



Welcome!

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Working at George Mason with Faye Taxman, Danielle Rudes, and the ACE! team is a fulfilling experience on so many levels. Not only is our work exciting and recognized as innovative in the field, but also we use solid scientific approaches to answer important policy issues. We have long-standing partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies that support our research.

From Danielle Rudes, Deputy Director of ACE!

Perhaps one thing I find particularly inspiring is our dedication to exploring various correctional queries using mixed method designs. This fall, I am teaching a graduate seminar in Qualitative Methods to a group of doctoral students from our Criminology, Law & Society program. The class progresses in three main sections. In the first third of the class, students read some of the classic ethnographies and discuss the methods these scholars employed. In the second part, students begin fieldwork in a setting of their choosing. This semester, these include jail, four different courts, a police academy, two probation offices, a reentry home for women, and around campus with underage drinkers. The students receive weekly feedback on field notes while fine-tuning their approaches and techniques. They do fieldwork while reading about key issues in qualitative work (e.g. ethics, human subjects' protections, confidentiality, risk, researcher role). In the final section of the course, students learn about coding strategies, theoretical framing in analysis and interpreting qualitative data. They also learn to use Atlas.ti (a qualitative software program) for help with data management and coding. As a final project, students write up work in the format of an academic article and present it to the class. Some of these students will go on to publish this work in scholarly journals. This training is invaluable for the projects we undertake at ACE! We already have a queue of projects ready for trained graduate students to begin fieldwork, coding and analysis. At ACE!, we take a holistic approach to learning that includes classroom and street experiences, providing students with limitless opportunities for future success. I am proud to be a part ACE!'s efforts to change correctional practices to better meet the needs of offenders and their communities.



Danielle S. Rudes, Ph.D.
ACE! Deputy Director

From Faye Taxman, Director of ACE!

Our work has three major themes: use solid experimental methods; create tools that are science-based for the field to advance both policy and practice; and share our work with researchers and practitioners. Regarding methods, experimentation is the "gold standard" and it requires the scientist to practice the art of design. Experiments in real world settings are exciting, requiring one to manipulate the system and interventions. In one current study, we randomly assigned offices to different change strategies. In another study, we randomly assigned offenders to different probation supervision initiatives to examine the impact access to care. These both "look" easy, but certain intricacies in how to randomize, how to recruit subjects without introducing selection bias, and how to ensure fidelity in the intervention all require the knowledge and know-how about systems, organizations, and patterns of behavior. Experiments require "manipulation" of pieces, including the intervention, to test while considering which theory is being tested and what are we trying to learn. An intervention, particularly in the area of corrections, is layered (controls such as drug testing, monitoring, etc. and treatment or techniques to impart new attitudes or skills to alter behavior). Our study manuals and procedures will translate research into practice for practitioners, providing training materials and creating simulation and other models to help agencies use the research findings in real-world settings. Twice, the Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded ACE! funds to develop and design evidence-based materials for the field—a Risk-Need-Responsivity Simulation Model and a EBP laboratory on applying the scientific knowledge into practice. The ACE! team works in the area of health services, public health and criminology to provide a bridge towards better outcomes. Our studies and teamwork are great partnerships for making a real difference.



Faye Taxman, Ph.D.
ACE! Director

New Projects!

Evaluation of the Multi-Site Demonstration Field Experiment: What Works in Reentry Research ACE! will partner with Dan Bloom of MDRC (<http://www.mdrc.org>) on a randomized controlled trial on reentry funded by the National Institute of Justice. This study will inform what in-prison activities best prepare offenders for return to the community, what works best to stabilize people after they are released, and what long-term efforts are needed to help former prisoners become productive citizens.

STRIDE: Seek, Treat, Reach to Identify Pretrial Defendants Enhancement Model The National Institute on Drug Abuse has provided funding to the Dr. Rick Altice (Yale School of Medicine) and ACE! to study strategies to reduce the transmission of HIV in the District of Columbia. The Yale and ACE! team will conduct a randomized controlled trial of buprenorphine maintenance treatment among HIV-positive, community-released defendants and offenders who meet DMS-IV criteria for opioid dependence.

