DPOP **NEWSLETTER**

SPRING 2025

ASC DIVISION OF

Public Opinion 😝 Policy



Chair's Welcome

Dear DPOP Members,

I hope this message finds you well and that you're enjoying the beauty of spring. As we wrap up our fourth year as a Division, I'm proud to report that DPOP is thriving—with a strong and growing membership of 109. Notably, much of this growth comes from students, signaling an exciting and promising future for DPOP.

Staying true to our mission of spotlighting the work of our members, this edition of the newsletter features scholarship by Angela Jones, Sean Patrick Roche, and Megan Denver. You'll also find interviews with our 2024 award winners—Luzi Shi, Merin Sanil, and Francis T. Cullen—each offering thoughtful insights into their work and the broader field.

While the ASC Annual Meeting may still be a few months away, we are already hard at work preparing for it. We're looking forward to connecting with many of you there and continuing to elevate the role of public opinion and policy research.

Thank you for your continued engagement and for helping make DPOP a vibrant and growing Division. Wishing you all a restful and rejuvenating summer.

Cheryl Lero Jonson

In this Edition:

- **About DPOP Membership**
- p. 3 **DPOP Career Corner**
- Article Highlight p. 5
- **Data Brief** p. 6
- Q&A with 2024 Division p. 9 **Award Winners**
- p. 13 YouGov Omnibus Winner
- p. 14 Award Nominations
- p. 15 News Around DPOP
- p. 16 DPOP Committee Chairs & Members
- p. 17 DPOP Executive Board
- p. 18 Division Sponsors



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ABOUT THE DIVISION OF PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

DPOP PROVIDES A HOME FOR SCHOLARS INTERESTED IN THE NATURE OF PUBLIC OPINION & ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIME AND JUSTICE POLICY

MEMBERSHIP

ACTIVE/RETIRED MEMBERS: \$20 STUDENT MEMBERS: \$10

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Q&A WITH FORMER DIRECTOR OF NIJ: NANCY LA VIGNE

Q: What were some of the most pivotal moments in your career and/or key knowledge or skills that you think helped you in being appointed director of NIJ?

I believe it was helpful that I have both a master's degree in public policy and a doctorate in criminal justice. Earning the master's degree fueled my passion for evidence-based policymaking and piqued my interest in acquiring the expertise to conduct rigorous, policy-relevant research. Pursuing my PhD at Rutgers School of Criminal Justice, which has long distinguished itself as an interdisciplinary school and has a history of applied criminology, exposed me to an array of research topics, theories, methods, and perspectives. In addition to my educational background, I worked in Washington, DC, for many years, first at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) for six years immediately following my doctoral studies, and then for nearly two decades at the Urban Institute, where I directed the Justice Policy Center. In my earlier employment at NIJ I gained a first-hand understanding of how federal grantmaking agencies operate and during my tenure at Urban I sought and won grants from NIJ and other federal and philanthropic grantmakers. While at Urban, I was also invited to deliver testimony before Congressional committees in both the House and Senate and periodically advised on evidence-based criminal justice policy on the Hill and throughout the country. All these experiences positioned me to be a promising candidate for appointment as NIJ director.



Q: How do you decide when to make a big career change or transition?

Big career decisions are never easy. When making them, it is important to do thorough research on the organization – assessing its mission, reputation, the quality of staff, and anything else you can discern about its history, strategic vision and planned future direction. It is also important to assess what new professional growth opportunities will be offered by changing roles. But despite all that research, I ultimately end up simply following my gut. Every professional change I've made has been a leap of faith – faith both in the institution I am contemplating joining and faith in my own abilities to make it a positive and impactful experience. Happily, I have never regretted any of my decisions to make professional changes – they have all been rewarding in different ways that have also expanded my skillset, the breadth of my knowledge, and the depth of my professional networks.

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Q: When facing moments where you doubted your skills or path, how did you overcome that?

Self-doubt is a normal human emotion. And while it should be acknowledged, its important not to let it define us or our actions. That's because self-doubt is an embodiment of fear of failure. I don't subscribe to those negative emotions even though I've had my fair share of them. The worst thing we can do to ourselves and those around us is to lead from fear. Fear prevents us from taking risks, which are essential to accomplishing both professional and organizational goals. Instead, I ask myself why I'm afraid and remind myself of all the times in the past that I've had similar fears or insecurities and overcome them – and how. I essentially engage in deliberate self-coaching.

