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Who Do We Want Our Students to Be? Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in Undergraduate Criminal Justice Programs

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Whether mandated by state legislatures or accrediting associations, assessment in higher education appears to be here to stay. Largely driven by a desire for greater accountability, assessment of student learning became part of academic vernacular in 2000, although initial reports that called for accountability began in the early 1980s (Doherty, Riordan, & Roth, 2002; Moriarty, 2006; Tontodonato, 2006). Also driving assessment initiatives is a paradigm shift in higher education (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Rather than a sole focus on the quality of instruction provided by the expert who imparts knowledge by lecturing, there has been an emphasis on how to produce quality learning and measure the subsequent knowledge and skills gained. Thus, attention to assessment practices has only increased over time, both in general education and at the department academic program level. Threats of a mandated external body overseeing assessment practices led most institutions to develop their own procedures as a way to maintain control and allow for more variation and flexibility (Moriarty, 2006; Moriarty & Garrett, 2008).

While it may be tempting to view assessment as a burdensome requirement foisted on higher education, assessment can also be an opportunity for thoughtfully and systematically improving student learning and teaching. Initially, the work of assessment requires faculty to, as a collective, wrestle with what we want students to "gain" from the program of study they are completing. What should students know, be able to do, and value after completing an undergraduate degree in criminal justice? The learning that we want to take place has to be named concretely. Once those intended outcomes are determined, thought must be given to how the curriculum, through individual classes, will provide the opportunity for students to develop these student learning outcomes

(SLOs). Clearly, the development of valid and reliable measures is paramount. The next step requires analysis to see how successful the program is in producing these desired results, and then, making necessary changes to improve results.

After examining discipline-specific ideas on program mission, goals, SLOs, and assessment, the faculty at the University of Missouri–Kansas City have engaged in an assessment process, which led to significant modifications in the curriculum and the program. These revisions eventually produced success in meeting set benchmarks. That process and outcomes are shared below in the hope of generating ideas and discussions as programs continue to develop and refine their assessment process and improve program-level SLOs.

Assessment in Criminal Justice

The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences has been in front of the assessment debate with certification standards that require proof of student learning; however, the exact knowledge and skills students should emerge with and how those outcomes will be assessed is not mandated. An effective annual assessment process allows for improvements in teaching and learning and offers guidance on curricular and program reform (Weiss, Cosbey, Habel, Hanson, & Larson, 2002). Ideally, assessment gives us more information that allows for clear and reasonable expectations to be set for faculty and students and, ultimately, can be used to produce better programs (Tontodonato, 2006).

Moriarty's research (2006) provides the most comprehensive look at how criminal justice programs in higher education are engaging in assessment. At the time her research was conducted, just over half (53%) of those responding had implemented program-level student learning objectives. About that same number were attempting to assess SLOs, with most activity in this regard occurring from 2000 to present. She found that the bulk of the development of assessment instruments occurred at the department level, and the responsibility for gathering and analyzing data similarly fell to designated faculty within the department. The senior seminar Capstone class remains a requirement in the vast majority of social science education programs, making it a logical choice for measurement of student learning objectives of undergraduate programs (Hauhart & Grahe, 2010).

The Development of Student Learning Outcomes

While SLOs can be written at the course level, the focus here is on program-level SLOs. SLOs should convey the diverse goals of a liberal arts education. Research has found that setting challenging goals in SLOs leads to an increase in motivation and performance from students (Weiss et al., 2002). In writing challenging SLOs, Bloom's Taxonomy of educational goals and objectives (and adaptations of this work) is often referenced as a useful tool (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956; https://tips.uark.edu/using-blooms-taxonomy/). Types of learning are categorized from simple (remembering, understanding, applying) to more complex (analyzing, evaluating, creating).

Southerland (2002) articulated SLOs in the field of criminal justice, which included the development of critical thinking skills, the ability to apply those skills to all aspects of the criminal justice system, improvement in written and oral communication skills, knowledge of the complex nature and causes of crime and delinquency, and the ability to bring ethical practice into the field of criminal justice. As seen in this list, acquiring knowledge, developing skills, and obtaining certain

dispositions are different types of learning, and they appear to be well represented in recent assessments of the field.

Moriarty (2006) summarizes assessment efforts in criminal justice programs and found that for institutions that have articulated SLOs, the most common learning objectives in criminal justice were as follows: 1. development of critical thinking skills (96%), 2. development of writing skills (89%), 3. familiarity with major theories and analytical approaches (88%), 4. development of interpersonal skills (70%), 5. understanding of ethnic, gender, or cultural dimensions of problems related to criminal justice (69%), and 6. understanding criminal justice research (66%). Other less common learning objectives included development of oral skills (55%), development of information technology skills (55%), knowledge of general management and administrative principles (50%), gaining practical experience (50%), development of reading skills (50%), learning quantitative and statistical approaches (44%), designing and conducting research projects (41%), knowledge of cognate disciplines (i.e., political science, sociology, psychology, public administration; 41%), knowledge of international dimensions of problems and policies (36%), and an "other" category that included a number of ethics-related outcomes (10%).

In developing program-level SLOs, a good starting point is an examination of the mission statement of the institution, and the mission and goals of the undergraduate general education as SLOs should clearly align with these ideals (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Strait, 2007). Similarly, there may be an existing departmental mission statement and goals to build on; however, faculty conversations may lead to revisions of these

statements. Exemplary academic program mission statements should be brief, clear, concrete, and memorable statements of the educational purpose of the program that identify signature features of the program. The statement should express a realistic vision and serve the interests of other stakeholders (i.e., potential employers; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Strait, 2007).

The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (2005) has developed a mission statement, which specifies essential learning objectives in criminal justice education:

> The purpose of undergraduate programs in criminal justice is to educate students to be critical thinkers who can communicate their thoughts effectively in oral and written form. Programs should familiarize students with facts and concepts and teach students to apply this knowledge to related problems and changing situations. Primary objectives of all criminal justice programs include the development of critical thinking; communication, technology, and computing skills; quantitative reasoning; ethical decision-making; and an understanding of diversity.

Many criminal justice scholars have contributed to the discussion of who we want our graduates to be, noting specific competencies, skills, and dispositions we hope they possess. One theme is that students should be able to link theory and practice and understand both the causes of crime and the societal responses to crime (Hunter, 2011; Klofas, 2010). In order to do this, scholars recommend that criminal justice education include a focus on criminal justice theories that help

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The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences General Business Meeting will be held on Friday, March 29, 2019, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Baltimore Marriott Waterfront, 700 Aliceanna Street, Baltimore, MD, Third Floor, Grand Ballroom II.

students understand and critique systems of social control (Arrigo, 2008; Kraska, 2006). As a discipline, we have had a stronger focus on theories of criminality, and by including criminal justice theories, we will be able to offer a critique that recognizes the inequities and failures of justice systems (Arrigo, 2008; Braswell & Whitehead, 2002).

Part of understanding those failures of justice systems requires examining how diversity affects the delivery of justice. Issues related to diversity—gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, religion, and sexual orientation—are making their way into some programs. Sixty-seven percent of criminal justice programs examined included a diversity class; however, 86% of undergraduate criminal justice programs do not require them (Patten & Way, 2011).

Teaching students to develop empathy for persons different from themselves (i.e., persons likely to be involved in criminal justice systems) and critically examine their own values and beliefs will produce students better equipped to work as practitioners in the field (Braswell & Whitehead, 2002; Engel, 2003). Scholars have developed concrete ideas on how to approach this task, from using literature as a way to teach empathy (Engel, 2003) to including content and service learning related to crime victims and victimization (Gibbs, 2016).

Given the relevance of the social problems inherent in criminal justice, having students take problem-based learning approaches in which students pose and answer research questions will produce students who think more creatively and comprehensively about crime (Klofas, 2010). Engaging students in local communities and empowering them to make a difference in the world

would be one way to challenge the status quo and change agencies and systems for the better (Braswell & Whitehead, 2002; Holsinger & Sexton, 2017; Klofas, 2010). The ability of students to link research and policy will increase their influence on the development of public policy (Hunter, 2011), while developing a critical consciousness will empower students to effect social change (Cameron, 2002).

