Collaborative and Creative Research to Advance Evidence-Based Practices

ACE! conducts collaborative and creative research to assist policy makers and correctional practitioners with using evidence-based practices and treatments. Along with our partners, we at ACE! work to craft new policies focused on preventing criminal behavior instead of simply responding to it.

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Advancing Practice

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An Introduction: ACE! Responds to the National Academy Report on the Causes and Consequences of Mass Incarceration

This spring the U.S. witnessed a hotbed of activity revealing a hotbed of activity with many instances revealing how a bloated criminal justice system impacts communities and individuals. A convergence of diverse and oftentimes conflicting perspectives suggests a new collective judgment that U.S. incarceration policies (and for that matter criminalization in general) place unhealthy demands on the lives and well-being of citizens and society at large. Several media campaigns highlight the depth and reach of unjust criminal justice policies and practices—including the Coalition for Public Safety (http://www.coalitionforpublicsafety.org), the ACLU’s End Mass Incarceration (https://www.aclu.org/issues/mass-incarceration) (2015), the Right on Crime (http://rightoncrime.com/the-conservative-case-for-reform/) (2015), and John Legend’s Free America Campaign (http://letsfreeamerica.com/) (2015) to name a few. This turn of events is welcome given the staggering statistics on the impact of the mass incarceration policies—1 in 4 U.S. adults has a criminal record, having a criminal record affects employment and a person’s role in society, and many Americans assume that incarceration is a normal part of their life cycle. Evidence now strongly suggests that many U.S. crime control policies do not work as intended and/or have harmful, unintended consequences. The collective judgment about the damaging nature of these policies and related practices suggests several immediate needs including: 1) unraveling policies and practices to resize and reshape the criminal justice system and 2) addressing the unmet social needs that fostered the great American experiment on the use of mass incarceration as a primary crime control strategy.

Over a year ago, the National Research Council released The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences (edited by Travis, J., Western, B., & Redburn, S., 2014). This 464-page report thoroughly examines the historical and socio-political factors influencing the mass incarceration movement and the impact of mass incarceration policies and practices on individuals, families, and communities. It is an impressive, if not breathtaking, report that is a “must read” for understanding American crime control efforts. Notwithstanding the unprecedented extensive review of American’s experiment with incarceration, the report makes recommendations based on the committee’s charge to assess the causes and consequences of mass incarceration in the U.S. The committee took a bold stance in identifying a need for some normative principles to guide our punishment policies and practices in the future. They also note that these normative principles should be used as a checks and balances on the factors that influenced the growth and sustained use of mass incarceration. The normative principles are: parsimony, proportionality, social justice and citizenship. Two of these reflect legal principles (parsimony and proportionality of penal severity) and two reflect social needs (social justice and citizenship). The inclusion of social justice, compared to criminal justice, as an overarching principle illustrates the degree to which mass incarceration policies/practices affect social inequities, racial and minority issues and disparities in access to social institutions (i.e., health, educational, employment). Citizenship is a welcome addition to this important conversation about mass incarceration since it signifies that the punishment processes should be concerned with how to facilitate resumption of the individual to a role in society that is productive and positively contributive.

The significance of the NRC recommendations cannot be understated, but these recommendations themselves are bound by the charge to this esteemed body. The report does not address many related topics and areas affected by mass incarceration policies and practices. At The Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!), two doctoral students—Teneshia Thurman and Lauren Duhaime—suggested there were complementary recommendations for these unaddressed areas. Danielle Rudes and I agreed with their assessment and asked other graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and researchers affiliated with ACE! to consider themes and subject areas untouched by the NRC report. These areas illustrate the depth we need to go to undo the impact of mass incarceration policies that affect society, as well as the various areas where reparations could correct the unhealthy policies and practices. Stated simply, U.S. mass incarceration policies not only impacted
incarcerated individuals, but also affect the actors involved in the administration of criminal justice, the culture of operating correctional institutions and entire communities.

Each essay in this issue of *Advancing Practice* recommends action in an area not covered in the NRC report. The action is justified by the extent of the problem, the consequences to the four normative principles identified by the NRC, and the importance of solution to undoing the impact of mass incarceration policies and practices. The recommendations are:

1. **Citizenship:** The label of “offender” supersedes all other labels and continues to stigmatize justice-involved individuals. To resume a conventional identity (i.e., parent, citizen, type of occupation, etc.) and reduce the impact of the negative label of “offender,” new language is needed to refer to justice involved (i.e., typically called offender, inmate, delinquent, etc.) as formerly incarcerated but no longer stigmatized with a derogatory label. Without this language, conventional roles and identities are difficult to assume/resume.

2. **Citizenship (Juvenile Justice):** Juveniles who encounter the justice system are more likely to enter the adult criminal justice system. Community corrections agencies should address disproportionate minority contact (DMC) including policies and practices that reduce and prevent juvenile offending. Schools and community correction agencies should partner to address these issues.

3. **Citizenship:** To bolster the desistance process (exiting from a life of crime), institutional and community correctional agencies should incorporate shared decision-making processes where justice-involved individuals have a voice in decisions affecting their life and learn to make these pro-social and positive choices for themselves.

4. **Social Justice:** NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) persists and can impact the ability to implement reforms. A dialogue can foster more support for community reforms and clarify myths about the danger that some justice-involved individuals present.

5. **Social Justice:** Social programs are important to communities, families and individuals. Yet, the programs themselves need to be stable, and able to meet the various needs of individuals including providing for basic needs (i.e., housing, food, employment, etc.) to affect the stability of a person in the community. Focusing attention on quality, holistic programming is important to address the social and psychological conditions that affect criminal behavior.

6. **Social Justice:** Numerous social and systemic barriers prevent individuals from gaining access to resources and opportunities necessary to seamlessly transition across various stages of the criminal justice system following arrest. Criminal justice actors should prioritize removing barriers, including the financial burdens, in the pretrial release process as well as post-release limitations on state-aid, education and employment opportunities. Alleviating burdens will improve the equality of access and promote social justice prior to and following incarceration.

7. **Social Justice (for correctional institutions and agencies):** A comprehensive approach is needed to both recruit and retain staff in community and institutional corrections to advance the use of evidence-based strategies. A goal is to maximize the working alliance between staff and clients by equipping staff with the tools to foster positive interactions, build decision-making skills, and build (and understand) intrinsic motivation.

8. **Social Justice:** A collaborative effort of individuals from different disciplines and perspectives is needed to undo the effects of mass incarceration and to develop untold and innovative solutions. A broad range of disciplines, not just representatives from the justice system, can work towards addressing the causes and consequences of mass incarceration from multiple perspectives.

The NRC report reinstated the importance of social justice and citizenship and we support these critical principles. It is time for deliberative recommendations that can meet these goals. We are interested in your thoughts about recommendations that focus on impacting the policies and practices of justice organizations, particularly institutional and community correctional agencies. Feel free to send comments to us at ace@gmu.edu and we will post your thoughts to our Twitter account. Please join us in this critical dialogue regarding how to move forward and innovate. We look forward to continuous conversation and passionate action to achieve these goals.

Faye S. Taxman & Danielle S. Rudes, ACE! Director & Deputy Director
Costs of Incarceration: Labeling, Stigma, and the Pains of Imprisonment

By Marissa Kiss, ACE! Research Associate and Kimberly R. Kras, ACE! Postdoctoral Fellow

RECOMMENDATION: The label of “offender” supersedes all other labels, and continues to identify a person as being involved in the justice system. The major challenge is how to assist the individual with resuming a conventional identity (i.e., parent, citizen, a work-related identity, etc.) and how society can reduce the stigma that occurs with a negative label. The concept of redemption signifies that the justice-related label is not needed because the individual has remained crime-free. More attention should be given to these issues, empirically and theoretically, to provide society at large, criminal justice agencies, and communities with the appropriate language to facilitate a conventional identity.

LABELING
The burden and weight of being involved in the justice system has long-lasting social, economic, physical, and psychological costs that impact the lives of offenders, their families, and communities. One of these costs includes the burden of being labeled a criminal. Stigma associated with the criminal label impacts the lives of offenders in numerous ways upon release.

The terms “offender,” “delinquent,” or “felon” are words assigned to an individual who has come in contact with, is currently involved with, or has been previously been involved in the justice system. These official labels are not only assigned by law enforcement officials, judges, prosecutors, and probation or parole officers, but are also unofficially assigned by teachers, family members, peers, and other members of the community. The official and unofficial “offender” label impacts and affects an individual from the time they enter the criminal justice system, throughout incarceration, and during their life post-release.

Labeling theory (Becker, 1963) is a theoretical perspective that focuses on what happens to individuals after they are identified as criminal offenders. Once an individual receives a label, he/she may endure stigma associated with being an offender, which makes it even more difficult to shed the criminal identity. Reinforced throughout the period of incarceration, this is because an individual is defined and labeled by the crime he/she committed and may not be able to see himself or herself differently once he/she is released into the community. One consequence of this labeling process is the internalization and acceptance of the criminal identity, which may affect one’s ability to reintegrate and desist from offending (Becker, 1963; Traub and Little, 1999). As an individual internalizes the label, the larger community may also reinforce the criminal identity by stigmatizing and making him/her feel different from other citizens. (It should be noted that the scope of one’s community can range from family or close friends to general society.) This type of “othering” inhibits the offender from redefining himself/herself in a more conventional way such as a citizen, parent, spouse, or teacher. Studies show that official labeling by the criminal justice system has a direct effect on subsequent criminality, as well as effects on other life areas like school or work (Bernberg and Krohn, 2003).