Q: What advice do you have about staying motivated and conducting evidence-based research during times of political and scientific turmoil?

This is an exceedingly heavy and scary time for all of us, both personally and professionally. It's far too easy for the current climate to distract if not derail us from our research activities. And while it's understandable that the current attack on science is sapping our emotional energy, if we let it detract us from our work, we're essentially ceding ground to the opposition. We need to take care not to succumb to anticipatory compliance – scaling back the exact activities that the powers that be are aiming to dismantle. In seeking fortitude to stay the course, I find it helpful to tap into my social and professional networks for encouragement and support.

Q: What communication barriers do you perceive between academics, policymakers, and criminal justice professionals and what advice would you offer to overcome those communication barriers?

Having conducted much of my research in partnership with practitioners and policymakers, I've given a lot of thought to communications barriers and strategies to overcome them. What I've learned is that the biggest barrier on the part of researchers is our failure to take the time to get to know our external partners and learn how they view their roles and their professional priorities and what matters to them. It's also important to be humble and respectful, acknowledging that typically your requests of them for data or their time are asks that fall outside of their core responsibilities.

In addition, I believe we have much to learn about how to translate research and communicate it in ways that are accessible and actionable. This should be required instruction in every doctoral program. We also need to build the body of evidence on implementation science in our discipline, measuring and documenting the best strategies to support the implementation of evidence-based strategies in the field.

Q: Looking ahead, how do you see the field of criminology/criminal justice evolving, and how are you preparing for those changes?

It's been my observation that the field is attracting more doctoral students and junior faculty who want to engage in community-based research and to develop their qualitative skills in addition to their quantitative skills. Our field's emerging scholars are attracted to the discipline because they want to see a safer society and a more effective and equitable system of justice for all. They recognize that in order for research to have that kind of impact, it needs to be informed by engaging with the people who are experiencing crime and disparate justice system contact. In my current role as dean of Rutgers School of Criminal Justice I am developing ways to train students in community-engaged research methods and reward faculty for conducting this type of research, which is extremely time consuming to do well and not always sufficiently acknowledged in tenure and promotion decisions. For more on my thinking about this and other topics addressed in this interview, I invite readers to check out my recent article in The Criminologist entitled Redefining Rigor: Embracing Mixed Methods Research in Criminology.

NEW ARTICLE HIGHLIGHT



Q&A WITH AUTHORS: ANGELA M. JONES AND SEAN P. ROCHE

1. What motivated you to conduct this study?

We had persistent concerns about measurement quality in criminological survey research, particularly the widespread use of agree/disagree (A/D) questions. Prior research (Pickett & Baker, 2015), including our own earlier work (Jones & Roche, 2025), demonstrated that A/D items are often vulnerable to acquiescence bias and other stylistic response effects. Although efforts have been made to address these problems with bidirectional A/D scales, we found that those solutions introduce their own psychometric complications, such as multidimensionality and poor internal consistency. Reading Dykema and colleagues' (2022) "Towards a reconsideration of the use of agree–disagree questions in measuring subjective evaluations" had a big impact on us. It made us want to explore item-specific (IS) formatting of criminal justice as an alternative that could reduce cognitive burden, minimize response biases, and improve construct validity in measuring criminal justice attitudes. Writing this article for the JQ special issue was also a great opportunity to expose criminologists to some of the survey methodology literature.

2. What are the primary findings of this research?

First, we found that item-specific (IS) formatted questions demonstrated stronger psychometric properties than traditional A/D formatted questions across all four measured constructs—dispositional attributions, situational attributions, punitive support, and rehabilitative support. Overall, the IS versions yielded higher reliability (as evidenced by comparing McDonald's omegas) and superior model fit in confirmatory factor analyses. Second, on the whole, the IS format revealed stronger and theoretically consistent relationships between attribution styles and policy preferences, suggesting the "pragmatic American" thesis is a methodological artifact. Situational attributions were negatively associated with rehabilitative support—but only when measured using IS items. These relationships were null when using A/D formatted scales.