Another theme receiving attention is the inclusion of the study of justice more broadly and more specifically including the concepts of social justice and distributive justice (Holsinger & Sexton, 2017; Hunter, 2011). Criminal justice courses and texts rarely include an examination of justice, which is odd given the significance of the word in the name of the program (Cameron, 2002; Castellano & Gould, 2007; Heffernan, 2017; Klofas, 2010; Owen, Fradela, Burke, & Joplin, 2006). Heffernan (2017) argues for a more systematic integration of justice into criminal justice education, given the interrelated nature of the terms. Whether teaching strategies start with instances of injustices and move backward to defining justice, or begin with definitions and apply them to specific situations, the inclusion seems critical for a more holistic understanding of justice and its connection to the study of criminal justice. Other ideas have been put forth as well, including the use of social justice theory to assess criminal justice practices (Robinson, 2010) and the assignment of community justice projects for students (Holsinger & Sexton, 2017).

Research has also given us insight into what criminal justice employers are looking for in graduates. When ranking hypothetical job applicants, criminal justice professionals rated ethical decision-making skills, critical thinking

skills, an understanding of diversity, and strong oral and written communication skills as most important (Baker, Holcomb, & Baker, 2016). Each of these categories was also highly ranked by criminal justice faculty and student respondents, although having ethical decision-making skills was ranked considerably lower by students compared to professionals, who saw this skill as critically important. Attributes seen as least important by all groups included technology and computing skills and grade point average, although students ranked this as more important than did faculty and professionals (Baker, Holcomb, & Baker, 2016). Another solicitation of feedback from employers indicated that graduates in criminal justice were perceived to be deficient in writing skills, the ability to engage in teamwork, and knowledge of current events (Peat, 2008).

Measuring Student Learning Outcomes

Once the program SLOs are determined, and students are given opportunities to obtain the knowledge or practice the specified skills, the issue becomes how to get useful and valid measures of achievement of those objectives. Most experts in assessment and many faculty recognize the limitations of course grades as outcome measures given the multiple components that go into letter grades (e.g., attendance, participation, following directions, content, and mechanics of writing). It is also difficult to know which aspects of the letter grade were done well or poorly. Likewise, course grades are not necessarily a good measure of critical thinking skills or many other skills and abilities. Instead, consider what a student can exhibit, accomplish, or perform that will capture the spirit of the written SLOs. For example, they may be able to apply course content to real life, articulate

connections, analyze debates, or evaluate evidence and observations (Strait, 2007).

Options for the measurement of SLOs include objective, standardized tests, which are well-equipped to measure change or growth but may not capture certain aspects of student learning, such as the application of knowledge, or the development of abilities. Tobin and Gebo (2008) have reported success in creating comprehensive knowledge-based exams that include questions that engage higher-order thinking and incorporate questions to assess tolerance and ethics. However, the current use of SLO measures shows that institutions are moving away from standardized national knowledge-based tests in general education (Hart Research Associates, 2016). Only 33% of institutions use them today, compared to 50% in 2008. The use of specially designed examinations was reported by Tobin and Gebo (2008) to be 46%.

The most common methods of assessment among institutions that assess cumulative learning outcomes in general education were rubrics (91%), capstone projects (78%), student surveys and self-reports (64%), and specially designed assignments (62%; Hart Research Associates, 2016). Less frequently used were specially designed examinations (46%), Association of American Colleges and Universities VALUE rubrics (42%), standardized national tests of skills (38%), and standardized national tests of knowledge (33%). While 85% of institutions have common general education SLOs, only 75% assess them, although the remaining 25% plan to do so (Hart Research Associates, 2016).

Moriarty's (2006) work examining practices in criminal justice education shows the vast array of assessment measures used: grades in course work (80%), surveys of students (79%), internships

(75%), observations by faculty members (72%), surveys of departmental alumni (69%), surveys of employers/internship supervisor (67%), senior seminar or capstone courses (66%), rubrics (56%), pre-tests/post-tests (50%), exit interviews (46%), major field tests (45%), senior research projects (with data collection and analysis; 44%), case study analyses (41%), post-tests only (38%), and portfolios (30%).

All of these measures fall into one of two categories: direct or indirect. Assessment of student learning at the program level should be based on direct measures and supplemented with indirect measures. Direct measures assess student work and include standardized tests or assignments given in classes (i.e., papers, projects, portfolios). While rubrics were listed as an assessment measure used in the snapshot provided by Moriarty (2006) and others, they are actually a tool that can be very useful in scoring direct assessment measures to assess whether students are exceeding, meeting, or not meeting expectations set in SLOs (see Moriarty & Garrett, 2008).

Indirect measures such as surveys (student, faculty, alumni, and/or employer), data on other success indicators (e.g., retention in the program, job placement, graduate school acceptance), and informal classroom assessment techniques (e.g., minute papers on what was important and/or what remains unclear) can provide other indicators that learning has taken place. Indirect measures can provide valuable indicators of student satisfaction, which is important for student success, retention, and new student recruitment (Tontodonato, 2006).

One of the most important aspects of assessment is how the data are used. Moriarty (2006) suggests that assessment activities should serve as a feedback loop in order to make changes to the major, modify course offerings, and revise specific courses. Assessment should be viewed as an ongoing process that is used to improve programs by improving student learning.

Assessment of SLOs at the University of Missouri–Kansas City

Developing assessment plans of student learning became a requirement at the University of Missouri–Kansas City in 2011, and these assessment initiatives were informed by the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and other professional organizations advocating for best practices in higher education. As a result, departments were encouraged to begin attending educational seminars on campus and to learn about new ideas in assessment protocols. While the department had assessment practices in place, we knew that the results from our SLO measures were poor; students were not performing well on the criminal justice exit exam.

In the fall of 2012, significant revisions were made to the mission statement, program goals, SLOs, and measurement of SLOs in the undergraduate program in criminal justice and criminology (CJC). Prior to these modifications, we used knowledge-based SLOs and measured outcomes with an objective, knowledge-based assessment in the form of an exit exam given in the senior seminar capstone class. Our revisions were initially informed by knowledge gained in presentations and meetings at our institution where departments were provided useful, concrete direction in the development of SLOs. The work prompted the faculty to engage in thoughtful consideration of who we want our students to be when they graduate with an undergraduate degree in CJC. We examined the recommendations of criminal justice scholars noted in this paper. The

following spring semester (2013) we put our new plan into effect by measuring program-level SLOs in the senior seminar capstone class

Ultimately, we developed the following six SLOs, which contain both knowledge-based and ability-based outcomes and likewise communicate the educational values of our department:

1. Students will be able to integrate, critique, synthesize, and apply content from the diverse CJC classes offered.

2. Students will have strong oral and written communication skills on issues related to crime.

3. Students will have an adequate understanding of the skills needed to succeed in this field.

4. Students will possess an understanding of the various job and career paths resulting from their CJC undergraduate degree.

5. Students will demonstrate the ability to link theory, research, and policy.

6. Students will demonstrate the ability to engage with and address existing social problems.

See Appendix 1 for our program's mission statement, program goals, and SLOs.

We currently have 15 direct and indirect measures that provide us feedback on how successful we are at meeting our six SLOs (see Appendix 2). We use rubrics to assess one assignment, a final paper, a final presentation, and a final project (four direct measures) from the CJC capstone class. An exit exam, worth up to 5% of the final grade, is given at the end of this class. The exit exam consists of three essay questions (three direct measures) that are graded with a rubric that categorizes student's written responses as exemplary (exceeds standards), proficient (meets standards), developing (standards marginally met), or unacceptable (does not meet standards). Our

departmental criterion for achievement is that 80% of our students meet or exceed standards (earn A's or B's).

A survey, also given at the end of the capstone class, provides indirect measures of our SLOs (eight indirect measures). In these measures, students give the department feedback on their perceptions of achieving the SLOs. Additionally, the survey presents two qualitative questions to students: 1. Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve our CJC undergraduate program at UMKC? 2. What have been the best, most meaningful aspects of the CJC program?

Once the work of collaboratively developing a mission statement, goals, SLOs, and multiple measures for each SLO was complete, the next step was to use the results to improve teaching and learning and develop action plans. When we received feedback from the 2012–2013 cycle and again saw poor SLO results, we initiated significant curricular changes, which went into effect in the fall semester of 2014. The changes in subsequent years were minor, compared to the major overhaul of the curriculum prompted by this first-year analysis of the new assessment plan.

Course Sequencing of Critical Milestone Classes

The student success literature in higher education, and more specifically strategic enrollment management efforts, attempt to implement best practices in colleges and universities with the ultimate goal of improving recruitment and retention. These institutions face real problems when they fail to graduate students or have less than ideal graduation rates, which are significantly worse for certain subgroups of students. There are many reasons for problems such as below-par graduation rates, including insufficient advising, which leads to students' lack of

understanding of program requirements and course prerequisites. Another cause for reduced graduation rates is students changing majors during their academic career. The literature suggests that optimum student success requires early indicators of good student-major fit, structured degree programs with clearer pathways to completion (i.e., major or academic maps), and more intrusive advising strategies that monitor student progress (Couturier, 2012; Education Advisory Board, 2012).