PAINS OF IMPRISONMENT
Incarceration magnifies the labeling process. When an individual enters prison, he/she is stripped of his/her name and assigned an inmate number. This process diminishes the individual’s status as a citizen, thereby eliminating one’s previous non-criminal identity and restricting their autonomy. In his well-known study on prison life, Gresham Sykes (1958) defines the loss of identity and autonomy as a “pain of imprisonment.” This
pain is further felt when the inmate is subjected to other forms of degradation, such as strip searches, segregation, and isolation (Singer, 1971; Huebner, 2003; Santos, 2004; Windzio, 2006). In two other studies of the prison experience, Conover (2000) and Santos (2004) provide accounts of inmates being treated like “boxes,” “packages,” “furniture,” “inventory,” or “animals” moving in and around facilities (like human warehouses) where correctional officers are (zoo) keepers. These types of incarceration experiences emphasize that inmates are no longer individuals and reinforce the image that inmates are less than human (Singer, 1971). Consequently, this label transitions with them upon release into the community.

“The process of making the criminal, therefore, is a process of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious; it becomes a way of stimulating, suggesting, emphasizing, and evoking the very traits that are complained of” – Frank Tannenbaum (in Traub and Little, 1999: 376)

COSTS OF A CRIMINAL CONVICTION
Upon release from prison, the stigma of a criminal conviction, along with an individual’s former prisoner status, follows him or her while seeking conventional opportunities in the community. The pains of imprisonment and costs of a criminal conviction may follow in the form of civil disabilities that restrict community life and citizenship, such as loss of voting privileges, restricted participation in local government, and limitations on receiving public assistance. While some argue these are deserved punishments, others suggest they are barriers to shedding the stigma of a criminal past. Braithwaite (1989) proposes that part of the purpose of labeling a person as a criminal offender is to produce shame. Braithwaite distinguishes between reintegrative and disintegrative shaming processes. Reintegrative shaming occurs when the offender is only punished by the criminal justice system—not society—and the community welcomes the offender back. Disintegrative shaming occurs when an offender is stigmatized or shunned upon returning from prison by the community. Braithwaite (1989) suggests that disintegrative shaming creates a group of outcasts who adhere to the criminal lifestyle because they have fully adopted the label and see no alternative.

The stigma associated with a felony conviction and incarceration experience impacts successful reentry (Maruna, 2001). Some scholars refer to these impacts as invisible punishments (Travis, 2002). Parolees and probationers in many states are barred from certain jobs, denied entry to school, denied access to school loans, denied membership in community groups, and have spatial limitations on movement. One direct consequence of a felony conviction is related to employment. In many cases, this criminal history prohibits formerly incarcerated individuals from obtaining legitimate employment and becoming a productive member of the community. In the process of trying to acquire a conventional identity, such as “employed,” ex-offenders may be subjected to disintegrative shaming when denied an interview or job because of their criminal label. This label negatively impacts hiring outcomes for individuals with a criminal record (Pager, Western, and Sugie, 2009). Employers are less likely to hire workers with criminal records due to the concerns that former felons are not reliable and will commit theft, violence, or drug use while employed (Western, 2008; Pager, Western, and Sugie, 2009). This stigmatization prevents individuals from obtaining and maintaining employment, and may be detrimental to successful community reintegration (Western and Wildeman, 2008; Graffam, Shinkfield, and Hardcastle, 2008).

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE
The National Research Council’s (2014) report on mass incarceration suggests that future research and policy should consider the collateral consequences of imprisonment and reentry to reduce rates of recidivism and improve the communities to which offenders return. The latter is vitally important as labeling theories suggest that the stigma associated with the criminal label will impact the lives of offenders in long-lasting and critical ways, such as inhibiting identity transformation and promoting disenfranchisement. These effects are mitigated by encouraging redemption from the criminal label through reintegrative shaming processes, whereby the offender regains full citizenship once he/she successfully completes punishment. In addition to restoring one’s civil rights, another way to accomplish this is to consider disregarding criminal history (such as through expungement of criminal records) after a certain period of law-abiding behavior in the community. Some scholars propose a 7 to 10 year period, after which those with criminal records have a similar risk of arrest.
as those with no criminal record (see Bushway, Nieuwbeerta and Blokland, 2011; Blumstein and Nakamura, 2009). Eliminating the label of “felon” after this period allows former offenders to assume the identity of conventional citizens and signal to the community they are redeemed (Maruna, 2012). Through this type of reintegrative shaming, communities can assist with restoring the offender’s previous, non-criminal identity and improve the likelihood of success.

References
How Can We Apply the Lessons of California Realignment in Other Jurisdictions?

By Amy Murphy, ACE! Project Director

The 2000s saw California become “ground zero” for criminal justice reform. Faced with a burgeoning, massively overcrowded prison system, in 2009, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation was ordered to reduce its 150,000 inmate prison population by 55,000 inmates (CDCR, 2013). The California legislature and voting population passed bills to advance the movement away from mass incarceration, including the Public Safety Realignment Assembly Bill (AB) 109, which ordered that individuals serving prison sentences for non-violent, non-serious, non-sex offenses be moved to community corrections supervision (CDCR, 2013). AB 109 resulted in an influx of clients to county probation departments. With this influx, counties have looked to find and support appropriate supervision and programming for their new population.

While much progress occurred in reducing incarceration rates nationally, with declines in the number of people imprisoned since 2009, much of the reduction comes from California. California diverted more than 100,000 felons away from prison and into the community (Petersilia, 2013) while many states’ prison populations have actually grown slightly. This demonstrates that most jurisdictions still have work to do in reducing incarceration (Carson, 2015). California continues to reform and reshape its justice system. In fact, in November 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47, which reduces penalties for certain crimes such as drug and property crimes. Proposition 47 deals with current crimes but it also is retroactive and requires reduction of sentences for those already convicted (Gerber, Sewell, & Chang, 2015). Jail populations in California declined significantly as a result of this recent proposition.

Through ACE!’s work with four jurisdictions in California, we have a front-row seat to realignment and reform and have the opportunity to provide guidance, feedback, and decision support to those counties. ACE! partnered with four California jurisdictions to implement the RNR Simulation Tool and/or SOARING 2. The RNR Simulation Tool helps jurisdictions apply the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework to practice. RNR establishes that to reduce offending behaviors, we must give attention to clients’ static risk levels, or rearrest, reconviction, or reincarceration; clients’ needs - paying special attention to the criminogenic needs, and responsivity factors, which refers to individuals’ characteristics like gender, age, and learning style that impact how the treatment should be delivered. Through use of this tool, the jurisdictions are reconfiguring programming to meet the needs of those involved in the justice system. ACE!’s eLearning system Skills for Offender Assessment and Responsivity in New Goals (SOARING 2) is designed to educate officers in core correctional practices and increase their use of these practices in daily activities.

“As the income gap continues to widen and housing costs soar ever higher, individuals...face extreme and mounting barriers to reintegration”

- Community Corrections Partnership Executive Committee Report: Three Years of Realignment in San Francisco, February 2015

We know that the U.S. needs to continue efforts to decrease incarceration, but we must go about this in a thoughtful manner. If we release inmates without identifying their needs and providing them with the services, treatment, and programming to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviors, those inmates are likely to continue the behaviors and find themselves in front of a judge once again.
Through our work with our wonderful partners in California, we take away the following lessons regarding keeping communities safe and improving lives while decreasing incarceration use.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Recognize** that while public sentiment about incarceration shifted in the abstract, NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) persists and can impact a jurisdiction’s ability to implement reforms. For example, citizens may agree that a reentry center is a great idea in theory, but they do not want to live next door to it. Approaching this issue requires talking and listening. Talking to local residents and clarifying myths about offenders can open their minds, but we must listen to their concerns as well and consider the whole community when making decisions.

- **Prioritization of needs** matters and should inform sequencing of treatment. Individuals with extensive criminal histories tend to have multiple needs. Agencies, treatment providers, and the individuals themselves need to work together to prioritize, because you cannot treat everything at once.

- **Basic needs can trump more “severe” needs.** It is very difficult for people to engage in treatment when basic needs are not met (e.g., not knowing where they will sleep and not having reliable access to meals). Partnering with supportive living programs can help stabilize clients and increase their readiness for treatment. In addition, there is more to housing stability than having an address. Many probationers are living in an environment that is not conducive to recovery and desistance from crime.

- **You can lead an offender to treatment, but you can’t make him/her engage.** High-quality treatment has no impact on a client who refuses to actively participate in the program. Measuring treatment readiness, using motivational enhancement techniques, and providing incentives can help increase attendance and engagement (Murphy & Taxman, 2014).

- **Effective collaboration and communication between jail staff and probation officers is a key to success,** given that many clients transfer between the two systems.

### References


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Addressing Collateral Social Consequences of Justice Involvement Apart from Prison Experience

By Shannon Magnuson, ACE! GRA and Mary V. Mbaba, ACE! Research Assistant

RECOMMENDATION: Numerous social and systemic barriers prevent offenders from gaining access to resources and opportunities necessary to seamlessly transition between stages of the criminal justice process following arrest. Criminal justice actors should prioritize removing barriers, including financial burdens of the pretrial release process and post-release limitations on state aid, education and employment opportunities. It is our recommendation that this should be a nationwide effort and should not vary from state to state. Alleviating burdens will improve equality of access and promote social justice prior to and following incarceration.

EXTENDING THE CONVERSATION TO THE ENTIRE SYSTEM
The report from the National Resource Council Committee extensively details the collateral consequences of mass incarceration and posits that prisons are “mainstays of justice” (Travis & Western, 2014, p. 350). A key ingredient in addressing these consequences is to offer equal access to community resources (as limited as they are) and opportunities preceding the prison experience and upon release. In this essay, we do not focus on the consequences of imprisonment itself, but offer recommendations to alleviate the roadblocks experienced by individuals who navigate the system.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES PRIOR TO INCARCERATION
An individual’s entrée into the criminal justice system begins at arrest and the remainder of their pathway through the system is, in part, determined by social and economic circumstances. In many cases, following arrest, individuals are held in pretrial detention during all or some of the period between arrest and adjudication. Incarceration, even temporary pre-trial detention, removes individuals from their communities and subjects them to social capital losses similar to those experienced by the convicted population. Losses include broken community ties, disruptions to employment and student status, and decreased housing and medical eligibility (Justice Policy Institute, 2012; Wiseman, 2013). These costs are especially burdensome to families of low socioeconomic status who may depend upon an individual’s income and benefits.