3. How might this research be useful to DPOP members?

First, we hope that by outlining the drawbacks of the A/D approach, DPOP members can become more critical consumers of the extant literature, more closely examine the formats they use in survey construction, and prioritize measurement quality. Second, by introducing IS formatting and empirically demonstrating it has some advantages over the traditional A/D approach, we think this study provides a model for how researchers can reformat other common criminological survey scales and move away from the traditional A/D format. We think this has implications for theory testing and applied policy research, where measurement error can have serious consequences. Finally, we hope this study inspires DPOP members to find and advocate for other improvements to measurement practices in criminological survey research.

To learn more or read the full article: Jones, A. M., & Roche, S. P. (2025). Introducing item-specific formatting to scales of criminal justice attitudes: Evidence from a national experiment. *Justice Quarterly*, 1-23. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2025.2463414

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DPOP'S DATA/ METHODS BRIEF



THE WHY, WHAT, AND HOW OF CONJOINT EXPERIMENTS

Megan Denver, PhD

The Why

Public opinion research has greatly benefited from experimental vignettes over the past few decades. The ability to randomize conditions of interest while holding constant other important elements in the story or scenario that a respondent sees has enabled researchers to make credible causal inferences. The biggest constraint many of us encounter when designing a vignette is that we want to randomize it all—not just race, but also gender; not just this, but that. On the backend, common reviewer questions involve authenticity: Does this scenario reflect complex reality? Do reported preferences or beliefs reflect how people operate and make decisions in the real world? Are respondents providing socially desirable responses that misrepresent their actual opinions? A conjoint experimental design can alleviate both design restrictions and some of these realism/social desirability concerns.

The What

A conjoint experimental design can be a strong option when the researcher wants respondents to choose between things—such as businesses, political candidates, applicants, or policies. The basic idea is that each survey respondent sees a table that compares two[1] (fully randomized) profiles. Profiles A and B contain the same set of attribute categories, but the order that those categories appear in the profile is randomized across respondents. All attribute levels (or values) are also randomized. Respondents are typically asked to pick (i.e., are forced to choose) between Profile A and Profile B, and in some studies, they are also asked to rate each profile on a Likert scale (Hainmueller et al., 2014). Below is an example screenshot from a recent study Luzi Shi and I conducted, which tested whether a business hiring initiative to employ people with criminal conviction records led to reduced interest in patronizing those businesses.

This multidimensional design allows for a wide inclusion of factors—often 5-8 attributes—without losing the ability to detect a causal effect of each attribute, if there is one. This is because conjoint designs rely on average marginal component effect (AMCE), or the probability, on average, that a respondent would change preferences among profiles if one profile attribute changed its level, net of the other attributes. Another way to think about the AMCE: it is the marginal effect of one attribute of interest (e.g., the business hiring initiative in the above figure) when averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes (staff composition, restaurant price, convenience, ratings). This essentially treats, one at a time, any one attribute as the treatment of interest and all other attributes as control variables that happen to be randomized.

[1] While most conjoint experiments present pairs, researchers have also used single conjoint designs (see e.g., Hainmuller et al. 2015).

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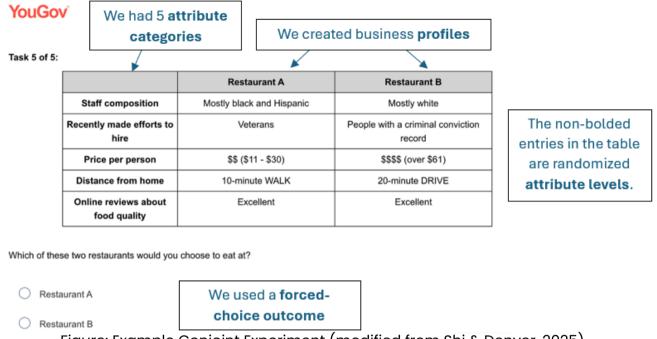


Figure: Example Conjoint Experiment (modified from Shi & Denver, 2025)

In fact, unbiased estimates can be obtained without including the other attributes in the model, because they are orthogonal. For this reason, you can have a 2x2x3x3x2x2 (Bushway & Pickett, 2024) or 2x4x3x4x2 (Shi & Denver, 2025) design, which contain around 150-200 profile combinations per study, and remain sufficiently powered with a sample size of approximately 1,000 respondents or less.

