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**Melissa A. Colon**

**Examining the Relationship between the Strength of Social Bonds  
and Offending Behavior**

**Abstract:**

Strong social bonds create a conventional lifestyle. However, Probationers, often lack these strong bonds. Yet, with the help from the community, probation agencies, and probation officers, a crime-free life is possible. The purpose of this study is to see if positive social bonds lead to a conventional life. Travis Hirschi's Social Bond theory will be used as foundation for this study. The four components to specifically study are education, marriage, employment, and hopefulness.

Travis Hirschi argued that pro-social bonds lead to a non-criminal life. Social Bond theory includes four elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. *Attachment* examines how connected one is to pro-social activities such as employment, education, and personal relationships. Strong attachments are believed to reduce bad behavior because if the person fears risking the relationship with their positive role model. *Commitment* is how committed one is to living a conventional life and the goals they wish to achieve based on conformity to societal norms. *Involvement* refers to how involved an individual is with conventional society and how well they adapt to the new environment; Involvement is usually measured in time. Finally, *belief* is how strongly one believes their conventional lifestyle and choices they make will actually impact their life long-term. Belief may also be related to some sort of religious affiliation.

Findings: It is hypothesized that those on probation have weaker bonds compared to those not on probation. Therefore, having weak bonds will result in criminal behavior.

The attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief one has to conventional groups has a dramatic impact on criminal behavior. Probationers are released into the community with zero or weak bonds. Family, friends, work, or programs can be essential to the probationers to maintain a conventional lifestyle.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Professor John Culhane, J.D**

# **Rebecca Crawford**

## **Overdoses in Erie County, New York**

### **Abstract:**

Every day, more than 130 people in the United States die after overdosing on opioids alone. Accidental drug overdose is currently the leading cause of death in the United States for those under 50. Drug overdose deaths now exceed those attributable to firearms, car accidents, or homicides. Between the time span of 1999-2015, there were a reported 568,699 deaths due to drug overdoses in the United States. Drug overdoses have had a devastatingly negative on our nation in entirety. In Erie County, New York a drug problem also exists. In Erie County there were 5,643 overdoses reported between 2015 to 2018 is roughly 1% of the population.

The purpose of this research was to determine if there is a correlation between overdoses and race, as well as between the number of reports made and race of reporters. The data gathered for this project was supplied by the Erie County Crime Analysis Center. The data represented in this study includes reported overdoses in Erie County between the years of 2015 until 2018. The hypotheses for this research are that the number of drug overdoses will be greater for the minority population compared to the number of drug overdoses for the non-minority population in Erie County, New York. There will also be a greater number of response calls made by non-minority individuals compared to the number of response calls made by minority individuals. There are many future studies that should be done to help create a greater understanding of the severity of the drug problems in the United States.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Dr. Kathleen Pierino**

# **Rebecca Grey**

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Illness**

### **Abstract:**

There are different factors that play a role in substance abuse and mental illness. The purpose of this study is to study the relationships between mental health and substance abuse. This research project seeks to determine the relationship between the participant's sex, age, and/or race has on mental health and/or substance abuse.

This research project is based on data that has been collected by the General Social Survey (GSS); The GSS is available for public use and contains a variety of survey questions regarding demographics, behavioral questions, mental health, substance abuse, special interests, and many more. The variables used in the study include: age, race, sex, ever used crack, ever injected drugs, number of poor mental health days, and ever felt like having a nervous breakdown.

The study compared number of poor mental health days and ever use crack. This comparison showed that there was a significant difference. Those who reported ever having used crack cocaine also reported having the highest number of poor mental health days. There was a comparison between ever injected drugs and mental health days. Similarly, those who reported having injected drugs also reported having more (poor) mental health days. Age was also compared with ever use crack. It showed that the older the participant the more the likely they were to use crack. Age and ever inject drugs was found that it was not significantly different. These comparisons showed that there was not a significant difference. The variables age and ever felt like having a nervous breakdown had a significant difference. It showed the participants in the age range of 25-49 years old were more likely to feel like they were going to have a nervous breakdown verses younger and older. Mental health days compared with sex of participant's showed no significant difference. There was however, a significant difference between the participant's sex and having a nervous breakdown. The comparison shows that females were more likely to have a nervous breakdown than males. There was a significant difference between the variables sex and ever use crack, along with the variables sex and ever inject drugs. Males were more likely to use crack cocaine and inject drugs as compared to females.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Dr. Kathleen Pierino**

# **Margeaux Ann Hallman**

## **Law Enforcement Perceptions on Hearing Impairments**

### **Abstract:**

Law Enforcement Officers interact with numerous individuals on a daily basis and any of them may have a hearing impairment which is not readily identifiable. The question is whether or not members of Law Enforcement know and are able to effectively interact with individuals who have hearing impairments and eliminate any possible communication barriers. The purpose of this research was to understand how Law Enforcement Officers perceive/understand hearing impairments, if they have had any previous disability training, and their willingness/comfort level in interacting with such hearing impaired individuals.