These all-important degree maps clearly illustrate to students, semester by semester, how to complete their degree. Degree requirements can be complex and overwhelming to students, and simplifying course selection by providing a clear template that students can follow has become a recommended practice (Education Advisory Board, 2012). To develop clear degree pathways, critical milestone courses (sometimes referred to as foundational courses) are useful tools. These are courses identified by the faculty that will be necessary to achieve a certain level of success (often expressed as a minimum grade requirement) to succeed in a particular field. By taking these classes early, students are able to get a realistic appraisal of their likelihood of succeeding in a particular field of study. Students are then unable to put off taking perceived challenging courses (Education Advisory Board, 2012).

The lack of literature addressing the ordering of core curriculum within degree programs is surprising in light of recommendations coming out of higher education. Studies in criminal justice show a great deal of variation in the structure of programs, little standardization in terms of prerequisites, and less evidence of sequential learning in criminal justice compared to other degree programs (Sloan & Buchwalter, 2016;

Williams, 2004). In other words, criminal justice majors are taking courses most frequently in an unstructured way.

Given the lack of course sequencing, it was not uncommon for students to take our 100-level *Introduction to Criminal Justice* during their first semester. The following semester, students were encouraged to take one or two of the required 200-level systems classes (a requirement of our program that allowed students to choose two classes from two of the following systems: policing, criminal courts, or corrections) and various other electives. It was not until years three and four that we encouraged CJC majors to begin to take *Theoretical Criminology, Introduction to Statistics in Criminal Justice*, and *Methods of Criminological Research* (which, at the time, were 300- and 400-level classes). It was not uncommon for students to put off taking these most challenging courses until their senior year. It was likewise not uncommon for undergraduate academic advisors to report that when students failed to pass one or more of these critical classes late in their degree program, they ended up somewhat demoralized, as their lack of success in the degree course made CJC appear to be a poor fit for them. At that point, students would change their major or persist by retaking classes and incurring expense and delays in their expected graduation date.

Learning about the aforementioned concepts through involvement in our institution's Strategic Management Team led to insights into problems and potential solutions in our own undergraduate program. As a department, our faculty began to have conversations about what our critical milestone courses should be. We talked about these as foundational courses that would allow students to learn "the language" of our discipline and allow

them to learn how to actually speak that language in subsequent courses. We discussed the importance of being able to read, understand, and critique academic articles. This critical content would allow our students to determine early in their academic career whether CJC is a good fit for them. The content of these critical milestone courses was deemed necessary in order to increase the likelihood that they would have a constructive impact on the field of criminal justice as a result of their possessing an undergraduate degree in CJC.

The critical milestone courses were identified as criminological theory, research

methods, and statistics. These courses would also allow for the greatest understanding of academic research articles used in most other courses. Therefore, we felt that these courses should be taken in the student's first two years of study, and consequently these course numbers were changed from the 300 and 400 levels to the 200 level. These classes (in addition to *Introduction to Criminal Justice*) are where we introduce the SLOs for our program. They are all required core courses (See Table 1 for the CJC Major Map).

Table 1: Criminal Justice & Criminology Major Map, General Education Content Removed

Criminal Justice & Criminology Major Map	Min Recom Grade for Req Class
Fall Semester Year 1 CJC: Introduction to Criminal Justice	C-

Spring Semester Year 1
    CJC 210: Introduction to Statistics in Criminal Justice OR
    CJC 215: Methods of Criminological Research OR
    CJC 220: Theoretical Criminology
	C-

Fall Semester Year 2
    CJC 210: Introduction to Statistics in Criminal Justice OR
    CJC 215: Methods of Criminological Research OR
    CJC 220: Theoretical Criminology
	C-

Spring Semester Year 2
    CJC 210: Introduction to Statistics in Criminal Justice OR
    CJC 215: Methods of Criminological Research OR
    CJC 220: Theoretical Criminology
	C-

Fall Semester Year 3
    CJC 3XX: Pick one Systems Class (Policing, Courts, or Corrections)
    CJC 3XX/4XX CJC Elective	

Spring Semester Year 3 CJC 3XX: Pick one Systems Class (Policing, Courts or Corrections)	

CJC 3XX/4XX CJC Elective	
Fall Semester Year 4	
CJC 3XX/4XX CJC Elective	
CJC 3XX/4XX CJC Elective	
Spring Semester Year 4	C-
CJC 3XX/4XX CJC Elective	
CJC 495WI: Capstone (College Writing Intensive Requirement)	

The CJC Major Map in its entirety can be found at: https://cf1.umkc.edu/majormaps/maps/2016-2017/AS_BA_CJC_2016_2017.pdf

Student practice in acquiring the SLOs occurs in the "Systems" classes where we require students to complete two of six courses focused on the different CJ systems (policing, courts, and corrections). These courses are currently all 300-level classes, and it is recommended they be taken during a student's junior year. Students are then required to complete five elective courses, the vast majority of which are now at the 300 and 400 level, in which we continue to allow for student acquisition of knowledge and skills. The expectation is that these relevant and popular electives can be more rigorous since students will have better and more consistent preparation (via the core required courses detailed above), thus enriching their experience and enabling them to engage more critically in discussion and other content. For example, the comprehension of academic/peer-reviewed articles should increase when students have completed the introductory course and also have a foundation in criminological theory, research methods, and statistics.

The final core requirement is the capstone class in CJC, which also meets the writing intensive requirement for the College for the CJC majors. It is in this class that our students are expected to demonstrate mastery of all SLOs. At the end of the class, these SLOs are assessed. The opportunity for the students to demonstrate the ability to engage with and address existing social problems is provided and assessed in this course through the completion of a high-impact, community service learning project (see Holsinger & Sexton, 2017 for more details).

While this article promotes course sequencing practices, we have not required additional prerequisites, largely due to limitations in scheduling given our student and faculty size. Rather, the burden is on advisors, both at the college and department level, to convince students of the value of adhering to the CJC major map. Another challenge to our ideal course sequencing recommendations is the large number of transfer students. It has been challenging as most community college transfer students, in need of 300- and 400-level classes, will now have three 200-level classes they need to begin with. At times, to assist these students we have had to rely on the old course numbering, which is still active, in order to meet these upper-level course requirements for transfer students.

Discussion

Every year, the CJC faculty reviews the assessment results at a regularly scheduled faculty meeting, including the student comments from the open-ended questions, and discusses how we can improve our undergraduate program. This critical

analysis process has produced a dynamic program that continually evolves in response to these data. As a result of this ongoing review, we have further developed and expanded our internship program; we offer greater flexibility in course offerings, including more evening, summer, and online classes; and we do a better job advertising the CJC student groups. Students requested an increased emphasis on some of the SLOs in earlier CJC coursework; these suggestions led us to elucidate the links between theory, research, and policy in foundational courses and provide more opportunities for students to improve their writing and speaking skills. Students are telling us they want more interactive group projects, more guest speakers, and more opportunities to engage in the community. As one student said about the program, "the most meaningful moments [were when]…students were asked to dream up solutions for a wide array of problems facing the CJ system…as future actors, these solutions are something my classmates and I will carry with us into our careers and hopefully one day watch come into fruition."

The feedback from students on the survey also reinforces a number of things we are doing right; for instance, "great professors" (i.e., passionate, accessible, and dedicated) is always among the most commonly mentioned pieces of feedback, and it encourages faculty to maintain this positive reputation. As we have become more focused on these SLOs, we have made a point to communicate them to the students and to every instructor teaching within our department. Communication occurs in classes, through course syllabi, by departmental advisors, on the departmental website, and in college catalogs and brochures. All these efforts have no doubt helped us improve outcomes.

The feedback received from the University Assessment Committee is responsible for many additional improvements we have made in our assessment process. Assessment results have led to stressing SLOs in all of our classes, particularly making links between theory, research, and policy; emphasizing skills needed in criminal justice professions; and teaching more about job and career paths in criminal justice. As a result of their recommendations early on, a curriculum major map, indirect assessment measures, and additional direct assessment measures were developed. As a department, we are still in the early stages of "new" program SLOs, and there is no doubt that our program will continue to evolve as a result of the assessment process.