In addition, respondents are typically asked to repeat the same task multiple times; in our study, Luzi and I had them complete five tasks (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The order of the attribute categories remained the same within each respondent (to avoid confusion and cognitive burden) but was randomized across respondents. The levels are always randomized within each attribute category. By viewing so many different considerations simultaneously, respondents are presented with more realistic choice sets while also not being directly focused on any one potentially controversial issue (Bansak et al., 2023; Horiuchi et al., 2022). As a result, this method can be particularly useful when there are concerns about authenticity and social desirability bias.

The How

Companies such as YouGov will embed conjoint designs into the survey, which researchers are able to pretest before the survey launches. However, this type of survey platform can be costly; a YouGov survey of 1,000 respondents is around \$7,500 (see Shi & Roche, 2024 for recent platform cost comparisons). For researchers selecting a platform without a conjoint experiment design built-in, political scientists have created software to design and embed the conjoint design into popular survey design programs like Qualtrics (see Strezhnev et al. 2014).

The analysis is also straightforward. It is common to simply run a linear regression with clustered standard errors (because each respondent rates multiple profiles). Stata has a "conjoint" command that automates that process and produces a graph, but we also include modifiable graph code in the example dataset below.

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The hardest part, as with experimental study designs more broadly, is selecting the attribute categories and levels that you want to test. Vignettes are still the best design for some experimental research questions, and conjoint and vignettes can be combined within a single study to address complementary questions and/or to ensure that findings generalize beyond any one design.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Justin Pickett for his feedback on an earlier version.

Looking for an example dataset and code?
"Replication Data for The Transferal of Criminal Record Stigma in the Employment Context: Evidence from Conjoint and Vignette Experiments."
Harvard Dataverse, V2. https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/UOC2HR

References

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Shi, L., & Roche, S. P. (2024). Sampling from online panels. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.859

Strezhnev, A., Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2014). *Conjoint survey design tool: Software manual*. Available online: https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/astrezhnev/files/ conjoint_sdt_manual.pdftext



Q&A with Winner: Dr. Luzi Shi



What motivated you to first study public opinion about crime and justice?

I was first drawn to this area of research due to my experience as an international student studying overseas. Moving to the new countries to explore my academic interests, I always felt a high level of fear of crime and wanted to understand the social influences that made me feel this way. I thus started to develop an understanding of the relationship between the media consumption and fear of crime, and then moved on to examine other areas in public opinion about crime and criminal justice.

How would you describe your contribution to the public opinion subfield?

In conducting public opinion research, I have engaged in multiple data collection efforts using platforms that are the standard in the field, including YouGov, Qualtrics Panel, Lucid Theorem, and Amazon Mturk. In addition to these opt-in survey platforms, I have independently sampled international students through nine universities' international student offices and supplementary snowball sampling through social media. The data sets that I and my co-authors collected (used in Criminology, Criminal Justice and Behavior, Journal of Experimental Criminology, and Psychology, Crime and Law publications) are available online.

Which topics related to public opinion and policy are you most interested in studying in the future?

My future research will still aim to understand to what extent the public's reactions to crime are based on systematic biases and stereotypes, and to test approaches to correct misunderstandings of crime. In particular, I will focus on the public's stigmatized attitudes towards the disadvantaged and marginalized social groups, including people with criminal records, women and sexual assault victims, and immigrants. I am also interested in survey and experimental research methods.



Q&A with Winner: Merin Sanil



What motivated you to first study public opinion about crime and justice?

I have always been interested in public opinion about various branches of the criminal justice system. Public opinion should and indeed does inform public policymakers are increasingly more responsive to public sentiment. Public opinion is important in research on punishment and few studies directly measure it, often assuming that it has an influence rather than assessing it. Especially in the context of white-collar crime, there is very little information about how the public views punishment for it compared to street-crime. My study examines how extralegal variables like race and moral character might shape punishment for street and white-collar crime.

What inspired the research project for which you won this award?

White-collar crime has typically been associated with white men, but increasingly evidence suggests that lower-level white-collar offenders are a racially diverse category offenders. While of understanding of traditional street crime in relation to race has been well documented, such is not the case for white-collar crime and this relationship is much more ambiguous. My experimental survey project manipulates race as an important variable to examine if, like traditional crime, race of the offender impacts punishment preferences for whitecollar crime.

How do you think this research will contribute to the criminology field or public opinion subfield?