SOARING 2 ACE! will work with Ralph Serin (Carleton University) in Ottawa, CA on a new project funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. In this study, we will develop tools to assist correctional agencies in translating research into practice and to train agencies in evidence-based practices.

Simulation Modeling for Substance Abuse ACE! Received funding from the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment to build a simulation model for drug-involved offenders.

Update on Current Projects

Do Reentry Centers Improve Outcomes? Reentry Centers: The Federal System

Study conducted by Jennifer Lerch, Jessica Rexroat, Mary Shilton, & Faye Taxman. Funding provided by the National Institute of Corrections to the International Community Corrections Association (#07EPI16GJT3).

The ACE! team, through a cooperative agreement with the International Community Corrections Association (ICCA), is studying reentry residential centers (RRCs) used by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). These RRCs assist returning individuals to transitions to the community. The purpose of this study is to examine how community residential and probation supervision can impact the outcomes of offenders returning to the community after incarceration. The researchers conducted site visits in nine RRCs and analyzed data on two release cohorts (n~40,000) for three years post-release. Findings reveal that the RRCs vastly differ in their organizational structure, leadership, services offered, and preparation for offenders to be successful in the community. Overall, 13% of offenders are re-arrested within three years, and 23% of offenders are revoked for technical violations on supervision. Region of the country affects violation rates, as does drug offense. Most participants in RRCs are low to moderate risk; high risk offenders are more likely to recidivate. Stay turned for upcoming monographs on the study, which will be available on our website in December 2010. The Advisory Committee is Terry Marshall, Nancy Beatty, Jane Browning, Dan Catley, Elizabeth Curtin, Larry Fehr, Dee Halley, Christopher A. Innes, George Keiser, Philip R. Magaletta, Jane O'Shaughnessy, David Robinson, Denise Robinson, & Jerry Vreogh.

How does geography influence drug abuse epidemiology in Baltimore? Manualized Treatment

Study conducted by Alese Wooditch, Brian Lawton, & Faye Taxman. Funding provided by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01 DA 17729).

Current studies of probation have focused primarily on individual factors and programmatic characteristics that influence outcomes. Since the majority of offenders under community supervision are required to be drug-free, a need exists to understand the context of drug use. This research seeks to answer two questions within a routine activities theoretical framework. First, does the availability of drugs in a probationer's immediate residential environment affect use of illegal substances? Second, do probationers residing in high-activity drug areas have more severe addiction disorders? The analyses indicate that drug availability within a probationer's immediate area is associated with a higher probability of testing positive for illicit substances, but is unrelated to addiction severity. The results suggest a need exists for a broader epidemiological framework to understand how environment affects drug use among probationers.

Update on Current Projects

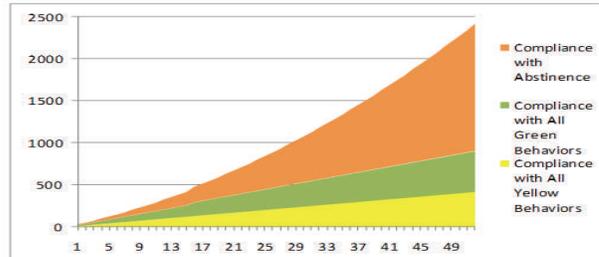


How many points is a negative UA worth? JSTEPS

Study conducted by Faye Taxman, Danielle Rudes, Shannon Portillo, & Amy Murphy. Funding provided by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (U01 DA 16213).

JSTEPS, an implementation study on the use of contingency management (CM), an evidence-based practice that provides incentives for positive behavior, in five federal sites, has experienced several exciting developments. All sites have developed protocols and point/reward systems, and three of the five sites are up and running! The research team has had the opportunity to conduct site visits and trainings at several of the sites, and we have presented our initial findings at professional conferences.