Evidence suggests that the length of pretrial detention has further implications for the severity of convictions and sentencing. Compared to offenders who are released prior to trial or sentencing, detained offenders receive harsher sentences more often than those who are released (LaFrentz & Spohn, 2006; Spohn, 2009). Securing release from the pretrial detention period requires an offender to submit funds to the state in the form of posting bail. The purpose of bail is two-fold: (1) to protect the community from violent offenders, while (2) incentivizing offender court appearance (Wiseman, 2013). The amount of money to secure release is derived from a predetermined bail schedule, a matrix where a monetary equivalent is assigned to the severity of the criminal charge. These schedules are not prorated per income level. Instead, they are standardized in an effort to reduce discriminatory release decisions by pre-trial judges (Justice Policy Institute, 2012). A New Jersey jail analysis found that 12% of the entire jail population remained in custody because of the inability to pay $2,500 or less to secure pretrial release (VanNostrand, 2013). Despite efforts to hamper discriminatory practices during the release process, these schedules inherently disadvantage those of low socioeconomic status. Their lack of financial capital limits their ability to afford the fixed price for release.

Alternatives do exist in place of monetary bail, such as pretrial supervision. Validated risk tools inform pretrial
release decisions and supervision conditions by triaging detainee populations into low, moderate and high categories based upon a series of criminogenic factors predicting their risk of flight and potential for new crime. These categories carry graduated supervision conditions such as telephone reporting with a pretrial services agent, no contact with victim (if applicable), and abstinence from relevant substances (if applicable) with potential referral for drug screens. Although these conditions still place an offender under correctional control, they do so in a less restrictive way and reserve detention bed space for those at highest risk to the community. Similar risk tools are currently used in post-conviction community corrections and should also be incorporated into the system prior to conviction. Various jurisdictions already employ these alternatives to bail, and this effort should be extended nationally (Mamalian, 2011). This solution attempts to mitigate some of the unintended consequences present prior to conviction and alleviates concerns of unequal access to release opportunity.

UNINTENDED OUTCOMES FOLLOWING INCARCERATION

Economic stability plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism post-release: employment among ex-offenders is a predictor of reduced drug dealing, violent crime, and property crime (Solomon, 2006). However, following incarceration, offenders are further subjected to barriers of employment and state aid opportunity that limits their economic stability. First, labor market participation and state aid approval is contingent upon presenting a birth certificate, social security card, and/or a photo ID to a potential employer, and ex-offenders face several difficulties obtaining this basic documentation when returning to their communities (Nelson, 2011). Legal sanctions in some states also exclude offenders, particularly felony offenders, from employment in certain industries and obtaining some licensures (e.g., barbering, cosmetology, electrician, pest control and taxi driver) (Wheelock, Uggen & Hlavka, 2011). Licensure bans may reduce upward mobility for legitimately employed offenders as higher positions require specific industry certifications.

Although it seems reasonable in some cases to limit offender occupational contacts with vulnerable populations (children and the elderly), many restrictions threaten civil rights and exclude offenders from industries in which they could do practical work. This is further exaggerated when non-governmental agencies have increased access to criminal history information, thus increasing negative stigma surrounding offender status within the private market, despite few actual threats of continued offending (Harris & Keller, 2005). While ex-offenders struggle to find legitimate means of income, state resources for food, public housing and medical assistance are often unavailable to felony offenders even after completion of an incarceration sentence (Wheelock, 2005). This is yet another form of social inequality experienced during an individual’s community reentry phase. With the disenfranchisement of individuals who now lack employment opportunities and lose access to state subsidies due to imprisonment, it is no surprise that offenders return to illicit activities to ensure income.

In response, transitional housing or reentry housing units should be established nationally within prisons to assist offenders’ reentry process. These units should: (1) offer assistance in educating and introducing offenders to employers who are known to hire past offenders and (2) assist individuals in gaining identification cards prior to returning to the community. Great measures have been achieved in the U.S. to “ban the box” (the selection criteria denoting previous justice involvement on many job applications) from employment forms; however, these measures should also be implemented nationwide. State bans should be removed on licensure tests to open the range of employment opportunities that ex-offenders have available to them. If the criminal justice system is to promote social justice through fair and equitable access to opportunity and resources, then it must remove policies that hinder successful community reentry.

CONCLUSIONS

It is crucial for the U.S. to continue to identify social conditions related to unequal access to resources and opportunities across the justice system continuum, such as financial hardships associated with monetary bail and pre-trial detention, employment restrictions, and state aid ineligibility. Implementing alternatives prior to incarceration (e.g., eliminating monetary bail) and connecting offenders to opportunities post-release will complement alternatives to mass incarceration highlighted by the National Re-
source Council committee. These solutions promote the normative goals of social justice within the continuum of justice involvement.

References
Mass Incarceration from a Juvenile Justice Perspective

By Kimberly S. Meyer and Lauren Duhaime, ACE! GRAs

While the National Research Council (NRC) report draws conclusions specific to the adult criminal justice system (Travis & Western, 2014), the juvenile system is dealing with different, but related, problems. The report’s authors leave no question that the United States incarcerates at an unprecedented rate, yet juvenile crime rates are down and cases are being diverted from the formal justice system at higher rates than ever (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2014). Still, juveniles who are exposed to the justice system are more likely to remain justice-involved and eventually filter into the adult system (Bostwick, Boulger, & Powers, 2012). This fact makes it important to address juvenile issues. Although there are many important juvenile justice concerns, we focus on Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) as a salient issue because it reflects the injustices present in both the adult and juvenile systems. DMC refers to the overrepresentation of individuals from minority groups in the justice system (McCarter, 2014). Congress made DMC a national issue in 1988 when the reauthorized Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act mandated that states address minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system (Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002). Despite this, scholars argue that federal efforts to reduce disparities have thus far been unsuccessful, leaving DMC as a lingering problem (Adams, 2014; Pope, et al., 2002).

DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT

Both the juvenile and adult systems continue to be burdened by DMC. To measure the extent of this problem, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) uses the Relative Rate Index (RRI). This measurement compares the rate of activity at each stage of the justice process (e.g., arrest, detention) for minority youth with the rate for white (majority) youth (OJJDP, 2009). Put simply, the RRI provides a single number that shows the extent to which minority juveniles are interacting with the system more than white juveniles. Using the arrest data pictured right, we can construct a simple example for black and white youth. White juveniles experience arrest at a rate of 32.0 per 1000 population and the rate for blacks is 73.2. The RRI, therefore, reflects a disparity in arrest rates between black and white youth: black youth are 2.3 times more likely to be arrested than white youth. While these numbers do not prove discrimination, they show disproportionality and overrepresentation in the system.

This overrepresentation occurs at every decision point in the juvenile system: police contact, arrest, referral, diversion, detention, petition, adjudication, probation, placement, and waiver (McCarter, 2014). Criminal justice actors refer black youth to juvenile court for delinquency offenses more than 1.5 times as often as white youth (McCarter, 2014). While some argue that there are differences in crime rates by race (which would explain differential arrest rates), most juvenile justice scholars agree that the significant differences in processing rates and arrests cannot be contributed to offending rates or legal factors alone (Piquero, 2008).

Similar disproportionate contact occurs at the adult level, but the most significant efforts to remedy this problem are currently underway at the local level in juvenile courts. These efforts come in the wake of civil rights lawsuits filed by the Department of Justice against local police and court jurisdictions in Tennessee and Mississippi (McCarter, 2014). To reduce DMC, many courts are taking steps to identify the extent of DMC, assess the reasons for its occurrence, develop intervention strategies, evaluate effectiveness of interventions, monitor trends over time, and then repeat the process (OJJDP, 2009). Emerging strategies for reducing DMC rates more
broadly include cultural competency and implicit bias training, increasing availability of detention alternatives, limiting subjectivity in decision making, reducing barriers to family involvement, and cultivating state leadership to legislate system-wide change (Cabaniss, Frabutt, Kendrick, & Arbuckle, 2007).

Although the issue of DMC is concerning in both juvenile and adult courts, it is perhaps more critical in the juvenile system because of the potential for juveniles to eventually move into the adult system. There is hope for reducing contact with the justice system, regardless of race, and one area of promising research relates to prevention of delinquent activity.

DELIQUENCY PREVENTION

Juvenile delinquency prevention efforts aim to reduce the number of youth who engage in delinquent behaviors at an early and impressionable time in their lives. Because of the current state of youth delinquency, researchers, policy makers, and law enforcement agencies are collectively challenged to develop policies and programs to address the needs and risks of those youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Ideally, known facts about the juvenile population drive and inform best practices for youth; however, the facts are often unknown or not readily available (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Further, investment in prevention and intervention programs for youth yields decreases in arrests, delinquency rates, and recidivism among youth. Examples of these programs include quality early childhood programs; evidence-based school, afterschool, and summer school programs; mentoring programs; and other mental health and treatment programs (Youth PROMISE Act).

In an effort to align with evidence-based practices for juveniles, the early 2000s saw a push for programs that targeted individual-level risk factors for youths’ continued involvement in crime and strengthened the characteristics of youths to ensure a more seamless and successful reentry process (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). However, research found that these individual targeted programs did not significantly reduce recidivism (Frederick & Roy, 2003; Wiebush, Wagner, McNulty, Wang, & Le, 2005). In fact, while individual targeted programs might best reduce recidivism rates for adults, there is a considerable amount of empirical support for the notion that larger neighborhood influences on delinquency and youth violence may transcend individual risks for offending (Abrams & Snyder, 2010).