This research project will be novel in examining how race interacts with other extralegal variables in shaping punishment for white-collar Additionally, past research has often conflated manipulations of socio-economic status and moral character when investigating the role of extralegal variables, this study attempts to disentangle these in their influence variables in shapina punishment. Overall, this study will help understand what kind of factors might explain the current discrepancies in punishment for white-collar and traditional street crime.

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PAGE 10



Q&A with Winner: Dr. Francis Cullen



What do you see as cutting-edge topics that are most in need of research by policy and public opinion scholars?

In American society—and particularly in the current attack on DEI—race is an enduring concern. We continue to need studies that focus on where Whites and people of color agree on policy issues and where there is a continuing divide. Along with Amanda Graham and Justin Pickett, for example, we have used surveys to document a huge divide in fear of the police, with Blacks multiple times more likely than Whites to be fearful.

Another line of important research is how the rise of White identity and White nationalism is leading to support for coercive policies. My research with Justin, Amanda, and Leah Butler (among others) shows that White nationalism now predicts punitiveness more strongly than racial resentment. Research needs to continue to probe how racial attitudes affect policy views (see our 2021 review essay in Crime and Justice, ed. by Michael Tonry).

What motivated you to first study public opinion, and how have you observed the study of public opinion about crime and justice change over time?

I did my first survey in 1979 when an assistant professor of sociology at Western University. At the time, punitiveness was rising and, following Robert Martinson's "nothing works" article and related critiques, many were asking: Is rehabilitation dead? I wondered, however, whether the public actually had abandoned the rehabilitative ideal. I conducted a convenience study in rural Illinois and discovered Americans favored both punishment rehabilitation! Rehabilitation was not dead. Every study I have done over the past decades had reported this same finding. Rehabilitation is what Alexis de Tocqueville called a "habit of the heart"—a cultural belief embraced by nearly all members of the public.

The most important development in public opinion is the sustained decline over the past 30 years in public punitiveness. Support for capital punishment, which was about 80% in 1994 has dropped to 53%. Same for support for harsher courts. This means that were are in a new era, where the public's "sensibility about crime" (to use Michael Tonry's term) has changed. There is more openness to progressive reforms.

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What advice would you offer to a young scholar who wants to begin studying public opinion about crime and justice?

I will give four pieces of advice.—beyond joining the ASC Division of Public Opinion and Policy!

First, become enmeshed in the scholarship on public opinion. If this is to be an expertise of yours, I recommend joining the American Association of Public Opinion Research, which includes a subscription to Public Opinion Quarterly. Read leading books on how to conduct research (e.g., Don Dillman et al.'s classic book). Read the political science and social psychology research and methods. Be sure to learn how to embed experiments in surveys. In short, read, read!

Second, most quality surveys are now conducted on opt-in platforms, such as YouGov. Learn about this method. Soon enough, most surveys will use AI technology. Be at the forefront of this development.

Third, once you have learned how to construct a quality survey, then conduct as many quality surveys as you can! Each survey should contain measures to support three to five publications. It is good to work in a research group—as I do with fellow scholars such as Justin Pickett, Amanda Graham, Cheryl Lero Jonson, Alexander Burton, Leah Butler, Teresa Kulig, Heejin Lee, Murat Haner, Melissa Sloan, and others. We share ideas and learn from one another. Our collective expertise surpasses any one person's expertise. We have fun together. In any case, you get good at technical tasks—whether it is surveys or playing tennis (my avocation)—by doing a lot of it!

Fourth, Justin Pickett is an amazing public opinion researcher. Create a library of his major works and read them. (Reading some of my articles, including those coauthored with Justin, would not be a bad idea as well!) Read the works of major scholars in political science. See how they conduct experiments. Model excellence; model success. How does Justin "set up" a topic? Read his methods section and see his tricks of the trade. See his visual presentation of data? And so on. How do other authors arrange the components of articles?

Good luck in your surveys!



Congratulations to Dr. Omeed Ilchi



Congratulations to Dr. Omeed Ilchi, winner of the 2024 ASC DPOP YouGov Omnibus Challenge!

Dr. Ilchi will be examining the prevalence of misconceptions about crime in the United States.







Now Accepting Award Nominations

DPOP is pleased to announce the call for nominations for <u>Division Awards!</u> Please email nomination and/or proposal materials to Awards Committee Chair Sean Patrick Roche (<u>sean.roche@txstate.edu</u>).