Full compliance, awarding points: orange, yellow, and green behaviors



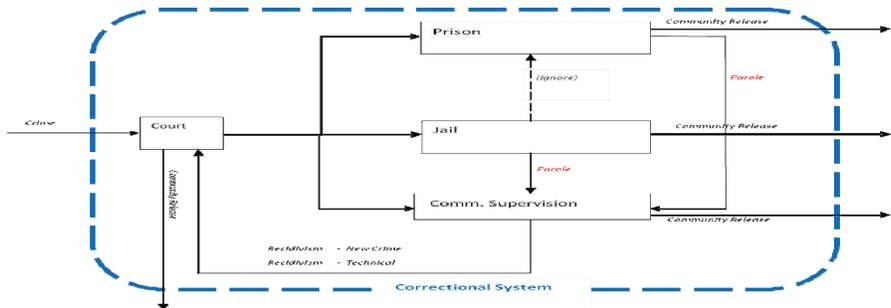
Several sites are currently using the JSTEPS software, a translation tool adapted for this project, to track client compliance. As part of the Plan-Do-Study-Act Model, ACE! developed feedback reports to sites to reiterate the principles of CM, summarize point systems, and provide questions for self-assessment—that is, input on areas where the sites have succeeded in implementing the principles and recommendations for improvement. We also illustrate potential point accumulations so sites have a visual representation of clients success.

What is the relationship between risk and dynamic need factors on services? Risk-Needs-Responsivity Simulation Tool

Study conducted by Faye Taxman, Stephanie Ainsworth, Jillian Baird, Jim Byrne (UML), & April Pattavina (UML). Funding provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (2009-DG-BX-K026).

The Risk-Needs-Responsivity

project researchers have examined national and state-level data sets and validation studies on risk distributions for a variety of offender populations in different settings. We conducted a systematic review of the relevant literature to identify the current state of knowledge regarding risk, need, and responsivity. We are continuing to identify relevant data sources to inform our model, including the identification of appropriate decision rules to guide offender placement in treatment programs and services based on levels of risk and need.



It is important for criminal justice agencies to match the criminogenic needs of offenders with the appropriate correctional programs and services. An expert panel will review the study assumptions and a team of field experts will review the logic of the responsivity tool. The simulation tool will be validated with two state data sets.

Update on Current Projects

What have we learned about “what works?” Mapping Evidence to Advance the Field

Study coordinated by Carolyn Watson and conducted by various researchers. Funding provided by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (HS018614-02) and BJA (2009-D6-BX-K021).

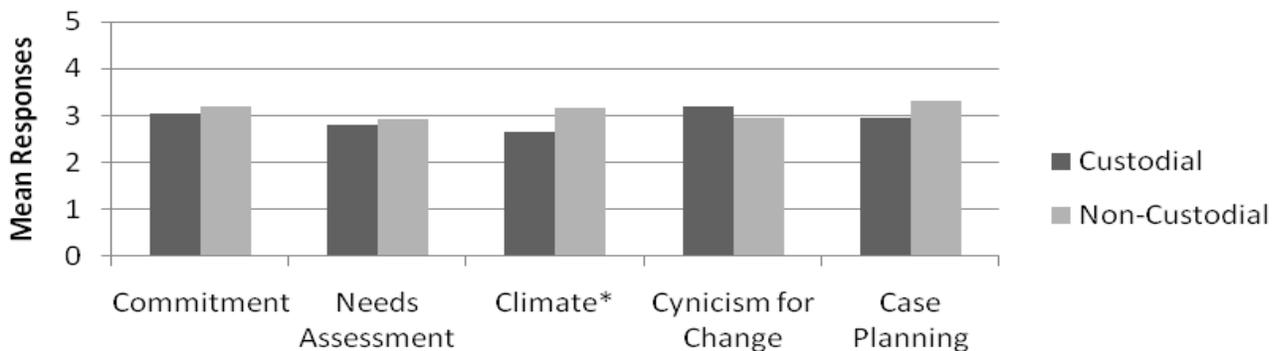
The Evidence Mapping to Advance Justice Practice (EMTAP) project (formerly NJH) uses a systematic review process to identify meta-analyses and other reviews that have been done in topic areas related to the correctional system. Recently, we have been working on developing and refining protocols for this review process. In June, we held our second meeting, where colleagues (including researchers, practitioners, and policymakers) provided valuable insight and feedback on our process. Several of our researchers have completed the reviews of their topic areas, including contingency management, working alliance, and sex offender treatment, among others. Findings in these areas demonstrate where the gaps in existing research are. For example, we found only three meta-analyses on contingency management, and although many more studies were found on working alliance, only three reported quantitative findings. In addition, our initial findings point to limits in the populations and settings selected for intervention research. For example, nearly half of the studies on sex offender treatment were done in community corrections settings. We look forward to completing reviews in other areas in order to provide a broad picture of “what works” in corrections.