A cross-sectional study was conducted utilizing a survey that was created specifically for this study and based on a modified Social Distance Questionnaire with permission from Dr. Danielle Eadens. The survey was distributed at two Law Enforcement training conferences on the Hilbert College campus. There are 50 response questions in the survey along with open-ended feedback questions at the conclusion of the survey. The survey consisted of five areas of measurement; demographics, training, knowledge, citizen interactions and co-worker interactions. Five questions were of qualitative nature, 30 questions fall under a 4-point Likert Scale, 4 questions fall under an 11-point Semantical Differential Scale, with 3 Yes/No questions and 7 demographic questions.

Findings indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between levels of Law Enforcement in regard to knowledge, training and citizen interactions. There was a statistically significant difference in co-worker interactions. There was a 75.31% positive response on survey question #14 indicating that there was a desire to learn more about hearing impairments. Of 164 participants, 64 (39%) clearly indicated that they did not receive training on hearing impairments or disabilities (answering with “None” or “N/A”). Importantly of 164 participants, 77.44% indicated they had interacted with a hearing-impaired individual around town. Within the last month, 71 of 164 participants (43.29%) had spoken to a hearing-impaired person. Based on the overall result of the survey, mandated training is recommended for all members of Law Enforcement, reinforced by survey questions answered positively that officers wanted more training. Hilbert College was suggested as a location for training on hearing impairments.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss, Professor John Culhane, J.D., & Dr. Kathleen Pierino**

**Rachel Hassett**

**Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Posttraumatic Growth,  
and Humor in Firefighters**

**Abstract:**

Firefighters experience high rates of trauma throughout their careers. Due to this, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has a much higher prevalence in firefighters than the general population (Wagner et al., 2010). However even with the high rates of PTSD, a common trend among firefighters is high rates of Posttraumatic Growth (PTG; Meyer et al., 2012). The objective of this research study was to examine the effects of traumatic events on a sample of firefighters. This research study identified the prevalence of PTSD and PTG in firefighters. It also examined if the prevalence of humor is associated with PTSD or PTG. This study recruited male participants from fire departments in Erie County, NY. These participants ranged from ages 18 to 70, and included full-time, volunteer, and retired firefighters. The firefighters were administered a survey to measure PTSD, PTG, and humor. Researching the mental health of firefighters is imperative to allow them to continue to effectively serve their communities.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Dana Bagwell and Dr. Brian Poliner**

**Sarah Jozwiak**

**Obstacles of Women in Pursuit of Leadership Positions in Healthcare and Supply Chain Management Industries: A Comparative Study**

**Abstract:**

Over the course of decades and multiple generations, society has gone through periods of evolution in societal expectations of women with transitions from the household to the workplace. However, the number of women in leadership positions across various industries has remained a low and unchanging minority.

Data were collected using a survey that was created based on various concepts of internal and external factors in obtaining a leadership position from the book *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg. The research analyzed specific factors that are associated with women who have obtained a leadership position within healthcare and supply chain management organizations and whether there was a difference in the factors between the healthcare and supply chain management industries.

**Faculty Mentors: Aimee Gomlak and Dr. Dana Bagwell**

## **Rebecca Kelly**

### **Seasonal Variation Gun Crimes in Erie County, NY**

#### **Abstract**

Previous research has explored the relationship between violent crimes and seasonal variations. Joseph Cohen used the UCR reports to examine murder and aggravated assault rates from 1935-1940 of cities whose population exceeds 100,000.” The peak occurs in mid-summer when a gradual decline sets in through the winter, with a holiday rise in December.” Gun violence caused “31,000 deaths in 2010, sixty-two percent were suicides, thirty-six percent were homicides and two percent were accidental deaths” (Miller et al., 2013, p.1). Estimates of gun violence cost the United States over one billion dollars each year (Miller et al, 2013, p.1). It is being hypothesized that gun crimes follow a similar pattern of seasonal variation. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was seasonal variation between the four-gun crimes of gun larceny, assault, robbery and homicide.

