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ON THE COVER: Two women hug each other across the wall during the ‘Not Walls’ demonstration by activists in the US in front of the wall that divides Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, from Sunland Park, New Mexico, on October 23, 2017. Photograph by Herika Martinez/AFP/Getty Images.

BACK COVER PHOTO: Broadway and Herald Square, New York City (Bill/Altschul Public Picture Collection, The New York Public Library.)
TIME OF DEATH?

Determining time of death is vital to forensics, and Dr. Jennifer Rosati maintains that observing insect development on decomposing remains can help to figure out this important information. Rosati, a professor of forensic entomology, is working on a strategy for rapid identification of blowfly and other necrophagous (that means carrion-eating) larvae, pupae and adult insects through mass spectrometry. She also looks at the use of insects for the detection of various drugs, toxins and proteins. And you thought that dogs were the only crime-fighters in the animal kingdom!
THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Impact, a celebration of the extraordinary work of the scholars and artists at John Jay College. John Jay has been on an incredible journey. Our grant portfolio has grown by more than 70 percent in just five years, and the scholarship produced by our faculty has increased by over 50 percent in this same period.

In this issue, we share with you just a few of these incredible projects. Like the work of Christopher Herrmann, Eric Piza, Preeti Chauhan and Phil Goff on the practices and policies of policing. They are studying how data can improve the operation of police forces around the country, and their work is helping law enforcement professionals understand how their actions and policies impact the communities they serve. Or Meredith Dank, Jamie Longazel and Ben Lapidus, whose research examining the experiences of modern day immigrants has helped to enrich the national conversation on immigration. Collectively, their work is a powerful counterweight to the climate of fear that has gripped the country. And the work of Jonathan Gray, Silvia Mazzula, Kevin Nadal and Ed Paulino, which is helping us understand the consequences of racial bias and how one’s identity is shaped by the forces and events around them.

The impact of our scholars is not lost on our students, who have been guided and mentored to pursuing their own projects that change the world around them. We are able to share with you just a handful of our inspiring current students and alumni—for example, Joseph Mahmud, Steven Pacheco and Donauta Watson-Starcevic, who are developing a mobile application to help connect the formerly incarcerated with willing employers—but every single one of our students is worth getting to know.

John Jay scholars and students are achieving remarkable things. Their work is helping us better understand ourselves, and the world around us.

Thank you to everyone who helped us make Impact a reality, and we look forward to presenting the diversity of John Jay scholarship in this and future issues.

Enjoy!

—ANTHONY CARPI
Breast cancer affects one out of every eight women annually. Today we understand that developing cancer is not only affected by gene mutations but also by mechanisms that regulate how genes are expressed, or turned into functional “products,” like proteins, in our cells. John Jay’s Dr. Lissette Delgado-Cruzata is working on developing a better understanding of what makes individuals likely to develop breast cancer. Her goal is to provide more and better information for future prevention programs that target individuals at higher risk for the disease. To do that, she and student mentees like Lisset Duran are investigating the factors that lead to changes in how our DNA behaves by carrying out experiments with breast cancer cell cultures.

Duran, a 2018 graduate and participant in the Program for Research Initiatives in Science and Math (PRISM), used Delgado-Cruzata’s lab training to study how certain DNA proteins affect the expression of breast cancer-associated gene BRCA1. Her research, which she hopes is a step on the road to better targeted cancer therapies, earned her the prestigious CUNY Jonas Salk Award for graduating students who are poised to make significant contributions to medical research. Duran is now a Ph.D. candidate in biology at Princeton University, meaning John Jay may someday have two Dr. Lisset(te)s!
**ENVIRONMENT MATTERS**

Three very different faculty projects on what happens with a change in environment

**Dr. David Munns**'s recent book, *Engineering the Environment: Phytotrons and the Quest to Control Climate in the Cold War*, is the first history of phytotrons, huge climate-controlled labs that let plant scientists experiment with the growth and development of living organisms inside a controlled environment. In more than 30 countries after WWII, phytotrons held the promise of an end to global hunger and political upheaval. Today, they may play an important role in helping scientists understand climate change and the complexities of natural ecosystems.