What is the willingness of staff to change? Evidence-based Practices in Corrections: The Maryland Division of Parole and Probation (MDPP)

Study conducted by Jennifer Lerch, Faye Taxman, Susan James-Andrews, & Danielle S. Rudes. Sponsored by the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation.

In this project, we seek to examine the change processes and outcomes of a pre-release facility that is attempting to transition from a prison-based to a community-based institution. Thus far, we analyzed the first wave of organizational surveys assessing staff readiness for change and administrator willingness to modify practices. Combining these findings with the qualitative data collected, we unearthed some interesting findings in comparing custodial and non-custodial staff in this pre-release facility.

This study demonstrates that custodial and non-custodial staff report equal use of positive and confrontational communication strategies, but that positive communication may not be translating into constructive interactions between staff and offenders. While survey data suggests that custodial staff reports a low readiness for change, observational and interview data confirm that staff attitudes and behaviors undermine efforts to provide a humane environment for reentry. The study illustrates the value of using quantitative *and* qualitative methods for understanding the critical challenges organizations face during change processes. It highlights the importance of understanding interactional and routine practices among front-line workers during implementation of organizational reform.



*p<.05, two-tailed, **p<.01, two-tailed, ***p<.001, two-tailed

Publications

Recently Published Journal Articles

- Hiller, M., Belenko, S., Taxman, F., Young, D., Perdoni, M., & Saum, C. (2010). Measuring drug court structure and operations. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 37(9):933 -950.
- Gooden, S. & Portillo, S. (2010). Advancing social equity in the Minnowbrook Tradition: Perspectives from Minnowbrook III. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 20(4).
- Maynard-Moody, S. & Portillo, S. (2010). Street-level bureaucracy theory. In Durant, Robert (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of American Bureaucracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Morrill, C. & Rudes, D.S. (2010). Conflict resolution in organizations. *Annual Review of Law & Social Sciences*, 6(23):1-25.
- Portillo, S. (2010). How race, sex and age frame the use of authority by local government officials. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 35(3):603-23.
- Rely, V., Belenko, S., Taxman, F.S., Hiller, M (2010). Exporting court innovation from the United States to continental Europe: Compatibility between the drug court model and inquisitorial justice systems, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*.
- Taxman, F.S. (2010). Probation and diversion: Is there a place at the table what should we serve? *Victims & Offenders*, 5:233-239.

Forthcoming Publications

- Kuhns, J. B., Wilson, D. B., Clodfelter, T. A., Maguire, E. R., & Ainsworth, S. A. (forthcoming, online first). A meta-analysis of alcohol toxicology study findings among homicide victims. *Addiction*.
- Taxman, F.S., Rhodes, A., & Dumenci, L. (forthcoming). Construct and predictive validity of criminal thinking scales. *Criminal Justice & Behavior*.
- Trotman, A. J.-M. & Taxman, F.S. (forthcoming). Implementation of a contingency management-based intervention in a community supervision setting: Clinical issues and recommendations. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*.
- Viglione, J., Hannon, L., & DeFina, R. (forthcoming). The impact of light skin on prison time for black female offenders. *Social Science Journal*, forthcoming.
- Wilson, M., Taxman, F.S., & O'Grady, K. (forthcoming). The relationships of social networks to HIV Risk Behaviors from a sample of probationers in a randomized trial. *The Prison Journal*.
- Wooditch, A. (forthcoming). The efficacy of the Trafficking in Persons Report: A review of the evidence. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*.