Assessment is an effective way to engage with the question of who we want our students to be when they graduate from our program with an undergraduate degree in criminal justice. It has encouraged the faculty to critically consider what knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be most useful to students entering criminal justice professions and those who wish to further their education. The process has been a success in that teaching and learning have improved and curricular and program reform have been the result (Weiss et al., 2002). The program has improved as a result, and our expectations are clearly set (Tontodonato, 2006). While assessment can be challenging, we hope the reader is motivated by and can draw ideas from our experience.

Appendix 1: Mission Statement, Program Goals, and Student Learning Outcomes

Mission Statement
The Criminal Justice and Criminology Department offers students the opportunity to analyze and interpret systems of social control that are applied through the criminal justice system and throughout society. The major develops skills in critical thinking, communication, and conducting and evaluating research to promote evidence-based decision-making. Inclusive learning environments require students to become knowledgeable and culturally competent individuals. As such the major emphasizes community engagement and service to prepare students for the jobs and leadership opportunities that will allow them to engage with the broader community and for their role as future change agents.

Program Goals
1. To produce educated, critical thinkers in issues related to crime who have strong communication skills.
2. To produce practitioners and scholars who are knowledgeable regarding jobs and careers in the field of criminal justice and who are prepared to interact effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
3. To produce socially active and engaged consumers of knowledge who are able to interpret and respond to information in meaningful ways.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students will be able to integrate, critique, synthesize, and apply content from the diverse CJC classes offered.
2. Students will have strong oral and written communication skills on issues related to crime (based on opportunities for improvement over the CJC curriculum).
3. Students will have an adequate understanding of the skills needed to succeed in this field.
4. Students will possess an understanding of the various job and career paths resulting from their CJC undergraduate degree.
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to link theory, research and policy.
6. Students will demonstrate the ability to engage with and address existing social problems.

Appendix 2: Measures of Student Learning Objectives

1. Integrate, critique, synthesize, and apply content from the diverse CJC classes offered
Capstone Exit Exam Essay #1 (direct measure)
Thinking of the courses you have taken for this degree (Introduction to CJ, Theoretical Criminology, Statistics, Methods, and two of the following classes: Juvenile Delinquency, Policing, Criminal Courts, or Corrections), write an essay about how these courses might be useful in addressing one of the following events:
   a. A highly publicized press release recommending curfews for juveniles
   b. A focused deterrence policing strategy targeting the city's most violent criminals
   c. The creation of a new specialized court for domestic violence offenders
   d. An editorial in the local newspaper calling for a policy solution to prison overcrowding

Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

2. Strong oral and written communication skills

Final Paper (direct measure of written skills)

Final Presentation (direct measure of oral skills)

Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

I feel my writing skills have improved as a result of the CJC undergrad classes I have taken.

I feel my oral comm. skills have improved as a result of the CJC undergrad classes I have taken.

3. Skills needed to succeed in this field

Capstone Exit Exam Essay #2 (direct measure)

What do you think are the most critical skills necessary to work effectively and respectfully with the diverse population that interfaces with criminal justice system? Are these skills you feel you possess? How did you acquire these skills?

Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

4. Job/career paths resulting from their CJC undergrad degree

Vocational Statement Paper (direct measure)

Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

5. Link theory, research and policy

Capstone Exit Exam Essay #3

In the field of CJC, what is the relationship with between theory, research and policy?

*Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)*

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

6. Engage with and address existing social problems

Final Project (direct measure of addressing a social problem)

Capstone Survey Question (indirect measure)

Students grade us on how well the program has helped them achieve this SLO

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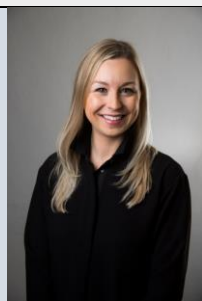
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CRIME & JUSTICE RESEARCH ALLIANCE

The Crime & Justice Research Alliance (CJRA) http://crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org represents a decade of planning and development, and has been supported by the past ten consecutive presidents and executive boards of ACJS and ASC. CJRA aims to a) promote criminology and criminal justice research published in journals of both associations; b) emphasize the relevance of our respective associations in criminal justice policy development at the local, state, and federal levels; and c) make the case for federal funding and access to data in support of such research.

Public-facing documents on CJRA state that the Alliance "…communicates with the criminal justice research and academic communities about legislative, appropriations and policy developments in Washington, DC" and "…assists policymakers across the political spectrum by summarizing published scholarly articles and identifying expert witnesses to speak to Committees, Members of Congress and Justice Department officials." Importantly, CJRA is a non-partisan entity and resource to reporters covering crime and justice as well as both political parties.

History and Structure of CJRA

In 2009, ACJS and ASC began a partnership called the Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy Coalition (CCJPC). The two organizations pooled resources to contract The Raben Group in Washington, D.C. to assist in developing contacts with key legislators and staff involved in criminal justice policy development, and further the dissemination of evidence-based research. The CCJPC consisted of four members appointed by ACJS and four members appointed by ASC. For several years, it organized visits by ACJS and ASC members to D.C. to lobby legislators and their staffs for increased crime and justice funding. The coalition also conducted several congressional briefings on issues related to policing and corrections.

In 2013 the CCJPC was renamed the Joint Oversight Committee (JOC) with a new charge from ACJS and ASC--to develop a more formal and permanent mechanism to represent the interests of ACJS and ASC in the crime and justice policy arena. Again, the JOC included four members appointed by ACJS and four members appointed by ASC. With the blessing of both organizations, members of the JOC worked to conceive and design what is now the Crime & Justice Research Alliance.

Established as a partnership between ACJS and ASC in late 2014, in 2015 CJRA retained The Brimley Group (a Washington, D.C.-based government relations consulting firm) and arranged for the development of the CJRA website (by FP1 Strategies). Shortly thereafter, the CJRA website was launched as a centralized resource of authoritative experts and scholarly studies, to provide policymakers, practitioners and the public direct access to relevant research on crime and criminal justice issues by ACJS and ASC scholars. Its purpose is to establish and promote CJRA's identity and the field of criminology by providing "…objective research to inform legislators in criminal justice policy and appropriation decisions as well as reporters covering criminal justice topics in the news."

Through a competitive process, a panel of CJRA board members vetted finalists and Caitlin Kizielewicz, of KIZCOMM, LLC, was hired in November 2015 as the CJRA media relations and communications consultant. Caitlin and Liliana Coronado, the Brimley Group representative, work in close partnership to elevate CJRA and the knowledge, expertise, and interests of ACJS and ASC members. Liliana conducts regular outreach to congressional staff, with a focus on appropriations and justice committees; drafts letters in support of research funding from CJRA to key legislators and committee members, and takes the lead in local arrangements for the "Ask a Criminologist" series of Hill briefings in partnership with the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA). The Hill briefing in May 2018, "Understanding Increases in Homicide Rates: How the Opioid Epidemic and Police-Community Relations Impact Homicides" was very well attended, and provided an opportunity for Congressional staff and key stakeholders to engage directly with CJRA experts.

CJRA is governed by an eight-member board that consists of four appointees from each of the two associations, ACJS and ASC. Each appointee serves a three-year term, and the chair and deputy chair alternate between an ASC and an ACJS appointee every three years. Recently, both associations appointed CJRA board members who serve other leadership roles, such as treasurer and policy committee members, to enhance communications and understanding of CJRA, and bring information back to association leadership. Ex-officio members include the executive directors of ASC and ACJS, and the immediate past chair of CJRA.

What has the CJRA accomplished in 2018?

CJRA efforts focus on two specific areas—a) government relations and the legislative policy arena, and b) media relations and publicity of policy-relevant research published in ACJS and ASC journals (Justice Quarterly, Justice Evaluation Journal, Criminology, Criminology and Public Policy) and that of some 120 subject area experts featured in the CJRA Expert Directory who are available for interviews or expert testimony. Over the last five months, CJRA launched three research campaigns from Justice Quarterly and the Justice Evaluation Journal.

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One of the JQ research campaigns, "Seen or Unseen? The Role of Race in Police Contact among Homeless Youth," secured the highest Altmetric score and most reads out of all JQ research articles published in 2018. A JEJ article on absenteeism interventions also experienced the highest Altmetric score and most reads out of all of the JEJ articles published in 2018 as a result of CJRA's publicity efforts. To be impactful, engagement by CJRA's media and government relations consultants—and a growing web presence—is critical, and affords the Alliance credibility and access. CJRA's website is organized around main topic areas, featured experts, recent news, research, and documents and communications related to policy outreach efforts, and it supports both the media relations and government relations functions of CJRA.