**Adverse childhood experiences** are a risk factor for juvenile offending. Dr. Kevin Wolff is interested in understanding juvenile offenders and reducing reoffending. In a recent study, he found that higher-quality treatments provided in long-term juvenile residential programs help to decrease the odds that a young offender will return to jail. Building on these findings, Wolff has investigated ways of individualizing interventions to provide the best possible treatment and prevent juvenile offender recidivism. He looked at the ways demographics and community characteristics—like residential instability or poverty—correlate with different combinations of negative childhood experiences. Wolff’s research will help to guide the creation of prevention strategies and treatment programs.

**Dr. Emily McDonald** currently leads research for a nonprofit team at Airbnb partnering with nonprofits including the IRC, Red Cross and UNHCR to provide no-cost housing to displaced peoples around the world. As a cultural anthropologist embedded within a tech product team, she utilizes participant observation, in-home interviews and surveys to understand the needs and desires of recently resettled refugees and transform research insights into actionable, real-world tools.

**Inspired by the work of Gabriel García Márquez, Byron Sandoval (20) is working on his own collection of Spanish-language short stories set in a fictional Latin American universe. This year, Byron is the recipient of an Undergraduate Research/Creativity Scholarship, and is supported by his mentor, Professor Maria Rossi.**

Olivia Orta (B.S. John Jay 2007, S.D. epidemiology Harvard 2018) joined the Epidemiology Department at Boston University as a postdoctoral associate, where she is studying endocrine disrupting chemicals (environmental chemicals that mimic human hormones) and pregnancy-related outcomes.
BODIES AT WAR
Belinda Rincon sheds light on the history of Chicana resistance

“When someone calls” themselves Chicana, it implies that they have a politicized identity—that they know the history of racism and oppression against their community.”

For Dr. Belinda Rincon, an associate professor of English and Latin American Studies at John Jay, unpacking this history of racism and oppression has been one target of her scholarly work, which often focuses on Chicana and Latina feminism, and on how literature, film and other cultural productions can shed light on these topics.

Rincon’s new book, Bodies at War: Genealogies of Militarism in Chicana Literature and Culture, offers new perspectives on the effects of U.S. militarism on the Chicana experience; she does this by examining the works of Chicana authors, artists and activists. But while the work itself is academic, the roots of this particular project are actually more personal.

“My own father fought in Vietnam,” said Rincon, “so I was always interested in how that experience impacted him.”

Rincon dedicates her first chapter to the war in Vietnam, a topic that has been written about and portrayed extensively in film and television. But a Chicana perspective has largely been absent from these portrayals.

One such perspective involves a view of U.S. militarism on the Chicana experience; others claimed that draft boards had racist motives and were sending more Chicanos into combat, while white and middle-class men were able to obtain deferments more easily. In response to this and numerous other grievances, Rincon details the enormous protests organized by the Chicana and Chicano community, which took place independently of the many other anti-war protests happening at the time.

Rincon emphasizes the term “Bodies” in Bodies at War, exploring how Chicanas used their bodies in different ways to respond to varying forms of U.S. militarism. In another chapter, Rincon delves into the work of Chicana author Elena Rodriguez and her novel Peacetime, which portrays a young Chicana woman who joins the army. Rincon uses this story to examine the role of Chicano women in military service, and the types of racial and gender-based discrimination they have faced in the armed forces.

A completely different picture of women in combat can be found in another chapter on the Zapatista movement, in which indigenous communities from Chiapas, Mexico, including women, were armed and underwent a form of basic training not unlike that of the Chicano soldiers who fought in Vietnam. But in this context, the Zapatistas were resisting the effects of NAFTA and economic globalization, which they viewed as another form of neoliberal militarism.