In 2013, Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced HR 1318, the Youth PROMISE Act, in the House of Representatives. The bill received bipartisan support due to its proposal for increased resources and processes to implement evidence-based interventions targeting juvenile delinquency and street gang activity in areas and communities that experience high levels of these problems. The bill specifically focuses on funding implementation and evaluation of evidence-based, locally-controlled youth and gang violence prevention and intervention practices. Some of these programs include mentoring and after-school programs, which evaluations have shown reduce crime in a more effective and cost efficient manner than youth incarceration. Passage of this bill would symbolize recognition of a youth crime problem and encourage stakeholders to reduce juvenile delinquency and youth involvement in gangs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Without intervention, juveniles who encounter the justice system are more likely to enter the adult criminal justice system (Bostwick, et al., 2012). The NRC report pointed out that the adult system is already dealing with offenders from minority groups at a disproportionately high rate (Travis & Western, 2014), and if this issue is not addressed in the juvenile system, even more minority youth may eventually age out and end up in the adult system. Ultimately, researchers find that DMC might be due to both differences in processing procedures between minority offenders and white offenders (Piquero, 2008). Piquero (2008) encourages future research to seek to understand how potential differences can explain minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system and, most importantly, how researchers and policymakers can best address DMC. Going forward, it is our recommendation that community corrections agencies work to address DMC by focusing attention and resources upon policies and practices best proven to reduce and prevent juvenile offending. In addition, collaboration between community corrections agencies and schools to implement evidence-based prevention and diversion programs might further reduce DMC in the juvenile justice system.
References


Youth PROMISE Act, H.R. 1318 (2013).
Shared Decision-Making and the Desistance Process

By Heather Toronjo and Jennifer Lerch, ACE! Research Associates

RECOMMENDATION: To bolster the desistance process (i.e., exiting from a life of crime), correctional agencies should incorporate shared decision-making processes wherein the offender has a voice in decisions affecting his/her life.

THE CORRECTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND DESISTANCE
As defined by the National Research Council (2008), “desistance is a process—not an event—in which criminal activity decreases, and reintegration into the community increases, over time” (Rosenfeld, Petersilia, & Visher, 2008, p. 86). The National Research Council’s (2014) report provides an excellent foundation for delving further into barriers to desistance and the role of criminal justice agencies in addressing these barriers. Much of the research presented on the effects of incarceration suggests that prison time may adversely affect criminal desistance (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014). Involvement in the criminal justice system disrupts normal life processes by removing individuals from society entirely and/or enforcing external controls on a person’s time and activities. This disruption has consequences for all facets of life, including employment and education, social supports, and housing, as well as affecting a person’s self-concept. All of these realities consequently affect a person’s desistance process.

Desistance can take place through many pathways including external (e.g., employment) and internal (e.g., identity) factors (LeBel et al., 2008). Research explores how external factors such as criminal peers/family, social supports, employment, and housing stability affect desistance from criminal behavior. For example, criminal peer networks and associations (i.e., antisocial associates) are consistently recognized as an essential dynamic need that can be changed to promote desistance and reduced criminal behavior (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Oleson et al., 2012). Individuals who build stronger, positive social ties are less likely to recidivate (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Berg & Huebner, 2011). While both stable employment and housing appear to be vital to the desistance process, the exact nature of the mechanisms at work is complex and not completely understood (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; National Research Council, 2008; Maruna, 2001; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Oleson et al., 2012). For instance, some research suggests that employment alone is not enough to support desistance or reduce criminal behavior, but rather it is the level of positive connection to the job (i.e., satisfaction) and/or relationships that are the important factors in the desistance process (Maruna, 2001; Laub & Sampson, 2001).

Another body of literature suggests the importance of internal factors such as identity, impulsivity/self-control, and reintegrative shame (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). For instance, a shift in the identity of an individual away from the criminal community and toward more pro-social roles (e.g., toward becoming a productive community member) demonstrates a desistance process with the outcome of ceasing criminal behavior (Maruna, 2001; LeBel et al., 2008; Bushway & Paternoster, 2013). Impulsivity (Miner, 2002) and self-control (Doherty, 2006) are key predictors of recidivism and the process of desistance (Maruna, 2001). Impulsivity and low self-control both relate to the
ability of an individual to think before acting, particularly when it comes to their desires. Individuals who have trouble controlling their impulses and/or desires are less likely to desist and more likely to continue in criminal behavior. Another internal factor related to desistance is the idea of reintegrative shame, which suggests a link between desistance and shame. For example, individuals may feel bad for the criminal behavior for which they have been punished, but only when their self-worth remains intact (LeBel et al., 2008). Those who have remorse about their crime, but still maintain a sense of self-worth are most likely to engage in the desistance process (Maruna, 2001). This speaks to the importance of self-concept. Being open to change, for example, is recognized as a necessary first step in the desistance process (McNeill et al., 2012). The nature of control-oriented strategies can be both dehumanizing and infantilizing, without building the person’s own responsibilities. As internal factors such as a prosocial self-concept are necessary for desistance, the criminal justice system must move away from unilateral decisions and include a role for offenders in decision-making.

**SHARED DECISION-MAKING: A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH**

As the reports suggests, “conditions of confinement should be reviewed with the objective of increasing prisoners’ chances of reentering society with social relationships intact and better prepared to make a positive, productive transition” (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014, p. 350). This requires criminal justice agencies to focus more attention on building offenders’ motivation to change and ability to support the desistance process. One potential way criminal justice agencies can address this need is to focus on building self-efficacy through shared decision-making at various criminal justice stages.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s own ability to execute the behaviors necessary to accomplish certain goals (Bandura, 1977). While having social supports, employment, and housing stability relate to improvements in the desistance process, addressing these issues independently, without input from the offender, neglects the importance of fostering an offender’s self-efficacy to promote lasting change. An important part of the change process is developing a new understanding of one’s role in society. An offender’s self-concept can be a powerful accelerator or inhibitor of change (Maruna et al., 2004), serving as either one more barrier or a tool to break those barriers.

Criminal justice agencies should approach processes with the goal of increasing desistance. Rather than imposing mandates or focusing solely on rule enforcement, criminal justice agencies should focus on shifting offenders’ negative self-concepts by fostering self-efficacy. Efforts include modeling prisons as a parallel universe to life outside, in which inmates continue to have responsibilities and make decisions as is required in life outside the prison walls (Schiro, 2000). In addition, offenders should be included in the case planning process in community corrections (Taxman, 2008). Both ideas rest on the assumption that for correctional practices to affect real change, offenders must be motivated and able to change. One model for shared-decision making is a strength-based approach. In this approach, correctional agencies must ask, “How can this person make a useful and purposeful contribution to society?” (Maruna & LeBel, 2002). This approach encourages offenders’ active participation in transforming their identities and rests on the idea that it is better to give help than to receive it. Only by incorporating offenders in the process and allowing them an active role in decision making in their own lives, can correctional efforts best live up to their namesake.

**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

While the idea of self-efficacy and desistance makes sense theoretically, more research is needed to understand the effects of correctional practices on offender decision-making, self-concept, and desistance. A trend in correctional agencies is to train staff to use skills that engage the offender as an active decision maker in his or her own life. It is one thing to “engage” the person in the decisions but it is also important to allow the individual to make choices and prioritize, which can build their self-efficacy and problem-solving skills. Moving forward, one critical research question asks how we measure the effect of shared decision-making on desistance? First, evaluations should incorporate multiple perspectives of the desistance process. Researchers should collect data
from the offender, staff, and administrative records to understand the components of shared decision-making processes. Second, criminal justice researchers use validated, well-researched scales that tap into internal factors associated with desistance, such as measures of identity and impulsivity. More research that assesses how to foster desistance can greatly broaden the current knowledge about how to accelerate desistance.

References
Workforce: The Backbone of Institutional and Community Supervision

By Amy Murphy, ACE! Project Director and Liana R. Taylor, ACE! Postdoctoral Fellow

RECOMMENDATION: Corrections agencies should take a comprehensive approach to both recruit and retain supervision officers who can advance the use of evidence-based supervision strategies. The purpose of building the skills of officers is to maximize the working alliance between officers and clients in the system. Equipping staff to use evidence-based practices results in improved outcomes.

The National Research Council report (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014) highlighted the impact of mass incarceration on individuals, families, communities, and taxpayers, but paid little attention to the agencies that run prisons, community supervision, pretrial, or treatment organizations. The workforce of these organizations and agencies are critical to undoing the effects of mass incarceration on individuals, families, and communities. Staff must find the right balance between personal and public safety in all justice settings--prison, community corrections, and other areas. Correctional agencies serve the justice system and, like general society, have assimilated a control-oriented perspective in dealing with clients involved in the system. Several themes have emerged over the past decade regarding the culture and environment of correctional agencies that are designed to advance the use of evidence-based practices. Desirable practices include 1) working (therapeutic) alliances, where there is trust and caring between the client and staff member; 2) procedural justice, where there is a focus on legitimacy and fairness among the actions; and 3) learning culture where the organizations create a work environment that embraces innovation. These factors are considered important features of a high-performing agency and foster individual change in the justice-involved individual. A number of workforce challenges exist in facility- and community-based agencies, such as establishing and maintaining manageable caseload sizes for officers, recruiting and retaining staff with appropriate skills, acquiring and maintaining adequate computer and data systems to monitor clients, and providing training and skill development for justice actors to incorporate recent innovations and address the population’s needs.

With the increased movement towards standardized practices, we need to determine what the best strategies are and how to help agencies and officers to implement evidence-based practices.

Unanswered research questions include:

• What workforce factors (e.g., staff qualifications, agency cohesion, agency resources, leadership, guiding philosophy) impact offender outcomes?
• How does agency cohesion impact individual officers’ perceptions of resources and support? How then do these perceptions impact interactions with clients?
• What are the strongest predictors of turnover in the corrections workforce?
• What is the best approach to agency-wide professional development?

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION STRATEGIES TO ADVANCE PRACTITIONERS’ SKILLS

One approach to addressing workforce issues is the use of empirically supported supervision strategies. One
recent development is Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Supervision, which refers to the use of supervision strategies that adhere to the RNR model. For example, Bonta, Bourgon, Rugge, Scott, Yessine, Gutierrez, & Li (2010) conducted an evaluation of the Strategic Training Initiative in Community Supervision (STICS). Randomly assigned probation officers received training in the RNR principles or no training. Results showed that the trained officers used more RNR-based skills, such as cognitive and behavioral techniques, and their clients had lower recidivism rates compared to those with officers who did not receive training.