Government Relations in 2018

It is a key aim of the Alliance to inform policymakers of relevant research and to advocate for sustained or improved levels of federal funding and access to crime and justice data. Over the past few months in 2018:

☐ CJRA secured the release of more than 50 missing data tables that had been removed from the annual FBI Uniform Crime Report by conducting outreach to members of Congress and securing a letter from five Senators to the Department of Justice. CJRA assisted members of Congress with formulating questions about the missing tables at a House Judiciary Committee hearing with FBI Director Wray. After hearing of CJRA efforts to restore the tables—the deletion of which generated widespread concern from crime and justice scholars and practitioners-- Director Wray agreed to do so. Continuing to make this crime and victim data available to scholars, practitioners, and the public is critical to our understanding of trends and patterns of violent crime—particularly homicide and domestic violence--and the development of law enforcement priorities and policies.

☐ CJRA efforts helped secure a $2 million increase for BJS and NIJ each in the House Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations FY19 bill, with BJS receiving$50 million and NIJ receiving $44 million. Should these House funding levels be signed into law, BJS will have received a $9 million increase and NIJ will have received an $8 million increase above the FY 2016 Omnibus levels. This represents more than a 20% increase in funding for both agencies over the last three fiscal years since CJRA began advocating for increased resources. Robust support for our primary Federal law and justice organizations—particularly those that support research and the development of evidence-based policy—is necessary to ensure that we learn the best ways to address issues of crime and justice in our communities.

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- ☐ CJRA secured removal of a provision of the FIRST STEP Act that would have eliminated the National Institute of Corrections, which provides much-needed training and technical assistance to correctional officers across the nation. The United States imprisons 25% of the world's prisoners—more than two million are behind bars and another five million are under some form of correctional supervision. Continuing education for those who manage the largest prison system on Earth and who work with these offenders is important because well over 90% of these prisoners will be released back into our communities.

- ☐ We presented our third annual "Ask a Criminologist" briefing in May 2018, attended by numerous Congressional staff. Held on Capitol Hill, the briefing examined the connection between the opioid epidemic, police/community relations, and violent crime/homicide. It prompted Senator Schatz' office to draft legislative text for additional research on opioids and homicides, which the Senator plans to include in upcoming legislation. With more than 72,000 overdose-related deaths in the United States in 2017 (more than three times the number of reported homicides, and more than all Americans killed in the Vietnam War), opioid-related crime has become a serious problem in many U.S. communities.

- ☐ CJRA recently released a fact sheet with links to the most current peer-reviewed work on the association between immigration and crime to provide legislators and journalists with evidence-based research findings without political considerations. Development of immigration policy should be informed by the most accurate, peer-reviewed research available, which we are able to provide.

Media and Communication Relations in 2018

A primary objective of CJRA is to promote scholarship and expertise generated by ACJS and ASC members—who represent our leading resource. CJRA communications consultant, Caitlin Kizielewicz of KIZCOMM, LLC, works to implement strategies to enhance and elevate the CJRA brand to the media and the public. She offers media training in the CJRA Media Training Workshop offered at ACJS and ASC annual meetings, which experiences high demand from ASC and ACJS members, and which has filled to capacity within hours of being announced. Through her efforts, the Alliance has secured more than 300 interview opportunities with national and local media outlets, and has established on-going relationships with a deep bench of reporters covering crime and justice topics. In February 2016, Caitlin created and began to distribute a monthly CJRA newsletter. She has also established social media channels with more than 3,200 followers. Additionally, she launched more than a dozen research campaigns that feature work in ACJS and ASC journals. Caitlin maintains the expert directory comprised of

more than 110 experts, as well as all expert relations including updating biographies, managing incoming inquiries and providing additional support. She has summarized nearly 200 research articles to provide abstracts on the CJRA website and maintains the latest news and updates on the site.

Media and communications activities over the past few months include:

- ✓ Continued to augment an expert directory of more than 110 experts and associated downloadable research products
- ✓ Translated more than 120 research articles for the CJRA website, created article summaries and highlighted key findings
- ✓ Facilitated interviews with 32 CJRA experts, including 15 ACJS members, 10 of whom had two or more interviews
- ✓ Secured a list of nearly 50 reporters who request research updates from CJRA
- ✓ Secured 34 media placements for CJRA experts
- ✓ Created a social media presence with more than 3,200 followers and an 18% increase in Twitter followers.
- ✓ Developed and distributed a monthly newsletter to nearly 900 subscribers (not including ACJS and ASC members)– securing an average open rate of 36%
- ✓ Formed relationships with publishers (Taylor & Francis and Wiley & Sons) and editors of four academic journals (Justice Quarterly, Justice Evaluation Journal, Criminology and Criminology & Public Policy) to streamline publicity efforts
- ✓ Finalized update of the CJRA website to serve as the go-to source for authoritative experts and relevant research on crime and criminal justice topics
- ✓ Conducted media training workshops for ACJS/ASC members at the ACJS and ASC annual meetings
- ✓ Coordinated efforts with the CJRA government relations consultant to promote events, briefings, conferences organized by ACJS and ASC members

These accomplishments lay a strong foundation, and CJRA is hitting its stride after 2-3 years of concerted infrastructure creation, growth, and development. CJRA now has a demonstrable impact on legislative policy, federal funding of crime and justice research, and access to crime and justice data. CJRA promotion of research by ACJS and ASC scholars and experts has resulted in increased downloads and Altmetric scores associated with journal articles CJRA has promoted, and raises the profile and relevance of our members' research.

To continue to grow CJRA's recognition and reach among both policymakers and the general public, it is critical that CJRA maintains its efforts in media and government relations activities moving forward. Full support of these activities from ACJS and ASC is essential to the ongoing success of the Alliance, and its impact in elevating evidence-

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based research in the crime and justice arena, and increased federal funding for future research in this space. The efforts of CJRA and its consultants could not be more critical given the absence of evidence that has begun to pervade political discourse, and the recent and impending threats to federal funding and access to data under the new administration.

CJRA welcomes any questions you may have and invites you to engage with us as a board, and/or with individual board members, to seek clarification or detail.
Please visit our website at: http://crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org

Current board members:
Paul Elam (ACJS)
David Myers (ACJS)
Marlyn Jones (ACJS
Peter Wood (ACJS, Chair)
Rick Rosenfeld (ASC)
Charis Kubrin (ASC)
Natasha Frost (ASC)
Anthony Peguero (ASC)

Ex Officio Members:
Nancy La Vigne (Past Chair, ASC)
John Worrall (ACJS Executive Director)
Chris Eskridge (ASC Executive Director)

Past CJRA board members:
Christy Visher
Dan Mears
Jocelyn Pollock
Ed Maguire
L. Edward Day
Laura Dugan
Charles Wellford

Protocol for Establishing, Updating, Removing ACJS Subject Matter Policy Experts

Adopted by ACJS Executive Board March 21, 2017

ACJS Public Policy Committee

Definition of ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert

A current member of ACJS with sufficient depth of knowledge based upon field of study, experience, practice, and other substantive and creditable activities in the area of expertise. The Subject Matter Policy Expert is able to summarize the current research in a particular subject matter and provide policy-related insight inclusive of impacts, implications, options, and recommendations based upon their subject matter and policy analysis expertise.

ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Directory Application Process and Criteria

To be considered for inclusion, please send the information below to **David Myers, ACJS Public Policy Committee Chair**, at dmyers@newhaven.edu and indicate that you would like to apply to become an ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert.