Throughout the work, Rincon challenges the notion that women being able to serve in combat is a form of gender equality, instead offering a pacifist take on Chicana feminism. But she complicates this view by examining the positivity and pride with which some Chicanas view armed service, conceding that not all Chicanas are anti-militarist.

The result is a poignant and thoughtful look at some of the ways in which the Chicana community has dealt with the effects of neoliberal militarism, and people are taking notice. Bodies at War is a finalist for the International Latino Book Awards.

— Sam Anderson
Human Errors was chosen as a Publisher’s Weekly “Big Title” and featured by the Wall Street Journal as a 2018 “Summer Read.”

To learn more about all the books published by John Jay faculty from 2017-2018, visit our website: https://www.jjay.cuny.edu/faculty-authors-and-editors

POINTLESS BONES AND BROKEN GENES

Nathan Lents on human dysfunction

The human body is often thought of as a finely tuned machine, perfected over thousands of years of evolution to become highly efficient and extremely adaptable—an organism that can thrive in every conceivable climate and geographic location. But according to biologist, popular science writer and John Jay professor Dr. Nathan Lents, the human body couldn’t be more flawed. Lents, who has written for the Wall Street Journal and the Observer and has been featured on outlets including the Today Show, BBC World Service, and Al Jazeera, claims that it’s our flaws rather than our strengths that actually make the human body such a wondrous example of biological evolution.

In his recent book Human Errors: A Panorama of Our Glitches, from Pointless Bones to Broken Genes, Lents set out to highlight how some of the most important functions of the human body are the result of genetic errors, random mutations, and evolutionary adaptations that help us address, and can also cause, what he calls our “human errors.”

“I took a handful of interesting design quirks in the human body and mind, and analyze them through the lens of our evolutionary past,” said Lents. “When you look at these design flaws from that perspective, they make sense. They’re still flaws, but they tell us a lot about our past, about the different environments we used to be adapted to, and what our bodies used to look like.”

An example of one of these quirks is the fact that humans and other primates must consume vitamin C, usually in the form of citrus fruits, to stay alive and healthy. If we don’t, we can contract and even die of scurvy. The vast majority of animals on earth—including all other mammals—can produce vitamin C on their own, eliminating the need to consume it in the form of food. According to Lents, human DNA actually contains all the necessary genes to make vitamin C, but today, we cannot make it. So why are humans among the only animals on earth unable to naturally produce this essential vitamin?

Because of mutation. “Through pure chance,” said Lents, “an ancestor of all primates suffered a mutation in an egg or sperm cell [that prevented the gene that produces vitamin C from functioning], and it became fixed in the population. All their descendants are now dependent on vitamin C from their diets. For this reason, primates were stuck where vitamin C was abundant.” Only after humans invented agriculture about 10,000 years ago, and learned to cultivate vitamin C-rich plants in places where they were not native, were they able to expand from Africa and Central Asia.

This is just one of many examples in Lents’ book where a genetic flaw can help explain some of the enduring questions of human evolution.

“…The individual flaws and quirks are really interesting and informative, but they also give us insight into our biology, how we are the way we are now. When we understand our evolutionary history, we can live in better harmony with our bodies.” —SAM ANDERSON
IN HER OWN IMAGE

Lisa Farrington shows how African-American artists make history

For more than a decade, John Jay Distinguished Professor Lisa Farrington has been on a mission to ensure that black female artists get the attention they deserve. Farrington is one of only six full professors of African-American art history in the nation. Her seminal work in the field, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History*, explores the long history of African-American creative work, situating black artists in the larger canon of American art history and showing them first as participants and creators.