Additionally, Robinson, VanBenschoten, Alexander, and Lowenkamp (2011) evaluated the Staff Training Aimed at Reducing Rearrest (STARR), another supervision curriculum for probation officers. As with STICS, officers were assigned to receive training or no training on the use of the RNR principles. Analyses indicated that clients supervised by trained officers had better outcomes (measured as failure on supervision and a new arrest) than those who were supervised by officers who did not receive training. Although research on these strategies is relatively new, it provides one potential avenue to address how correctional officers and community supervision officers are trained, with the aim of helping them balance public safety concerns with the needs of the client.

**FOCUS ON WHO NOT WHAT**
In addition to implementing these new supervision strategies, agencies will benefit from examining the current state of skills in their workforce. Establishing an effective workforce that can integrate evidence-based strategies daily works best in conjunction with recruitment of quality staff who share and contribute to the agency’s ideals and principles. The first step is to identify and achieve consensus on desired staff characteristics.

Some items to consider include:
- **What staff qualifications do we want, and will our compensation package attract applicants with those qualifications?** For example, if an agency wants to require that all officers hold a Bachelor’s degree, they must review the compensation offered for a comparable job in their city.
- **What are the potential officers’ attitudes toward criminal justice clients?** Do they have a positive outlook on offender change?
- **What will the caseload sizes be?** Research findings on caseload sizes vary. Some studies found that smaller caseloads lead to greater numbers of violations due to increased scrutiny (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006). Others, such as Jalbert and colleagues (2011), found that reducing caseloads by 40% resulted in reduced recidivism for clients who were supervised by officers with smaller caseloads.
- **What message does the agency leadership convey?** In addition to providing training on and encouraging the use of evidence-based practices, do they encourage a collaborative and rehabilitative environment?
- **How can computer/management information systems be used to improve productivity and assessment of fidelity to core correctional practices?**

**References**
Getting Interdisciplinary: Relying on More than One Discipline to Understand Mass Incarceration

By Teneshia Thurman, ACE! GRA, and Brandy Blasko, ACE! Postdoctoral Fellow

Within each discipline exist generally established ways of defining problems, advancing central concepts, and organizing theories. Evaluating problems within intellectual, social, and methodological boundaries helps define each discipline (Reybold & Halx, 2012).

But what if the problem extends far beyond the boundaries of your discipline?

RECOMMENDATION: Research often tackles complex societal issues that expand beyond one discipline. Doing so requires a collaborative effort from individuals from different disciplinary perspectives and community agencies. This collaborative effort will provide a greater ability to problem solve and address the causes and consequences that mass incarceration policy and practices have had on individuals and their communities.

With a growing population of individuals involved in the criminal justice system (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), strained budgets (Pew Charitable Trust, 2010), and a constant concern for public safety (Petersilia & Cullen, 2015), the United States criminal justice system faces a variety of practical challenges as it works to simultaneously manage growing prison populations and understand the breadth of consequences mass incarceration has had for prisoners and their communities. On the surface, this problem—mass incarceration—is a criminal justice concern and one for scholars within the criminal justice discipline to study and evaluate. Yet, an important lesson learned by the scholars recently tasked by the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate this very problem is that several disciplines are better than one. The ad-hoc committee and subsequent contributors to the report The Growth of Incarceration: Exploring Causes and Consequences, created by the National Research Council, was comprised of individuals from the disciplines of law, sociology, criminology, political science, history, social work, psychology, public health, medicine, and economics. Without scholars from different disciplines serving on the committee, the report may not have succeeded in expressing the complexity of mass incarceration. Mass incarceration affects individuals, communities, families, and political arenas due to the physical, mental health, education, employment, and many other facets impacted by this phenomenon. Making mass incarceration even more complex is United States history, including social inequality and politics related to incarceration.

WHAT IS INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH?

“Interdisciplinary” means much more than a group of representatives from several disciplines. The key to creating a truly interdisciplinary project involves fostering an environment where everyone contributes equally toward common goals (Aboelela et al., 2007; National Academy of Science, 2004).

Because there is a synthesis of ideas, one of the first objectives of any interdisciplinary team must be to firmly establish joint goals and values. Common principles and language must be agreed upon in order to overcome ideological, skill-related, and cultural barriers (Voyvodic & Medcalf, 2004). Common language and conceptual frameworks are often seen as important components to the development of goals and values of an interdisciplinary team (Aboelela et al., 2007; National Academy of Sciences, 2004). Furthermore, one product often resulting from shared knowledge across disciplines is new conceptualizations. Many times different disciplines...
have the same conceptualizations but use different terminology to describe the same phenomena. Convergence of important concepts creates consistency among scholars as they collaborate to understand complex issues.

*The Growth of Incarceration: Exploring Causes and Consequences* concludes with four normative principles that could help decrease the use of incarceration: parsimony, proportionality, social justice, and citizenship. These principles are representative of the committee members’ convergence of discipline specific knowledge. For example, “citizenship” can have many meanings. Sociologists often conceptualize citizenship as a set of practices (judicial, political, economic, and cultural), which define an individual as a member of society (Turner, 1993), whereas a legal/judicial conceptualization of citizenship likely focuses on the mere collection of rights and obligations (Turner, 1993). The National Research Council committee’s conceptualization of citizenship rests between social equality and social equity, thereby seeming to adopt the essence of both sociology and legal definitions. In this case, a single disciplinary focus may have diminished the role citizenship had when considering consequences of incarceration.

**THE NEXT GENERATION OF INTERDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARSHIP**

Solutions for many problems increasingly expand beyond a single discipline. Although adapting to an interdisciplinary research approach could meet resistance and pose unique challenges, individuals across research and academic communities increasingly support interdisciplinary research and educational initiatives (National Academy of Science, 2004). For example, to foster new interdisciplinary research and ideas at George Mason University, The Study Group on Behavioral and Health Interventions (SGBH) was established in 2011 by scholars from several departments interested in intervention studies. ACE!’s Director, Dr. Faye Taxman, serves as a founding member of this interdisciplinary effort. The SGBH hosts roundtable discussions or “meet and greets” to allow faculty working on or interested in intervention studies to share information and discuss innovative research approaches. Several members of the group also made significant strides in collaborative outreach work within Northern Virginia through the development of new models in response to community needs. Dr. Taxman also partnered with another founding member of SGBH, psychologist Dr. June Tangney, to co-teach *Interventions for Offenders: The Intersection of Psychology and Criminology*, a course offering both a criminology and psychology perspective to the study of criminal justice interventions. Together Drs. Taxman and Tangney also host a monthly interdisciplinary brown-bag series. ACE! graduate students, postdoctoral research fellows, and faculty come together with members of Dr. Tangney’s research lab (Human Emotions Research Lab, Psychology Department) each month to learn about work in other disciplines that may be pertinent to our work. In April, Dr. Carla Fisher, Assistant Professor in the Communications Department, will discuss risk communication. Her research focuses on how intergenerational family communication is connected to health. Dr. Fisher has explored this in the context of breast cancer, genetic testing, medical decision-making, later-life caregiving, geriatric healthcare, mental health, and disordered eating patterns. With an emphasis on risk management and addressing risky behaviors within in the disciplines of psychology and criminology, Dr. Fisher exemplifies the goals of the interdisciplinary brown-bag series.

In recent years, funding solicitations also began to call for interdisciplinary, collaborative research initiatives. These funding programs aim to support the formation of focused interdisciplinary groups working across fields and academic divisions. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), for example, estimates over 21 exploratory centers dedicated to interdisciplinary research are funded by their Interdisciplinary Research Program (Zerhouni, 2003). The program also funds interdisciplinary training programs to support the next generation of interdisciplinary scholars. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is another example. NSF supports solicited interdisciplinary programs; center competitions; unsolicited interdisciplinary proposals; education and training; workshops, conferences, and symposia.
Understanding the importance of collaboration, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), a non-profit, non-governmental organization located in Washington, DC, encourages the involvement of stakeholders and clients who are directly affected by many of the problems studied. This unique approach provides the opportunity for clients and stakeholders to serve as members of an interdisciplinary team. The SGBH recently hosted a meeting with Dr. Kara Odom-Walker of PCORI to discuss collaborative funding opportunities. PCORI grants are evaluated based upon the extent to which clients and other stakeholders are involved in formulating research questions, defining the study population, defining and identifying outcomes, and monitoring study progress.

CONCLUSION
Despite the fact that the National Research Council’s (2014) report does not specifically call for interdisciplinary research, several recommendations set forth by the report require an expansion of knowledge in key areas as a mechanism to understand the impacts of mass incarceration. This requires collaboration among individuals representing multiple disciplines. NIH reports they financially support interdisciplinary research centers because interdisciplinary research fosters an atmosphere where research scholars conceptualize new ideas and significantly broaden the scope of investigations (Zerhouni, 2003).

Although adjusting to new ideas and applications is often difficult, an integrative, collaborative interdisciplinary approach to the study of the impacts of mass incarceration has the potential to advance the criminal justice field in unprecedented ways. Perhaps in the near future, interdisciplinary education and research will serve as the standard rather than the exception in our discipline.

References
Hearing from the Experts: A Practitioner, A Participant and a Professor

By Brandy Blasko & Kim Kras, ACE! Postdoctoral Fellows, & Mary Mbaba, ACE! Research Assistant

One way of understanding critical issues in corrections is to ask the “experts” their thoughts. We asked a practitioner, a participant, and a professor similar questions about mass incarceration.

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<th>PRACTITIONER</th>
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| **Glen Martin**  
Founder,  
JustLeadershipUSA | **Mr. Daniel Pilgrim**,  
incarcerated within the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institution at Coal Township | **Dr. Carrie Pettus-Davis**,  
Assistant Professor  
Washington University in St. Louis |

**Three key issues with mass incarceration:**

1. The removal of judges’ sentencing discretion to a system of mandatory minimums;  
2. The moral underpinnings of our criminal justice system that focus on punishment as the driving force behind criminal justice in the U.S., rather than rebuilding people through redemption and transformation;  
3. The justice system’s and correctional staff’s (e.g., probation officers) propensity to incentivize the incarceration of offenders.