Official police data from the Erie Crime Analysis Center was used of offenders who committed any of the four-gun crimes. The results of the study could inform policy decisions on how to deter gun offenders through legislation. A chi square was analyzed between the amount of gun crimes between the high and low crime months and the agency type (i.e., City, Suburbs or Erie County Sheriff). Results showed no statistical difference between gun violence and the months of the year. Future research should be directed towards the rates of gun violence across the United States.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Dr. Kathleen Pierino**



# **Cody Mayerat**

## **A Comparison of Social Bonds between Boy Scouts and Youth**

### **Abstract:**

This project looks at Travis Hirschi's four social bonds and compares them between Boy Scouts and Youth not involved in Boy Scouts. Hirschi examined the relationship between the strength of Social Bonds (i.e., attachment, involvement, commitment, and beliefs) and deviant or criminal acts. Social Bond Theory is a criminological theory that focuses on the importance of relationships and how they affect criminal behavior. This theory has been one of the most influential and widely tested perspectives on juvenile delinquency in the field of criminology. Youth have periods after school where deviant or criminal behavior are most likely to occur. An individual could participate in extracurricular activities at school instead of spending time unsupervised that may lead to criminal/deviant behavior. An example of extracurricular activities that does not involve schools are organizations such as Boy Scouts that teach strong Social Bonds.

A cross-sectional study was conducted utilizing a survey to compare the bonds between Boy Scouts and Youth not involved in Boy Scouts. The survey was distributed to Boy Scout troops during their meetings. Data on Youth not involved in Boy Scouts will be distributed to a local school district. There are 42 questions in the survey. Areas looked at in the survey involved the four aspects of Social Bond Theory: Attachment, Involvement, Commitment and Belief. Questions were of qualitative nature, Yes/No, Likert Scale, Multiple Choice and Demographics. There will be Independent Samples T-Tests run comparing Boy Scouts and Youth not involved in Boy Scouts. Frequencies will be measured for all variables. Chi Square and ANOVA will be measured to understand the strength of the four areas between the two groups.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Dr. Yvonne Downes**

## **Quentin Page**

### **Examining the Importance of Racial Diversity in the Workplace**

#### **Abstract:**

Racial diversity and how it effects the workplace have never been under the microscope as much as it is now. Globalism has given the world a new understanding on how different people interact together in workplace settings and has led many people to believe there are positive effects that racial diversity has on organizations. The purpose of this study is to measure the impact racial diversity has on financial performance in organizations. Secondary data analysis was the research design used. The study looked at 366 organizations in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and in Europe. Financial data and leadership demographics of each organization were compiled for the purpose of this study.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Brian Poliner and Dr. Dana Bagwell**

**Bradley Perrin**

**Impaired Driving: Examining the Impact of Ignition Interlock Devices on the Recidivist Offender and Habitual Drinker**

**Abstract:**

This dissertation examines the impact of the ignition interlock device on a habitual offender of impaired driving and problem drinker. By examining this relationship, I identify the characteristics and issues behind recidivist impaired driving offenders and how specific rehabilitation techniques could produce lower recidivism rates. Specifically the effects of an alcohol ignition interlock device that is sentenced to convicted impaired driving offenders depending on arrest circumstances. The ignition interlock device is installed into the offender's vehicle for a period of time, requiring the offender to provide a breath sample to start the vehicle. If the sample test positive for alcohol on the breath or in the system, the vehicle will not start and will be locked out until a clean sample is given.

I examine the effects this device has on the consumption habits of offenders not only while installed in the vehicle, but after the device is removed. Examining characteristics of arrest as well as suggesting further treatment for heavy drinkers while being supervised by the device can lower recidivism rates for impaired driving offenses. This dissertation challenges the argument that offenders of impaired driving should be punished and deterred in hope to prevent future offenses. Previous data from STOP DWI of Erie County and the Institute for Traffic Safety Management and Research is examined for conclusive data suggesting the ignition interlock plays a larger role in reducing recidivism.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss, Professor John Culhane, J.D. & Dr. Kathleen Pierino**

# **Shannon Petrinec**

## **Analyzing the Prevalence of Contraband in Inmate Packages**

### **Abstract:**

This study is intended to analyze contraband that is entering New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision facilities. The study will attempt to prove the need for Directive #4911A, which was rescinded in 2017. The directive was established to monitor packages that are sent to inmates more closely. Directive #4911A would limit the source of inmate packages to certain vendor sources that have been approved by the DOCCS. Packages would not be able to come from personal sources with the enactment of this directive.