✓ First Name:

✓ Last Name:

✓ Current Professional Title:

✓ Email Address:

✓ Office Phone w/ Area Code:

✓ Mobile and/or Home Phone:

✓ Fluency Language(s) Other than English (Please list language(s)):

✓ Specific Area(s) of Subject Matter Policy Expertise for Which Consideration is Being Requested

	Comparative/International
	Corrections (Prisons, Jails)
	Corrections (Probation, Parole)
	Courts and Law
	Criminal Behavior and/or Victimization
	Criminal Justice Education
	Criminal Justice Reform
	Criminal Justice Technology
	Criminological Theory
	Gender, Crime, and Justice
	Gun Violence
	Juvenile Delinquency and Justice
	Mental Health
	Policing
	Prisoner Reentry
	Race/Ethnicity and Issues of Diversity
	Restorative and Community Justice
	Security and Crime Prevention
	Violent Crime
	Other

✓ Curricula Vitae or Resume with the following details:

    o College Degree(s), Field of Study, and Awarding Institution(s): (Minimum of an earned Master's Degree attainment required for inclusion in the Directory)

- o Teaching Position(s) Held: (if applicable), location, and Expertise-Related Courses Developed and/or Taught
- o Expertise-Related Authored Publications, e.g., books, textbooks, [and Expertise-Related Published Authorships, e.g., articles, entries, etc.] (Publishing is required - please include peer-reviewed publications and reputable practitioner and reference publication authorships reflecting subject matter area of expertise)
- o Publicly funded expertise-related grant proposal(s) (description of proposal and source of grant)
- o Independently published expert-related attributions (addressing distinct cases or events; not the same case or event): (Identify the date(s) and source(s), e.g., journalistic and professional blogs, magazines, newspapers, other periodicals, etc.)
- o Expertise-related oral statements or testimonies before federal, state, local, tribal governing body
- o Current recognition as a subject matter expert qualified to provide subject matter expert testimony during legal proceedings
- o Formal experience as a policy analyst in the expertise-related area
- o Minimum of 12 consecutive months of practical experience in the area of expertise

- o Expertise-Related Trainer Position(s) held, location, and expertise-related subject matter delivered
- o Member of a state or national accrediting body in the subject matter expertise area
- o Expertise-related knowledge-based licensures or expertise-related knowledge-based specialty certifications held from regulatory body
- o Completed substantive formal training in area of expertise (description, when, and where)
- o Expertise-related formal organizational awards (national, regional, state, tribal, local, international, professional, academic, peer, etc.)
- o Additional Professional Memberships and Professional Affiliations (required)
- ✓ Biography (A maximum of 350 words that succinctly details your expertise)

ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Directory Review Process

David Myers, ACJS Public Policy Committee Chair, will forward the request to the **ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Review Sub-Committee** to review the application. The ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Review Sub-Committee will propose new Subject Matter Policy Experts to the ACJS Public Policy Committee and the Committee will approve the recommendation. The criteria below will be used

to determine the eligibility and outcome of the application.

ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Directory Eligibility Criteria

- ✓ Current ACJS Member verified by ACJS National Office (required)
- ✓ Member of ACJS for at Least 3 Years (required)
- ✓ College Degree(s), Field of Study, and Awarding Institution(s): (Minimum of an earned Master's Degree attainment required for inclusion in the Directory)
- ✓ Expertise-Related Authored Publications, e.g., books, textbooks, [and Expertise-Related Published Authorships, e.g., articles, entries, etc.] (Publishing is required - please include peer-reviewed publications and reputable practitioner and reference publication authorships reflecting subject matter area of expertise)

ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Directory Other Relevant Criteria

- ✓ Teaching Position(s) Held: (optional), location, and Expertise-Related Courses Developed and/or Taught
- ✓ Publicly funded expertise-related grant proposal(s) (description of proposal and source of grant)
- ✓ Independently published expert-related attributions (addressing distinct cases or events; not the same case or event): (Identify the date(s) and source(s), e.g., journalistic and professional

blogs, magazines, newspapers, other periodicals, etc.)

- ✓ Expertise-related oral statements or testimonies before federal, state, local, tribal governing body
- ✓ Current recognition as a subject matter expert qualified to provide subject matter expert testimony during legal proceedings
- ✓ Formal experience as a policy analyst in the expertise-related area
- ✓ Minimum of 12 consecutive months of practical experience in the area of expertise
- ✓ Expertise-Related Trainer Position(s) held, location, and expertise-related subject matter delivered
- ✓ Member of a state or national accrediting body in the subject matter expertise area
- ✓ Expertise-related knowledge-based licensures or expertise-related knowledge-based specialty certifications held from regulatory body
- ✓ Completed substantive formal training in area of expertise (description, when, and where)
- ✓ Expertise-related formal organizational awards (national, regional, state, tribal, local, international, professional, academic, peer, etc.)
- ✓ Additional Professional Memberships and Professional Affiliations (required)

Posting ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert To CJRA Website

The ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Review Sub-Committee will forward successful applicants to **Caitlin Kizielewicz, CJRA Media**

Consultant, at

ckiz@crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org, to be posted on the CJRA website as a Subject Matter Policy Expert. Caitlin will forward the successful applicant a CJRA Expert Directory Information Form requesting the required information to be placed on the CJRA website. Once the successful applicant provides the requested information, they will be added to the CJRA website as a Subject Matter Policy Expert.

Updating ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Information

Subject matter policy experts may update individual information on the website and/or may ask to be removed from the website at any time. To request one of these changes, please send a detailed request to David Myers, ACJS Public Policy Committee Chair, at

dmyers@newhaven.edu and indicate that you would like to have your ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert information updated. David Myers, ACJS Public Policy Committee Chair, will forward the request to the **ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Update Sub-Committee** to review the request. The ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Update Sub-Committee will forward the request to Caitlin Kizielewicz, CJRA Media Consultant, at

ckiz@crimeandjusticeresearchalliance.org to be

posted on the CJRA website. Caitlin will make the requested changes.

In the absence of an active **ACJS Subject Matter Policy Expert Update Sub-Committee,** update requests can be sent to **Cathy Barth, ACJS Association Manager,** at manager@acjs.org.

Defining Serial Murder: The Importance of a Consistent Definition

Penny Geyer
University of New Haven

Serial killer is a term often used by law enforcement, the media, and scholars alike. However, what exactly is a serial killer? Or, is the proper term *serial murderer?* Unfortunately, there is no consistent definition and, therefore, no concrete answers to these questions. This presents a critical problem, as serial killing is a significant phenomenon and cannot be ignored. The Radford University/Florida Gulf Coast University Serial Killer Database lists nearly 5,000 repeat killers and 14,000 victims worldwide (Aamodt, 2017). The question of serial murder or serial killing is not just one of semantics. Due to the lack of consensus on a definition of serial murder, empirical research is limited (Gurian, 2017). In fact, Fridel and Fox (2017) state, "serial murder is one of the least understood terms in the literature of criminology and psychology" (p. 505). Not only is the credibility of research affected by definitional limitations, but understanding of the offenders themselves is inhibited and thus potentially detrimental to society as a whole (Fridel & Fox, 2017).

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate not only the rampant discord in defining serial murder but, more important, the detrimental effects caused by this lack of agreement. Numerous studies empirically have shown how research into serial murder is hampered by a lack of uniform meaning. More extensive, valid studies must be conducted to understand these types of killers and stop the rising number of victims. For this to occur, the concept of serial murder must be clearly and uniformly defined.

Literature Overview

Bête d´extermination (devouring beast), *diable* (the devil), *werewolf, ripper, slayer,* and *homicidal maniac* are a few of the terms given to repeat murderers over the years (Reid, 2016). While these labels were present beginning in the 15th century, it wasn't until 1929 that a clear definition was attempted. Ernst Gennat, Berlin Chief of Police, developed and employed the term *Serienmörder* (serial killer), which was defined as an individual who murdered in a series (Reid, 2016). It wasn't until the late 1950s that the term *serial killer* was used in the United States, and even then, it was defined as a person with homicidal hatred (Reid, 2016). Since 2001, *serial murderer* and *serial killer* have been the two terms that have dominated in law enforcement and academia. However, there has been no conformity in use of either term, and neither has a universally accepted definition.

Whether *serial murderer* or *serial killer* should prevail pales in comparison to the importance of establishing a definition that will encompass both terms and will be permanently accepted by all. In early conceptions of serial homicide, sexual motive and sadistic fantasies were considered fundamental characteristics (Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992). This construct was discarded, however, as it was too narrow in its consideration of motives by excluding "black widow" killers, killers for profit, and medical-based killers (Hickey, 2016). Contemporary definitions moved away from a motive-based criterion and focused more on the time between the kills and the number of victims. In 1985, Fox and Levin (1998) defined serial

murder as "a string of four or more homicides committed by one or a few perpetrators that spans a period of days, weeks, months, or even years" (p. 410). Later, the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit adopted the definition of a three-victim threshold with a cooling-off period (Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988).

In 2005, the FBI established yet another revised definition of serial murder. This new "official" definition for law enforcement purposes was "the unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008, p. 12). However, while law enforcement may seem to have an "official" definition, a similar agreement does not exist within the academic community. Most scholars support either the original three-victim minimum definition or the revised two-victim threshold, but there are still some who argue for even higher victim minimums (Fridel & Fox, 2017). Fridel and Fox note that "this lack of consensus has resulted in a plethora of differing definitions, preventing direct comparisons of results across studies" (2017, p. 506).