Revise & Resubmit

- Rudes, D. S. Framing organizational reform: Misalignments and disputes among parole and union middle managers. Revise & resubmit at *Law & Policy*.
- Rudes, D. S., Lerch, J., & Taxman, F.S. Implementing a reentry framework at a correctional facility: Challenges to the culture. Revise & Resubmit at the *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*.
- Rudes, D. S. & Taxman, F.S. Early Release. Chapter in *Corrections*, edited by William Chambliss & J. Geoffrey Golson, Sage Publications.
- Sloas, L.B., Steele, P.D., & Hare, T.S. Geographical access to treatment for sex offenders under community supervision in Kentucky. Revise & resubmit at *Journal of Sexual Aggression*.

Meet the New Students!



Jillian K. Baird, BS is currently pursuing her MA in the Criminology, Law and Society department at George Mason University. She is a Graduate Research Assistant for ACE! (Advancing Correctional Excellence) and a Presidential Scholar. Jillian earned her BS in Psychology in 2009 from Centre College, Danville, Kentucky and anticipates completing her MA in the spring of 2012. Her research interests include probation, problem-solving courts, organizations, and effective correctional treatments.



Sara Debus-Sherrill, MA is a doctoral student in the Department of Criminology, Law, and Society. She received an MA in clinical psychology from the University of Alabama and a BS in psychology from Tulane University. Sara is currently a research assistant with ACE! as well as a Research Associate with the Urban Institute's *Justice Policy Center*, where she contributes to research and evaluation projects related to criminal justice and law. She has experience with criminal and juvenile justice populations in both a research and clinical capacity and has research interests in correctional mental health services, the impacts of incarceration on rehabilitation and well-being, and desistance from juvenile offending.



Jessica Rexroat, BA is working toward her master's in Criminology, Law and Society at GMU, with an anticipated completion date of Spring, 2011. Jessica is currently a research assistant for ACE! She received her BA in Criminal Justice from Edinboro University in 2008. Her research interests include police culture, police legitimacy, offender rehabilitation, and residential reentry centers.



Lincoln Sloas, MA is a doctoral student in the Criminology, Law and Society Program at George Mason University. He received his M.A. from Morehead State University in 2008. Lincoln spent a year as a lecturer at Morehead State University, teaching undergraduate courses in Deviance and Criminal Justice. His research interests include sexual offending, criminological theory, spatial analysis, and offender rehabilitation. He recently published an article in *Papers and Proceedings of the Applied Geography Conferences*. He currently has a manuscript under review at the *Journal of Sexual Aggression*.



Jill Viglione, MA is a first year doctoral student at George Mason University. She received her MA in Criminology, Law and Society from Villanova University and her BA in Criminal Justice from Quinnipiac University. Her research interests include cultural representations of race, poverty and crime as well as corrections and capital punishment. Her most recent work examined the relationship between skin tone and sentencing of black female offenders.

Recent Activity

Stockholm Criminology Conference

June 13-17, 2010

ACE! Director Faye Taxman, Deputy Director Danielle Rudes, and many more GMU students and faculty joined researchers from the international community in Sweden to take part in the Stockholm Criminology Conference. In addition to presenting on current ACE! research, Drs. Taxman and Rudes were thrilled to cheer on colleague Dr. David Weisburd, recipient of the 2010 Stockholm Prize in Criminology.



American Probation and Parole Association Training Institute

August 15-18, 2010

The JSTEPS project team was excited to discuss the study alongside members of participating sites. Chief Probation Officer (PO) Greg Forest of the Western District of North Carolina, former Probation Chief Richard Crawford, and Supervising PO Liz Kerwood of the District of Hawaii presented to the American Probation and Parole Association's Annual Training Institute, alongside Faye Taxman, Danielle Rudes, and Amy Murphy of ACE! The team presented early findings and discussed systems developed by the sites.