1. We need programs that get to the “nitty gritty” and actually help inmates...rehabilitation programs. Current programs are those like “Thinking for a Change” that is taught with a book. They don’t help us;  
2. Overcrowding in prisons;  
3. We need more prison staff due to overcrowding.

1. We have had an exponential increase in incarceration but not the same kind of change in service provisions, especially re: the complex needs of offenders;  
2. We have a weak evidence base for what works and for whom;  
3. We have a changed dynamic in communities affected by mass incarceration. They are overburdened and we’ve neglected communities as an intervention.

**Best current practice for reducing incarcerated populations:**

- **Common Justice**—a pilot program in New York. The program is based on restorative justice principles and creates an effective means for non-incarcerative punishment, healing, restoration, and accountability.

- I have to say “good time” for inmates. Pennsylvania doesn’t have good time but a lot of dudes here say they would be more motivated to stay out of trouble if they knew it would be beneficial.

- We don’t know what the best current practices are. There is not a strong base in the empirical literature about what works. The most promising practice right now is diversion, with attention to addressing the service needs and risks of offenders.

**Your ideas on best practices for improving community responses to mass incarceration:**

- Investing in the very people who have experienced the system firsthand. Re-educating Americans away from incarceration is the answer to crime. Policymakers and key stakeholders should work toward partnerships with affected communities to enhance the conversation for justice reform, while also rebuilding trust between these communities and the CJ system to move towards engaging in common public safety alternatives.

- A community forum where inmates, the judicial community, and people from the community come together in a secure environment like a prison and talk. A lot of people in the community still see us as the people we were when we came in. My family used to, too. After writing and interacting with me, they see I have changed. The community needs to see that, too.

- The approach needs to be holistic. We need to consider the needs and situations of the family. The elements of the criminal justice system need to be integrated at the local level to better address the issues related to mass incarceration. Lastly, we need to challenge people to look critically at the evidence-based efforts and decarceration.
Understanding the Day-to-Day Experiences of Working and Living Within Prisons

By Brandy Blasko, Danielle Rudes, Caitlin Kanewske, Shannon Magnuson, & Jessica Mercante, ACE! Postdoctoral Fellow, Deputy Director, GRAs, and Volunteer Researcher, respectively

In recent years, incarceration in the United States transformed drastically as prison populations soar and carceral philosophies shift accordingly. However, most of what is known about the prison experience and its relation to prisoner well-being and desistance from crime continues to come from decades-old outmoded sources such as Glueck and Glueck’s (1934, 1950) male cohort interviews, stories of male and female prison adjustment (detailed, respectively, by Sykes in 1958, and Giallombardo in 1966), as well as the 1990s revival of the Gluecks’ male cohort by Laub and Sampson (1993) (see also Toch, 1977).

While this scholarship was under development, the U.S. incarcerated anywhere from a few hundred thousand to just over 1 million individuals. Today, however, U.S. prisons house an excess of 2.5 million persons and the experience of confinement becomes an ever-more-frequent life event for a great many individuals. Indeed, a staggering 1 in 29 U.S. residents experience incarceration in their lifetime (Lerman, 2013). Behind prison walls, the social, legal, and organizational contexts in which prisoners face (and prison staff facilitate) containment, confinement, treatment, supervision, case management, and punishment are varied, diverse, and ever-changing. Yet even with dramatic increases in incarceration rates and changes in punishment goals, processes, and outcomes, Americans are simultaneously witnessing a corresponding decline in visibility of, and transparency in, the experiences of confinement (Liebling, 1999; Simon, 2000; Wacquant, 2002). Truly, the public-at-large has little knowledge of the current experience of living and working behind prison walls, while scholars devote scant attention to the day-to-day prison experience. The Prison Project focuses on uncovering this American incarcerative domain by examining three key components of custodial environments: relationships, legitimacy and procedural justice.

With access granted by Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John E. Wetzel to all correctional institutions across the Commonwealth, our five person ACE! research team—including Dr. Danielle S. Rudes (Deputy Director), Dr. Brandy Blasko (Postdoctoral Research Fellow), Graduate Research Assistants Shannon Magnuson and L. Caitlin Kanewske, and Undergraduate Research Assistant Jessica Mercante—has clocked over 300 research hours in six selected prisons since kicking-off the project in June 2014. The team administered surveys to over 2,000 randomly selected prisoners and conducted interviews with a sub-set of over 140 prisoners. Staff data collection will wrap-up in April 2015. Thus far, the project has been well-received by both prisoners and staff across all prisons, as demonstrated by an average response rate of 98.4% among prisoners and 99.3% among staff.

THE PRISON PROJECT RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

| Provide information regarding procedural justice and the prison experience. | Here we (a) rely on multi-level modeling with prisoners (level-1) nested within housing units (level-2) and prisons (level-3), to determine how individual-prisoner, housing unit, and prison-level factors predict prisoner perceptions of procedural justice, including trust, respect, fairness, and confidence, including (b) how these effects vary within and across prisons; and (c) relying on rich, nuanced interview data with a subset of prisoners to capture perceptions of legitimacy, justified actions, and relationships via narratives of in-custody experiences. |

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THE PRISON PROJECT RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

| Assess differences and similarities in procedural justice, relationships, and legitimacy between the viewpoints of prisoners and prison staff. | Here we compare survey and interview data among prisoners and prison staff both intra- and inter-organizationally (i.e., within the same prison and across prisons) and at multiple time points (via multiple data collection waves). |
| Test hypotheses regarding trajectories in prisoner procedural justice. | Here we (a) examine changes in prisoners’ perceived procedural justice and staff-prisoner interactions over the three-year study period; (b) evaluate hypothesized predictors of change; (c) model the dynamic relationship between perceived procedural justice and staff-prisoner relationships over time by evaluating hypothesized mediators and moderators of the link between procedural justice and subsequent behavioral and emotional responses (e.g., misconducts, adjustment, recidivism). |
| Greatly expand our understanding of the prison experience. | Here we study how both male and female prisoners within a variety of different custodial environments perceive, understand, and negotiate formal and informal aspects of the prison experience. An important strength of this approach includes random selection of prisoners from housing units and staff from every position classification in every prison within one state system, including institutions with male and female prisoners and within every security classification. |

Unpacking the organizational environment and culture in the ways proposed by this project offers a means to investigate a critical “black box” in correctional knowledge. In collaboration with Secretary Wetzel, as well as Dr. Bret Bucklen and his team from the Office of Planning, Research, and Statistics, our research team strives to understand the components of the prison environment (beyond correctional interventions) that improve or at minimum reduce the harm of the prison experience for prisoners, while also mitigating custodial issues (e.g., misconduct, prisoner-on-inmate or staff assaults, prisoner grievances) for prison staff.

References

A snow-filled fieldwork trip in Northeastern Pennsylvania.
Doing “Culture Changing” in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

By John E. Wetzel, Secretary (PA Department of Corrections)
Bret Bucklen, Director of Planning, Research, & Statistics (PA Department of Corrections)

For those of us who work in the criminal justice system, these are challenging times. Recent national events have highlighted the lack of trust in law enforcement, which is unfortunately prevalent among many of the communities that we serve. This distrust in law enforcement extends beyond just the police, to the criminal justice system more broadly. While research is lacking in this area, we know that distrust of the system among many of those arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a crime does not end at the prison gates but rather extends inside the walls of prison. At the back end of the system, distrust continues through to community corrections and community supervision as well. Even at a time when evidence suggests that correctional practices are becoming more objectively effective and fair, negative perceptions of the fairness and legitimacy of the system remain prevalent among offenders. As the old adage goes, “Perceptions often drive reality.”

It is therefore not enough to simply focus on objective improvements in correctional practices. As the corporate management guru Peter Drucker once said, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” If we are interested in maximizing outcomes, we must also focus on improving the correctional culture, which will lead to improvements in the perceived legitimacy of the correctional system among those directly impacted by it, including inmates and their families. A basic, fundamental requirement of any prison system is to operate safe, secure prisons. With research indicating that offenders are more compliant if they believe the system operates in a procedurally fair manner, improving the correctional culture is also about enhancing basic safety and security.

Anyone with experience working in big organizations knows the power of culture to perpetuate itself. Changing culture is difficult work. Here at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC), we have been involved in several “culture changing” efforts in recent years. At a high level, a lack of faith in the correctional system exists because of the sheer size, scope, and reach of the system. The PA DOC inmate population grew from 8,243 in 1980 to 51,321 in 2010. Until recently, the PA DOC inmate population grew by an average of approximately 1,500 inmates per year. This growth has meant a wider net of lower-level offenders and longer sentences in prison. Also, this growth has disproportionately affected poor and minority communities in Pennsylvania. Our “culture changing” efforts in this regard came in 2012, when we undertook reform of the criminal justice system through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) process. JRI began with an analysis of the major drivers of our prison population, and culminated with unanimously supported, bipartisan legislation enacted to safely reduce the prison population. Since then, the PA DOC population has dropped by more than 1,000 inmates. In 2014 alone, the PA DOC population declined by 756 inmates. This was the largest one-year drop in the state prison population in over 40 years and only the fourth year in the last four decades that the state prison population dropped rather than increased. During this same time period, crime rates in Pennsylvania have continued to decline, demonstrating that the “culture change” of prison population reduction is analogous to having our cake and eating it too – BOTH a lower prison population AND a lower crime rate are possible!