Several studies have attempted to address the detrimental effects caused by the lack of conformity in the definition of serial murder. In a review of both current research and legal definitions of serial murder, Adjorlolo and Chan (2014) identify several discrepancies between how the term is defined, and they offer a more comprehensive serial murder definition. They note that a minimum number of murders needs to be set, as well as criteria for attributing murders to suspects accurately and addressing the offender's intentionality. To properly incorporate these factors, Adjorlolo and Chan built upon a definition previously offered by Skrapec (2001). They

proposed a definition of serial murder that includes, "two or more forensic linked murders with or without a revealed intention of committing additional murder, the murders [being] committed as discrete event(s) by the same person(s) over a period of time, and [with a] primary motive [of] personal gratification" (p. 490).

Skrapec (2001) and Adjorlolo and Chan (2014) were not the only ones to argue for the validity of a motive component in the definition of serial murder. Williams, Thomas, and Arntfield (2017) conducted a study using "personal gratification" of motive to apply leisure science to serial murder. They found that leisure does appear to play a role in many serial homicide cases. In particular, leisure-related themes emerged, such as serial murder as a game, murder for thrills and intense situations, murder for simple enjoyment and fun, and murder as a unique personal celebration. This insight into motivations of serial murderers showcased the importance of developing a definition of serial murder that incorporated all possible motives, not just a limited set.

The broadening and embracing of a more inclusive definition of serial murder also can be seen regarding gender. Farrell, Keppel, and Titterington (2013) note that one of the most troublesome issues in researching serial murder, especially female serial murder, is the lack of a consistent and established definition. In particular, women are implicitly excluded by reference to sexual motivations or, more specifically, by stating that the offender had to be a man (Egger, 1984). Farrell et al. (2013) demonstrate that female serial murderers present their own issues in classification, and that victim-offender relationship and victim approach need more analysis for

understanding these female offenders and their crimes. Additionally, Farrell and colleagues found that offender motivation was not an ideal basis for classification when addressing female serial offenders.

Contemporary Research

Recently, researchers have continued their studies in the ongoing pursuit of the elusive serial murder definition. For example, Fridel and Fox (2017) empirically examined the effect of the Federal Bureau of Investigation lowering the threshold to two murders, in contrast to the either three-victim or four-victim minimum utilized by most scholars. Offender demographics—specifically age at first kill and race, partnership, method, and motive—were the independent variables selected as the focus of the study. The analysis was limited to male offenders who operated in the United States with a first kill during the 1970s or later.

Initially, each selected demographic and behavioral variable was examined for association with the number of victims killed. Then multinomial logistic regression was used to examine the differences in offender characteristics among those with victim counts of two, three, and four. Offenders with five or more victims were excluded from this portion of the analysis so as not to bias offender characteristics in the four-victim group in favor of the offenders with large victim counts. Lastly, a series of multinomial logistic regression models were applied to compare offender characteristics across all victim counts in an attempt to identify the optimal threshold for serial murder.

The data were obtained from the Radford University/Florida Gulf Coast University Serial Killer Database, which contains more than 150 variables pertaining to various offender and victim characteristics, including location, offender history, motivation, time frame, sentencing, method, mobility, and paraphilic behaviors. The resulting dataset consisted of 2,275 repeat killers who were implicated in two or more homicides, for a total of 9,152 murders.

Fridel and Fox (2017) found that offenders who murder two, three, four, or more victims are quite distinguishable. Specifically, two-victim offenders were noted to differ significantly in terms of motive, partnership, and crime scene behaviors. As two-victim offenders differed so drastically from all other serial homicide offenders, it was recommended that the proper minimum threshold for serial murder should be three victims (Fridel & Levin, 2017). Furthermore, Fridel and Levin argued that not only did their results lend empirical support to the argument of a two-victim threshold being too low, but by restoring the three-victim threshold, there would be less dilution of the serial killer population, with a large share of offenders who may or may not have the same deadly intent.

Gurian (2017) also offered a study based on empirical research to aid in the development of more accurate classifications and definitions of serial murder. She used a comprehensive overview of a sample of 508 cases (738 total offenders, including partnered groups of two or more offenders) to provide analyses of solo male, solo female, and partnered serial killers, to illuminate statistical differences and commonalities in offending and adjudication patterns among the three groups. Offenders included had a minimum of two discrete murders between 1900 and 2013, with partnered offenders considered as those with a minimum of two offenders (Gurian, 2017). Cases were identified by compiling a list of offenders

using research literature, peer-reviewed journals, bibliographies, biographies, and computer searches.

A database was then created, which included offender age, race/ethnicity, time frame of murders, location, conviction, sentence, plea, victim type and number, method, and mobility (Gurian, 2017). Chi-square tests and logistic regressions were used as methods of analysis. Gurian's results revealed offending patterns were based on time frame, mobility, method, and victim selection. One of the key findings from this study was that while victim count serves as an indicator with respect to time frame, it does not do so for method or adjudication. Based on her findings, Gurian stated, "a working definition of serial murder should incorporate all types of serial killers (i.e., including women), and include a consistent minimum time frame, body count, and general pattern to killing" (p. 557).

Empirical research into serial murder has been significantly hampered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's definition of serial murder, which pervades the literature (Reid, 2016). Reid argues that with its nonelaborate and broad parameters, this frequently employed definition has hindered estimations of prevalence of serial murder, along with impeding any progress into determining its etiology. To overcome these obstacles, Reid posits adoption of new criteria across the fields of law enforcement and academia and offers a new categorization for serial murder under the label of "Compulsive Criminal Homicide" (p. 290). She lays the groundwork for her new classification by introducing, outlining, and summarizing the stages through which the definition of serial murder has evolved. Existing definitions of serial murder then are analyzed to demonstrate how several common notions of serial murderers are so narrow and exclusionary that they fail to capture and accurately present the full concept. Lastly, she suggests that focusing solely on the number of murders shifts the focus away from the actions and internal pathologies of the serial murderer. She argues for the adoption of a Compulsive Criminal Homicide (CCH) classification to shift the focal point of serial murder to issues of more scientific value. The corollaries of CCH are as follows:

A. The total achieved murders numbers 3+ OR the total achieved murders numbers 2 and there was at least one additional attempted murder;

B. Murders and/or attempted murders should be linked forensically and/or upheld judicially;

C. The primary goal of the perpetrator is intrinsic and based in psychological motivations of personal gratification;

D. The murder is not carried out at the behest of another or in response to a personal attack on oneself or a loved one;

E. The offender exercises independent conscious deliberation, purposeful control, planned forethought, and intentional action in the acquisition, constraint, handling, and/or elimination of the victim;

F. Each event of murder occurs as a discrete event at different intervals of time and is interrupted by a break or dormant period between homicides wherein the offender returns to their usual way of life;

G. Subsequent killings must also meet corollaries A–G. (pp. 297–298)

Reid's (2016) CCH offers a label and definition with significant detail and thorough elaboration. It encompasses prior aspects deemed relevant, such as victim count, timing, and motives, as well as specific nuances of each, so that a more accurate portrayal of the serial murderer is embodied in the definition. Reid states, "the seemingly trivial application of nonstandardized definitions for serial murder has serious and wide-ranging implications for scientific investigation" (p. 291). Until this standardization is achieved, there will be very little empirical knowledge that can be gained regarding serial murder. As Gurian (2017) noted, classification of serial murderers can be improved with consistency, particularly with respect to victim number and offending patterns. To illustrate, Fox, Levin, and Fridel (2019) offer data suggesting 120–180 Americans are slain by serial killers per year, which is in significant contrast to the Justice Department's estimates of thousands of victims annually. This statistical discrepancy between law enforcement and scholarly research becomes a quandary that has no easy answers. Fridel and Fox (2017) recommend, given their empirical results that two-victim offenders differ significantly from all other serial killers, that law enforcement officials should revert back to the traditional three-victim minimum. However, they also recognize there may be potential benefits in the allocation of resources during an investigation if the two-victim count is maintained. This waffling between definitions and who should use them highlights the exact dilemma that serial murder research has been trying to solve.

Conclusion

Research on serial murder has been limited over the past several decades, for a multitude of reasons. While scholars argue for a more scientific approach, there remains the critical element of no universally accepted definition. This lack of definition has compounded an already difficult subject to study, with its limited sources of official data and questions regarding the validity of information that is available. When researchers adopt a definition of serial murder that is contrary to the law enforcement definition, there is the possibility of under-inclusion or over-inclusion of serial murder cases. As Adjorlolo and Chan (2014) state, these errors can result in "serious consequences such as research and investigative flaws" (p. 487). Future research needs to center on the establishment of a fully developed and functional concept of serial murder, such as the one offered by Reid (2016), which can fit both academic and law enforcement needs. Once this has been accomplished, progress can be made in the understanding of serial murder and techniques can be developed to address it.