The study will collect data from Unusual Incident Reports from six NYS DOCCS facilities. Any contraband that is confiscated from packages has to be entered into a UI report. From these reports, inmate demographics of the inmates receiving these packages will be studied. The study will also analyze the type of contraband found in these packages as well as the origin of the packages. The hypotheses to be tested include (1) Inmates 18 to 28 years old receive more packages with contraband items than those who are 29-39 years old or 40+ years old, (2) Inmate packages containing contraband items are more often sent from personal sources as opposed to vendor sources, and (3) Inmate packages that contain contraband items most often contain drugs rather than non-drug contraband items. Specific comparisons to be made include (1) the amount of inmate packages entering each facility type (minimum, medium, or maximum) based on the race of the inmate receiving packages and (2) the amount of inmate packages entering each facility type based on the age of the inmates receiving packages. The results of the study may be used to support the reenactment of Directive #4911A in NYS DOCCS facilities.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Dr. Kathleen Pierino**

## **Michael Sciarrino**

### **Exploring the Underlying Factors in Bail Determination as it Relates to Rates of Recidivism in Erie County, New York**

#### **Abstract:**

As the United States incarceration rate has steadily increased throughout the past few decades, there has been little research focused on the appropriateness of bail decisions. Though ratified in 1791, the Eight Amendment mandates that “excessive bail shall not be required”, however, through reactive criminal justice efforts to control crime, past federal regulations have suggested outrageous sentences for low level offenders, whom all do not have the financial resources to afford bail. Subsequently, many individuals, especially those who are poor, remain behind bars before they have been proven guilty. The idea of bail is for defendants to take advantage of a reasonable opportunity to secure release, as a better way to prepare a defense for themselves, before their next court date.

When considering bail amounts, judges, and police departments alike, traditionally consider both, the threat the defendant poses to the community, and the likelihood of their return to court. However, it is far too often that bail is unattainable, even for low risk defendants; which contributes to unnecessarily imprisoning people at the financial burden of the tax payers. Additionally, for the defendant, detainment may create devastating barriers to successful reintegration such as loss of employment, which may lead to the inability of the defendant to support themselves or a family.

Using secondary data obtained from the Erie County Sheriff’s Office Jail Management Division, the study demonstrates that there is a disproportionate number of defendants who have not posted bail within a six-year period from 2011-2017. The study also recognizes a significant difference between defendants of different races, and the likelihood of those defendants posting bail.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Professor John Culhane, JD**

## **Eric Smith**

### **At-Risk Children: A Path Down The Residential Life, Where Can One Go?**

#### **Abstract:**

A child labeled at-risk is an area of concern that is in every part of today's society. When a child is categorized at-risk, their future will be determined by the path they take. The purpose of analyzing how an at-risk child can adapt to services if presented with options such as foster care, therapeutic foster care, and residential treatment facilities is important. The key component to remember is where at-risk children are cared for and treated makes an impact on their long-term growth, sense of belonging, and mental health stability. The job of individuals especially parents, caregivers, and workers in the mental health field are to educate themselves so they can properly assist a child in need. Secondary data were examined regarding all counties in New York State with the focus on Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Genesee County. Research has shown that since 1994, there are significant amounts of children affected by services, especially a child in foster care. Additional research has shown that submitted CPS reports vary between different counties and can impact a child's life when reported. To conclude, research has shown that the bigger the county the more money a county must spend per child.

Using the data collected has made us more aware of how the path taken by an at-risk child can determine their future if no interventions are made.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Dana Bagwell and Professor Colleen Kumiega**

**Gianna A. Totaro**

**Term Limits: Is New York State Ready For Change?**

**Abstract:**

Term limits have been widely discussed and debated. To date, fifteen states have passed term limit legislation. Those states include Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. Scholars have found positive outcomes when implementing term limits, including increased competition, ideas, and diversity. Currently, New York State does not have term limits for all elected officials. Using data collected in a survey of New York State registered voters, this descriptive research study examined voter opinion regarding term limits. This study showed that the majority of registered voters wanted term limits. They also believed it would help end corruption and encourage voting in elections. However, there was no relationship between demographic characteristics and how the first research question of desiring term limits was answered.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Brian Poliner and Dr. Dana Bagwell**

**Nia Williams**

**An Evaluation of the Federal Job Readiness Program of the Western District of New York Federal Probation Department**

**Abstract:**

With so many individuals being released back into their communities, increased attention has been placed on successful reentry initiatives. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the attitudes and perceptions of participants that have completed the Federal Job Readiness Program provided by the Western District of New York Federal Probation and Pretrial Services Department. The evaluation regarding the efficacy of the program was important to discover whether or not the program was successful in helping offenders secure stable employment. It is important to study reentry programs because community health is benefited by educating offenders. These programs provide access to resources and organizations that can help offenders live successful lives. By evaluating the Job Readiness program through surveys, offenders who often lack the support needed to live a crime free life can voice their experience with the Job Program and express if they feel like they received the individual help that they need to secure employment and develop essential life skills.

**Faculty Mentors: Dr. Martin Floss and Professor John Culhane, J.D.**