Another great example of a “culture changing” effort that we have initiated in the PA DOC in recent years is a complete overhaul of our system of treating mentally ill offenders in prison. Upon recognizing that offenders with mental health problems were a growing, yet often overlooked, proportion of our prison population, we transformed our system from top to bottom. Every single staff member employed by the PA DOC is now
being trained in Mental Health First Aid, a monumental task to undertake with a staff of nearly 15,000. Many staff are also trained in more intensive Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). We have expanded our definition of “seriously mentally ill,” ensuring that those who need more intensive treatment services receive them. We have also significantly revised our responses to mentally ill inmates who break rules in prison, in order to more appropriately differentiate between deliberate misbehavior and misbehavior primarily driven by a mental illness. It is hard to overstate the “culture change” that this has represented within our department.

There is still much “culture changing” work left to be done in our system. One important first step is to carefully document our current culture so that we can more fully understand it, and develop appropriate “culture changing” responses where needed. This is where the ACE! Prison Project comes in (for more information, see p. 22). The goal of this project is to comprehensively document the local culture at each of our 26 individual prisons and to build a more complete picture of our departmental culture as a whole. We are grateful to our partners at ACE! for undertaking this study, and will benefit tremendously from what we learn from their research. It is our hope that we can take the knowledge gleaned from this important study and use it to create a system that is perceived to be more procedurally just and fair by all of those who are impacted by it. Ultimately, this will lead to better outcomes.
From ACE! UGRA to GMU Undergraduate Research Scholar, and Beyond

By Aishwarya Iyer, ACE! Undergraduate Research Assistant

I joined ACE! in Summer 2014 as an Undergraduate Research Assistant. I had recently changed my major to Criminology, Law, and Society, and I wanted exposure to the field while building my resume. Assigned to work with Dr. Brandy Blasko, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at ACE!, I worked on several interesting projects. The first study involved understanding prisoners’ desistance from crime. I read inmate survey responses and coded them for themes. The work illuminated the world of corrections from the inmates’ perspective. I worked with another UGRA, Alec Lamp, to finish the coding and participated in several days of discussion and analysis with Alec and Dr. Blasko. Prior to working on the study, I had some interest in the intersection of psychology and corrections, but my interest piqued while helping with this study. The work provided me with a glimpse of prison life from the viewpoints of people who were incarcerated, and highlighted the effect that mental illness can play in incarceration and vice versa. As my summer continued, I also worked on Dr. Blasko’s mental health project. While the desistance study and the instructions for its completion were fairly simple, the mental health project required me to use different skills. The data required a tremendous amount of cleaning. To complete that work, I had to learn about correctional psychology, psychiatric diagnoses, and mental health care in prisons. This process challenged me, but it made me realize that while research is difficult and challenging, it is also rewarding. I started to reconsider my career plans, and began to think about incorporating research into my future goals.

As my research assistantship came to a close, I knew I wanted to stay involved with research and ACE! There was so much more to learn, not only from the research I was involved in, but from the individuals at ACE!. Dr. Blasko invited me to work on her research project at a local county jail and suggested I apply for the George Mason University Undergraduate Research Scholars Program and Mentor grant. The grant gives undergraduates research experience under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Reflecting upon my interests and experiences as a UGRA, I worked closely with Dr. Blasko to create my own research questions related to mental health and procedural justice. I was ultimately awarded funding and started collecting data last month. Through this experience I am learning about the process of starting a research project, instrument creation, and data collection by surveying and interviewing jail inmates. I am excited that in November I will present findings from my work at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology under the mentorship of Dr. Blasko.

I am fortunate that I joined ACE! the summer after my freshman year, leaving several years of my undergraduate career to benefit from the research opportunities ACE! has to offer. Dr. Blasko has shaped not only my undergraduate research experiences, but also my future career. Under her mentorship and patient guidance, I have developed a passion for research and cultivated a deep respect for hard work and perseverance. I originally joined ACE! because it would look good on my resume; however, my ACE! experience has done much more than that: it has changed my trajectory and motivated me to set higher goals. For example, I recently applied to work with ACE! Director Dr. Faye Taxman under the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Summer Research Program. The program provides a stipend to undergraduates to work with a NIDA-funded scientist for eight weeks during the summer. Although my mentor, Dr. Blasko, will move on to a position at Sam Houston State University in the fall, I will continue to work with faculty and students at ACE! to hone my research skills as I prepare for an advanced degree.
Taking a Look at Social Support and Treatment

By Alexis Schulman, ACE! Undergraduate Research Assistant
With special thanks to Jennifer Lerch and Teneshia Thurman (mentors)

In Summer and Fall 2014, I worked as an Undergraduate Research Assistant at ACE! on the Motivational Assessment Program to Initiate Treatment (MAPIT) study. My work on MAPIT assists with determining whether individuals are more successful on probation when participating in Motivational Interviewing with a counselor or using a motivational, computer-based program, both of which are being compared to standard probation. Motivational Interviewing is a client centered interviewing method geared to elicit and strengthen motivation for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2009).

I contributed to the study by completing data validations, fixing missing data, and compiling interview times to aid the cost-benefit analysis. To accomplish this, my primary focus was on completing data validations. I listened to audio recordings each week while looking at the data the interviewer input, validating that it is correct and listening to ensure the interviewer conducts the interview properly. Afterward, I provided feedback to the interviewer to ensure they maintain high fidelity to interview procedures. The study determines a client’s success on probation from the baseline to follow-up.

The interviews covered many facets of the client’s life. Listening to the audio recordings of these interviews, I found it striking how unconcerned some clients seem to be about their continued substance use or offending, especially while on probation. My first impression was that those who perceived themselves as having family and friends as support were more willing to seek treatment for substance abuse or to act in accordance with the law. Simply not causing the people around them any further distress seemed to be a driving force behind seeking ways to address challenges with substance use or their criminal lifestyle.

To gauge the social supports a client currently has as well as their relationship with different family members and friends, MAPIT asks numerous questions concerning a client’s tangible, emotional, and affectionate support. These different types of supports and their overall feeling of support may be a vital component to succeeding on probation. Given this, it will be very important later to examine the ways that various types of social support impact clients’ attempts or desires to seek treatment, stop use, and/or desist from criminal behavior. Knowing that motivation is an important component for individuals who seek treatment it will be interesting to examine at the completion of the study what magnitude social supports had on an individual’s motivation to seek treatment for their drug and/or alcohol use. MAPIT asks numerous questions about the types of supports (i.e., having someone to provide tangible, emotional, or affectionate support) the client currently has as well as the client’s relationship with different family and friends. These relationships and supports may be a vital component to succeeding on probation.

Working on the MAPIT project was an essential experience for me. It allowed me to see what daily tasks are involved when conducting research and helped me see research in a new light. I am graduating from George Mason this year and am currently applying for jobs in the DC area, with the hope of working in the intelligence or investigations field.
Meet ACE!’s New Team Members

**Sara Del Principe** - Graduate Researcher

Sara Del Principe graduated from Virginia Tech in May 2014 with a double major in Psychology and Sociology with a emphasis on Crime and Deviance. She is currently enrolled in the Criminology, Law, and Society masters program at Mason. Sara is still developing research interests and ideas, but has really enjoyed working with offender reentry issues and working on developing tools that assist in productive, successful reentry.

**Caitlin Kanewske** - Graduate Research Assistant

Caitlin Kanewske is in her first year of doctoral studies in Criminology, Law and Society. She received a Master’s degree in Justice, Law and Society from American University in 2014. Her research interests include corrections, prison reform, offender rehabilitation and reentry, and correctional education.

**Kimberly R. Kras, PhD** - Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Kimberly R. Kras is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence! (ACE!) at George Mason University. Kim’s doctoral dissertation is titled Redemption or Condemnation? A Long-term Follow-up of Desistance Patterns of Sex Offenders. Kim’s research focuses on issues related to offender reentry, sex offenders, rehabilitation, life course theories, and gender. Kim received her PhD in Criminology and Criminal Justice in May 2014 from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. She earned a Master’s degree in Criminal Justice and Criminology and a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

**Shannon Magnuson** - Graduate Research Assistant

Before joining George Mason and ACE!, Shannon received her Master’s degree in Criminal Justice with a specialization in Corrections Administration from John Jay College, a continuation of her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida. While attending John Jay, Shannon worked with NYC’s Department of Probation and the Vera Institute of Justice Center on Sentencing and Corrections.

**Liana Taylor, PhD** - Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Liana Taylor is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence! (ACE!) from Cleveland, Ohio. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Psychology at the University of Cincinnati and her Master’s and Doctoral degrees in Criminal Justice at Temple University. Her doctoral dissertation is titled, General Responsivity and Evidence-Based Treatment: Individual and Program Predictors of Treatment Outcomes during Adolescent Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment. Her research interests include correctional programming, specifically substance abuse treatment programs, as well as program evaluation and program planning.

**Brittney Via** - Graduate Researcher

Brittney is currently enrolled in the Criminology, Law, and Society master’s program at Mason. She graduated from Randolph College in May 2014 with a B.A in Sociology and minors in Psychology and Mathematics. Her research interests include juvenile delinquency and offender rehabilitation. At ACE!, she is working on the Prison Project and the Evidence-Based Community Supervision project with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.
Awards

Former ACE! GRA Jill Viglione Wins TWO Federal Awards for Dissertation Work

Former Graduate Research Assistant, Jill Viglione, received two competitive and prestigious awards for her dissertation work. Jill received an NIJ Graduate Research Fellowship (dissertation grant) for her dissertation project titled: Bridging the Research/Practice Gap: Street-Level Decision Making and Historical Influences Related to Evidence-Based Practices in Adult Probation. Jill received a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for this project as well. Congratulations to Jill on these two huge accomplishments!

Deputy Director Danielle Rudes Receives NIJ Award

Deputy Director Dr. Danielle Rudes received an award from NIJ titled Implementing, Disseminating and Translating Evidence-Based Policy/Practice in Community Corrections. The research will determine how community corrections managers and staff: 1) define EBPs; 2) seek/gather information regarding EBPs; 3) understand EBPs and their role in their agency, and 4) adapt/adopt EBPs to fit within existing agency policies and practices. Congratulations, Dr. Rudes!