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Book Review: Adam Lynes, *The Road to Murder: Why Driving Is the Occupation of Choice for Britain's Serial Killers*. Waterside Press, 2017. ISBN: 1909976377

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Much of the literature published on serial killers seeks to provide reasons why these offenders commit their heinous acts (Lester, 1995; Giannangelo, 1996; Ramsland, 2006). In *The Road to Murder: Why Driving Is the Occupation of Choice for Britain's Serial Killers*, Adam Lynes offers a new perspective on the evaluation of serial murderers. Lynes focuses on how certain occupations, specifically those of a transient nature, can significantly contribute to the method of the offender's killing regime. Additionally, by applying underlying criminological and psychological principles, Lynes addresses whether it is an offender's sadistic fantasies that direct such occupational choice or if factors in the occupation itself initiate the desire to kill.

The paucity of research directly assessing the potential association between career choices involving driving and serial murder is startling. In a list of the top nine serial killer occupations, categorized by skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, and professional/government, only one—truck driver—specifically was noted as a driving-related occupation associated with serial killing (Arntfield & Danesi, 2017). Lynes's work is significant in attempting to fill an informational void in the prevailing research regarding serial killers. The book centers on the evaluation of serial murderers in Britain who drove or relied on driving as part of their occupation.

Lynes, as Deputy Head of the Homicide and Violent Crime research cluster within the Centre for Applied Criminology, is highly qualified in the subject matter of serial murder. The book offers an in-depth background to modern developments in the study of serial murder, as well as a brief overview of known British serial murderers and their occupations. It then delves into the issue of serial murder and transience, particularly serial murder and driving as an occupational choice. Through use of a series of eight case studies on serial killers who were identified as holding transient-oriented occupations, Lynes illustrates "just how significant an offender's occupation may be in the aid of their offending" (p. 98).

One of the strengths of the book is its well-rounded informativeness and clarity of presentation. In opening, the two opposing theories that dominate the literature on serial murder, medical-psychological and structural tradition, are defined and discussed. These two different theoretical perspectives are succinctly summarized as "one that argues that the answers lie within the offenders themselves; and the other that argues that it is the society in which [*sic*] these individuals inhabit that holds the key to understanding why certain individuals can repeatedly kill" (p. 30). Lynes recognizes that both these perspectives provide significant insight into the understanding of serial murder; however, he raises the concern that neither adequately considers an offender's occupation. He further argues that considering an offender's occupation is critical for a truly comprehensive understanding, as employment can provide the offender status, proximity, and access to potential victims.

The strongest aspect of the book is Lynes's use of Holland's (1973) RIASEC model to analyze

whether the offenders studied purposely chose transient occupations in order to commit murder or, rather, killed due to factors that developed once they were employed in these types of work environments. Holland posited that individuals seek employment corresponding with their interests. Additionally, he identified a set of distinctive occupational interest types—Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC)—which he labeled as personality types. The case study involving Peter Sutcliffe demonstrates Lynes's skill in expertly applying this psychological model seamlessly in a criminological context.

> It would be whilst employed [as a lorry driver] that Sutcliffe committed the majority of his known offenses. All of his occupations: grave-digger; factory worker; heavy-goods driver; and finally, lorry driver all fall with those professions aligned with the Realistic personality type…it is evident that Sutcliffe was continually drawn to professions that demanded the same or similar skill sets. (p. 103)

Lynes utilizes the RIASEC model throughout the remaining seven case analyses, providing ample validation for his argument that transient-oriented serial killers do not consciously select their professions in order to offend; rather, they are drawn to this type of employment because of their Realistic personality type. This information can be extremely beneficial in understanding the circumstances that lead to particular individuals becoming serial murderers, as well as aiding in the profiling and apprehension of future transient serial offenders.

Another strong attribute of Lynes's evaluation is that he does not leave his analysis resting on just one theoretical framework. Throughout the case studies, applications of both rational choice theory and the routine activities approach can be seen. Cornish and Clarke's (2014) rational choice theory suggests that offenders are in pursuit of benefits for themselves, and this process involves a rational level of decision making: weighing the benefits of committing the crime and the risks of apprehension. Lynes argues that the criminal decision-making process of serial killers holding transient-oriented employment is influenced by their work environment. Lynes states that, "occupations containing significant amounts of driving generate the immediate circumstances and situations for a serial murderer to decide that the benefit of committing a crime outweighs the risk of being caught and apprehended" (p. 201).

The routine activity theory developed by Cohen and Felson (1979) argues that in order for a crime to occur, three essential elements must be present (a motivated offender, a suitable victim, and the lack of a capable guardian). Lynes draws on this approach to address serial killers' offending length as related to employment, specifically for those in driving and transitory work. In reviewing known British serial killers, Lynes found that serial murderers employed in healthcare fields, public and personal service, or driving and transitory-dependent work were active for longer periods of time than those killers who were unemployed. Lynes reasoned that legitimate employment lessened the chance that killers would be suspected of being the offenders, as their occupations would give them permissible and valid reasons for being near their victims. For instance, Robert Black, a delivery driver, was able to kill for 5 years because he chose victims in places where he would not be recognized or identified and had valid reasons for

being present due to his delivery obligations. Additionally, "Black's occupation acted as a means of propulsion towards locations that…provided suitable targets that also lacked capable guardians" (p. 124).

In the book's conclusion, Lynes looks at the future of serial murder and considers how police investigative techniques, forensic capabilities, and the advancement of surveillance technology have been leading to offending periods that are drastically reduced. Although the advent of police national databases, DNA analysis, and closed-circuit television surveillance offer police significant advantages in the apprehension of serial killers, the same advancements also can provide offenders with criminal opportunities that might not otherwise be available. As Lynes notes, "it may be that the 'Golden Age' of the serial murderer who held transient-oriented professions has come to an end, and that the serial murderers of tomorrow may hold occupations that require use of technology such as computers" (pp. 209–210).

From start to finish, Lynes presents clear and logical theoretical applications in his analysis of driving as an occupational choice for Britain's serial killers. Through the use of both psychological and criminological models, Lynes aptly offers insight into an aspect of serial murder that has not been adequately assessed by scholarly research. By focusing on serial offenders in a transitory work environment, Lynes demonstrates the value of broadening our understanding of serial killing beyond those factors commonly studied. Clearly,

there is much to be learned about this phenomenon, if we are to prevent its occurrence. The information is there if we, like Lynes, look for new and innovative ways to utilize it.

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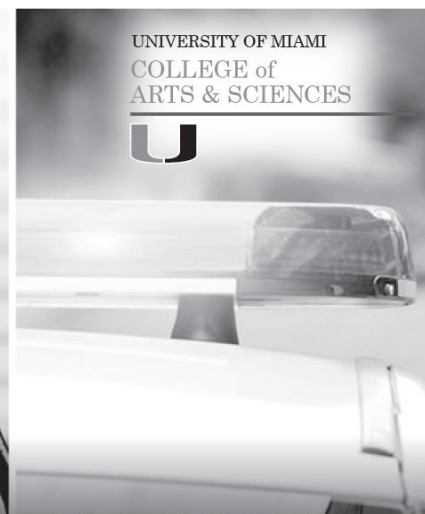
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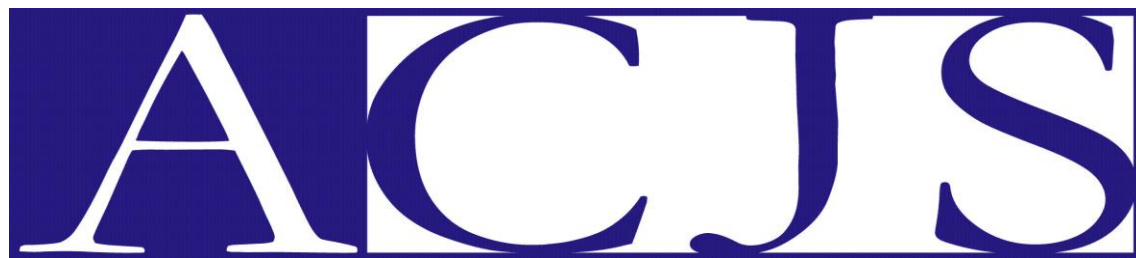
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