Additional Events

It's been a busy summer and fall for the ACE! team! Other events where we have presented have included the *National Association of Drug Court Professionals Annual Meeting*, the *College on Problems of Drug Dependence*, the *Addiction Health Services Research Conference*, and the *International Community Corrections Association meeting*.

American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting

November 17-20, 2010

ACE! researchers will give the following presentations at ASC:

Wednesday, November 17

- 11:00-12:20 Alese Wooditch. "The Geography of Drug Abuse Epidemiology among Probationers in Baltimore, Maryland"
- 12:30-1:50 Fergus McNeill, Faye Taxman, & Stephanie Ainsworth. "Desistance: The New Wave of Correctional Practice"
- 2:00-3:20 Division of Experimental Criminology featuring Ted Palmer to be interviewed by Faye Taxman, Pat Van Voorhis (University of Cincinnati), Doris MacKenzie (Penn State)
Danielle Rudes chairing a session, "Parole & Prisoner Reentry"
- 3:30-4:50 Lincoln B. Sloas, Timothy S. Hare, Paul D. Steele, Matthew R. Laurin. "Spatial Analysis of Sex Offender Residence, Treatment Service Accessibility, and Treatment Participation in Eastern Kentucky"
- 3:30-5:30 Faye Taxman, Stephanie Ainsworth, & Jillian Baird. "BJA-GMU-UML Risk Needs Simulation Tool Meeting"

Thursday, November 18

- 11:00-12:20 Jill Viglione. "Emergent Issues and Cross-Cultural Approaches to the Study of Racial and Gender Disparity in Sentencing"
- 2:00-3:20 Faye Taxman. "Modeling Change: Simulating the Impact of the Expansion of Treatment Systems in Correctional Settings"
Danielle Rudes chairing session, "Politics, the Law and Prisoner Reentry"
- 3:30-4:50 Stephanie Ainsworth. "The Minimum Legal Drinking Age and Blood Alcohol Levels of Victims of Violent Death"

Friday, November 19

- 9:30-10:50 Jennifer Lerch, Faye Taxman, Danielle Rudes. "Implementing Reentry in a Correctional Facility"
- 3:30-4:50 JSTEPS: Contingency Management in Justice Settings, Session chaired by Faye Taxman, with presentations by Faye Taxman, Danielle Rudes, Shannon Portillo, and Amy Murphy

Upcoming Events



Save the Dates!

ACE! International Criminology Event

ACE! will welcome Fergus McNeill for a talk on *Desistance Research: Wave of the Future* on November 22 at 10 AM at Meese Conference Center (Mason Hall). Professor McNeill teaches criminology and social work at the University of Glasgow and is co-editor of the book *Offender Supervision: New Directions in Theory, Research, and Practice* (2010). ACE! researchers contributed two chapters to this book. Please contact us at ebct@gmu.edu if you would like to attend.

ACE! Inaugural Symposium

January 13-14, 2011

ACE! presents our first symposium: "Undoing the Effects of Mass Incarceration" with U.S. Senator Jim Webb (VA) and Prison Fellowship (Pat Nolan). Please visit our website at <http://gemini.gmu.edu/ebct/ace> and click Register if you would like to attend.

We've Moved!

ACE! is pleased to report that we have relocated from the Prince William campus to the main Fairfax campus of GMU. Our telephone and email contacts, as well as our website, remain the same, but our mailing address has changed. Please update your records!

Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!)
Department of Criminology, Law, & Society
George Mason University
MS 6D3
10519 Braddock Road
Fairfax, VA 22030

Department of Criminology, Law, & Society
George Mason University

MS 6D3
10519 Braddock Road
Fairfax, VA 22030



For more information on ACE!, contact the research team at (703) 993-9699 or ebct@gmu.edu.
Visit our website at <http://gemini.gmu.edu/ebct>.