Research Associate Jennifer Lerch Receives Travel Award from NIDA

Research Associate Jennifer Lerch received a Travel Award for Junior Investigators for the Addiction Health Services Research conference from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The conference took place in October 2014 in Boston, Massachusetts. Jen presented, What Predicts Continued Substance Use among Probationers. Go Jen!!!!

UGRA Aishwarya Iyer Awarded Funds from Undergraduate Research Scholars Program

One of ACE!’s Undergraduate Lab participants, Aishwarya (Aish) Iyer, took knowledge learned at ACE!, applied it to her own study, and submitted a proposal to George Mason University’s Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP). The Student Scholarly Activities subcommittee of the QEP Leadership Council reviewed Aish’s application to the Fall 2014 Undergraduate Research Scholars Program and selected her proposal for funding! ACE! Postdoctoral Fellow Brandy Blasko is serving as Aish’s mentor for the duration of this project, which is titled Mental Health Symptoms of Jail Inmates: The Role of Procedural Justice and the Effects of Imprisonment. For more information about applying to the URSP, visit oscar.gmu.edu/students/ursp.cfm.
Former ACE! GRA Jill Viglione wins Graduate Paper Award

Jill Viglione won the Graduate Paper Award at the American Society of Criminology’s Division of Corrections and Sentencing meeting, held in San Francisco in November 2014. The title of her winning paper was *Probation Officer Use of Client-Centered Communication Strategies in Adult Probation Settings*. Pictured right, Viglione accepts the award from Dr. Natasha Frost.

Baltimore-Based Research Associate Michael Williams Nominated for Acting

Our very own Michael Williams, Interviewer on the MAPIT project, has been nominated two Helen Hayes Awards. He is nominated for the James MacArthur Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Play (“Two Trains Running”) and as a member of the cast of “We Are Proud to Present,” which is nominated for Best Ensemble in a Play. Congratulations, Michael!

Research Assistant Mary Mbaba Receives NASTAD Fellowship

Mary Mbaba recently accepted a part time fellowship with the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD). Mary’s fellowship is dedicated to health equity for gay black men with HIV.

Taxman Recognized as One of the Most Productive Criminology Scholars

ACE! Director Dr. Faye Taxman is recognized as one of the most productive criminology scholars in Ellen G. Cohn & David P. Farrington (2014). Publication Productivity of Criminologists, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 25:3, 275-303, DOI: 10.1080/10511253.2014.889728.

Rudes Named Associate Editor for the Journal, Victims & Offenders

ACE! Deputy Director Dr. Danielle Rudes has been named a new Associate Editor for the Journal, *Victims and Offenders: An International Journal of Evidence-Based Research, Policy, and Practice*. 
Recent Activity

Law & Society Association Annual Meeting & 50th Birthday Party
Minneapolis, Minnesota May 29-June 1, 2014

In 2014, the Law & Society Association (LSA) celebrated its 50th Anniversary in Minneapolis in style! Festivities included a lavish party, trivia competitions, historical remembrances and a (secret) flash mob featuring ACE!'s own Danielle S. Rudes and former ACE!er, Shannon Portillo. There was even a photo booth (picture on the right features Danielle Rudes, Shannon Portillo, Catherine Salzinger, Tori Goldberg and Kaitlyn Humphrey). What a wonderful way to celebrate LSA! Here’s to the next half century!!! Pictured left, Dr. Rudes is joined by Dr. Shannon Portillo (The University of Kansas) and Crysanthi Leon (University of Delaware) at LSA.

National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) annual conference
Anaheim, California, May 29-31, 2014

ACE!ers Amy Murphy and Stephanie Maass, along with our partner Rudolfo Perez of Hidalgo County, TX Probation, presented on the RNR Simulation Tool at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals annual conference.

Drs. Taxman & Rudes Present at the Stockholm Criminology Symposium
Stockholm, Sweden, June 9-11, 2014

ACE! Director Faye Taxman and Deputy Director Danielle Rudes presented at the Stockholm Criminology Symposium in June 2014. Their panel session discussed “The limits, challenges and risks of risk assessment,” was joined by Shawn Bushway (State University of New York Albany) and Joan Petersilia (Stanford Law School), who served as the panel discussant (pictured bottom left). Drs. Taxman and Rudes are pictured with 2014 Prize Winners Daniel Nagin and Joan Petersilia, bottom right.

Photo Credit: Video screen shot from www.criminologysymposium.com
Farewell to Dr. Caudy at the Nationals Game
Washington, DC, July 7, 2014

Past and present ACE!ers came together at a Nationals vs. Orioles game over the summer as a special way of saying goodbye and best of luck to Dr. Michael Caudy. Mike left GMU to pursue an Assistant Professor position at the University of Texas, San Antonio after spending three years as a Post Doctoral Research Fellow at ACE!. What a fun send-off!

ACE! Welcomes Three New Babies!

ACE! Research Associate Stephanie Maass welcomed a daughter, Charlotte Elizabeth Maass, on Friday, January 23, 2015 at 1:19 pm. She weighed 7 lbs. 10 oz. and was 21” long. Stephanie did not find out the gender of her baby during her pregnancy, so learning it was a girl after so many months of guessing was a fun surprise for us all in the office! Congratulations to Steph and her husband Kyle (pictured far right).

Former ACE! GRA Erin Crites welcomed son Colton Nicholas Crites (pictured bottom left) July 12, 2014. He was 7 lbs. 13 oz. and 20 inches long. Congratulations to Erin and her husband Zac!

Courtney Porter, former Research Associate and GRA at ACE!, welcomed a baby girl, Caelan Marlene Porter on February 27th, 2014 at 5:39 pm (pictured top left). She weighed 6 lbs 3 oz and was 19.5” long. Congratulations to Courtney and her husband Tracey!

The Whirl of Glory & cACEy

ACE! introduced the Whirl of Glory for recognizing Curriculum Vitae (CV)-worthy accomplishments among our team. When someone from ACE! has an article published, wins an award, receives tenure, etc., the Whirl of Glory helps to celebrate their achievement and is accompanied by an office email singing their praises. We are so proud of the excellent work done here at ACE!

If you are doing a great job at ACE! (for non-CV worthy work), cACEy is what you covet. cACEy is a hard-working elephant (who works harder than an elephant, really?) who will come and sit on your desk in recognition of your dedication, drive, passion, spirit and commitment. The best part about cACEy is her trunk (well, the box she carries on her back). It opens, and in it you will find encouraging words to get you through your day and the names/accomplishments of previous winners. Recipients can peruse these kind thoughts for further inspiration.

Lincoln Sloas, Jill Viglione and Brandy Blasko Accept Assistant Professor Positions

Former ACE! GRAs Lincoln Sloas and Jill Viglione accepted Assistant Professor positions (tenure track) at Florida Atlantic University and the University of Texas San Antonio (respectively). Additionally, ACE! Post Doctoral Research Fellow Brandy Blasko took an Assistant Professor position (tenure track) at Sam Houston State University. Congratulations! We will miss you three!
Recent Presentations


Blasko, B. L. (2014, October). *The prison experience as a turning point in sexual offenders’ pathways to desistance*. In P. Lussier (Chair), The prison experience, community reentry and desistance from crime. Symposium presented at the meeting of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, San Diego, CA.


Rudes, D.S (2014, May). Punishment in the community: Exploring punishment on the ground in local communities. Chaired this session at the Law & Society Association Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

Rudes, D.S. (2014, May). The agents of the criminal justice system Chaired session at Law & Society Association Annual Conference, Minneapolis, MN.


Taxman, F.S. (2015, May 12). Panelist on Recidivism Panel at the 5th National Background Check Program Training Meeting Baltimore, MD.


Publications


Blasko, B. (in press). Sexual offender treatment research update: Where are we at and where are we going? Perspectives.


ACE! article among the 10 top-read articles of 2014 from Criminal Justice and Behavior!

Congratulations to Alese Wooditch, Larry Tang (GMU Statistics Department), and ACE Director Faye Taxman! Their article titled “Which Criminogenic Need Changes Are Most Important in Promoting Desistance From Crime and Substance Use?” was listed as one of CJB’s top-read articles for 2014. As a result, it is Open Access and free for downloading – this means practitioners (and others) without academic journal privileges can access this article!
Criminology, Law & Society at George Mason University

The Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) is part of the Department of Criminology, Law, & Society (CLS) in the College of Humanities and Sciences at George Mason University. As a university center, we know that one of our key roles is to develop and encourage the talent of junior researchers. Graduate students in the Department work on ACE! projects as project managers, data collectors, analysts, and writers. They are able to get outside the classroom and hone their skills while contributing to the field. In addition to working with students, we often collaborate with other research centers and faculty both in the CLS department and across other disciplines.

The Department of Criminology, Law and Society is a dynamic, interdisciplinary unit. The faculty includes some of the nation’s top researchers in the field. Graduate and undergraduate students have the opportunity to work closely with these outstanding faculty in courses and on research projects. As they graduate, students go on to work in the area’s top federal agencies, law schools, and doctoral programs.

Students at the graduate and undergraduate level develop strong foundations in research, methods, theories and systems of justice, criminology and crime policy, law and society, and justice. They graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the causes and consequences of crime and injustice, the responses by criminal and civil justice institutions, and what works to improve social conditions among affected individuals, communities, organizations, and countries. For more information, visit: cls.gmu.edu.

Upcoming Events

American Probation and Parole Association
2nd World Congress on Community Corrections
Los Angeles, California
July 14 - 16, 2015
Drs. Faye S. Taxman & Kimberly Kras will attend and present Supervision markers of probation processes: A worldwide effort to better understand the sanction of probation and “Good enough is good enough:” Community corrections middle managers and organizational change, respectively, at this event.

EuroCrim 2015 & CREDOS
Porto, Portugal
September 2 - 5, 2015
Drs. Faye S. Taxman and Danielle S. Rudes will attend and present at this event. Dr. Taxman’s accepted panel is titled Improving the quality of addiction treatment for offenders: New conceptual models for implementation of evidence-based treatment, with Dr. Steven Belenko, Temple University. Dr. Rudes’ session title is forthcoming in July.