The Young Scholar Award recognizes outstanding public opinion research contributions of members within 6 years of receiving their doctorate in terms of publications, data collection, and funded research as well as service to DPOP and the community (e.g., invited presentations/panels, engagement with DPOP). Nomination materials are due by **August 31, 2025**.

- Eligibility: Scholars within 6 years of receiving their doctorate; Can include faculty or practitioners; Requires membership in DPOP.
- Nominations: Must come from DPOP membership via nomination letter and include the nominee's CV.
- Evaluation Criteria: Research contributions (e.g., publications, data collection, funded research) as well as service to DPOP and the community in public opinion/policy research (e.g., invited presentations/panels, engagement with DPOP).

The Distinguished Scholar Award recognizes lifetime scholarly achievement in the field of POP. It honors public opinion/policy scholars who have made significant contributions to the field of POP and DPOP, including scholarship (e.g., publications, data, funded research), teaching/mentorship to students and young career scholars, and service to DPOP. Nomination materials are due by **August 31, 2025**.

- Eligibility: Scholars at least 10 years post-Ph.D.; Can include faculty or practitioners; Requires membership in the DPOP.
- Nominations: Must come from DPOP membership via a nomination letter, letters of support from research partners/mentees/colleagues, and the nominee's CV.
- Evaluation Criteria: Research contributions (e.g., publications, data collection, funded research), teaching, mentorship to students and young career scholars, as well as service to DPOP and the community in public opinion/policy research (e.g., invited presentations/panels, DPOP engagement).

The Student Survey Award provides funding to allow for the collection of a convenience sample of adults in the United States via Lucid to explore public opinion concerning crime and justice issues. Proposals are due by **September 12, 2025**.

- Eligibility: Any graduate student of any social science or social science-related department anywhere
 in the world who is a member of American Society of Criminology's (ASC) Division of Public Opinion &
 Public Policy (DPOP). We regret that we cannot provide opportunities to any other individuals and
 groups.
- Proposals: To be considered to this Award, all applicants must submit a proposal. For details concerning the structure of the proposal, please refer to the <u>DPOP Student Survey Award 2025 FAQs.</u>
- Evaluation Criteria: We seek proposals that break new ground in the hypotheses they investigate, the procedures they employ, or both. Ideally, your proposal should offer the potential for a clear scientific advance with implications for the real world (e.g., criminal justice policy, practice).



News Around DPOP

New Journal Publications by DPOP Members

Hansen, M. A., & Navarro, J. C. (Forthcoming). It's just 'locker room' talk? The impact of gender and political partisanship on agreement with rape myths in the United States. *Victims & Offenders.* Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2024.2445288

Hickert, A., Shi, L., Shaw, O., & Yan, S. (2025). Do direct and courtesy prison stigma hinder support for a startup business? A vignette experiment. *Journal of Experimental Criminology.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-025-09664-x

Jones, A. M., & Roche, S. P. (2025). Introducing item-specific formatting to scales of criminal justice attitudes: Evidence from a national experiment. *Justice Quarterly*, 1-23. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2025.2463414

Navarro, J. C., & Hansen, M. A. (Forthcoming). An experimental study on the effect of prosecutorial Brady violations on confidence in exonerating individuals wrongfully convicted of murder. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. Advanced online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-024-09658-1

Roche, S. P., Lee, H., Pickett, J. T., Graham, A., & Cullen, F. T. (2024). Validation of short-form scales of self-control, procedural justice, and moral foundations. *Justice Quarterly*, 1–30. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2024.2406535

Shi, L., & Denver, D. (Forthcoming). The making of courtesy stigma: From employees with criminal records to employers who hire them. *Criminology*. Advance online publication. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1745-9125.12398

Wozniak, K. H., Pickett, J. T. & Brown, E. K. (2025). Dangerous or lazy: An experimental analysis of defendant characteristics and public support for collateral consequence restrictions. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-024-09790-8

New Book Publications by DPOP Members

Graham, A., Cullen, F. T., & Link, B. G. (2025). *The hidden measurement crisis in criminology: Procedural justice as a case study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1017/9781009558549, Online ISBN: 9781009558549

DPOP Members in New Positions

Dr. Katherine Wilds is starting as an assistant professor at Tarleton State University in Fall 2025.



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