2819

## ONLINE

www.acjs.org

## Publication Schedule

- January
- March
- May
- September
- November

Distributed to current ACJS members.

## Submissions

### DEADLINES

- December 15th
- February 15th
- April 15th
- August 15th
- October 15th

*The editor will use her discretion to accept, reject or postpone manuscripts.*

### ARTICLE GUIDELINES

Articles may vary in writing style (i.e., tone) and length. Articles should be relevant to the field of criminal justice, criminology, law, sociology, or related curriculum and interesting to our readership. Please include your name, affiliation, and e-mail address, which will be used as your biographical information. Submission of an article to the editor of ACJS Today implies that the article has not been published elsewhere nor is it currently under submission to another publication.