Farrington—also the author of the first comprehensive history of black women artists, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists*—was called upon last year to make sure women received their share of the spotlight in a New York City exhibition. “On Such a Night as This” celebrated the contributions of African-American artists to American art over the past two centuries. Blending rare masterworks from the 19th century and pivotal contemporary pieces of both painting and sculpture, the show represented well-known artists like Faith Ringgold, Richard Mayhew, Gaye Ellington, Romare Bearden and more. It was no surprise that Lisa Farrington was invited to assist in curating the show; considered the foremost specialist in female African-American artists, her expertise lies at the intersection of African-American and female artistic identity, uniquely qualifying her to champion and guide women’s inclusion in exhibitions like this one. She left her mark on the show, choosing the works by Gaye Ellington.

Farrington writes and lectures with the goal of elevating the voices and work of black artists, women in particular. She is currently working on two projects; the first is a monograph on painter Emma Amos, who also appeared in “On Such a Night as This,” while the second is a book titled *Black and White: An American Family*. The book will continue to look deeply at African-American stories, combining U.S. sociopolitical history with the true chronicle of an interracial family that spans the breadth of the 20th century. —RACHEL FRIEDMAN
THE 21ST CENTURY

DESPITE AN INCREASINGLY DIVIDED NATION, THERE’S MORE IMMIGRANT TO THE IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE CONVERSATION THAN FEAR

AUTHOR:
SAM ANDERSON

RESEARCHERS:
MEREDITH DANK,
BEN LAPI DUS AND
JAMIE LONGALE
There is arguably no issue more polarizing in American politics today than immigration. The United States is becoming more diverse every year as immigrants from around the world continue to flock to this country to seek a better life, whether that means new employment opportunities and a higher standard of living, or an escape from war and violence back home. With them they have brought skills, traditions, art, religion and a variety of other contributions to the fabric of American culture. Complicating this picture are deep anti-immigrant sentiments held by some Americans, who blame immigrants for contributing to economic hardship and other social ills. The result is a poignant and complex subject ripe for scholarship thanks to its ramifications for future generations of Americans.

**SPREADING MORAL PANIC**

Dr. Jamie Longazel is an associate professor of political science who wrote his recent book, *Undocumented Fears: Immigration and the Politics of Divide and Conquer in Hazleton, PA*, a year before the election of Donald Trump and the wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy that followed. Longazel’s book documents a series of events that began in 2006, but more than a decade later his case study of Hazleton has become one of the most prescient and relevant portraits of Trump’s America.

In 2006, two undocumented Latino men allegedly murdered a white resident of Hazleton, Pennsylvania. Though the men were never convicted of the crime, then Hazleton mayor Lou Barletta, now a Pennsylvania congressman closely aligned with Trump, seized on this event to create what Longazel called a “moral panic.” “He was hyping up fears about undocumented people committing crimes and draining resources,” said Longazel, “and what happened is the native-born folks, who are third- or fourth-generation European immigrants, began blaming Latinos for all the city’s problems rather than paying attention to the economic circumstances.”

Like countless towns and cities across America, Hazleton was hit by a wave of economic hardship during recent years as manufacturing jobs have disappeared, making it difficult for the working class population to earn a decent living. Accompanying this trend has been an influx of Latino immigrants, shifting the population of the small city from 95 percent white in 2000 to about 50 percent Latino today. In 2006, Barletta passed the Illegal Immigration Relief Act, intended to punish businesses for employing undocumented workers, among other changes. Although the law was later ruled unconstitutional, its effects on Hazleton remained significant, including anti-immigrant rallies in the town.

While Longazel intended to study a fairly novel phenomenon in his hometown, the same phenomenon is playing out in real time on a national scale today. “I’m making the case that it’s not just the racism, but racism as it intersects with class,” he said. *Undocumented Fears* continues to receive media attention as people look to the events in Hazleton to better explain the rash of anti-immigrant feeling spreading across the country.

The nativist turn in national discourse, accompanied by anti-immigrant policies such as zero-tolerance and an increasingly stringent approach to interior enforcement, has presented significant challenges for the many researchers, practitioners and advocates working to improve living conditions for America’s immigrant communities.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

For John Jay research professor Dr. Meredith Dank, one of the most pressing and relevant of these challenges is the effect of these policies on the fight against human trafficking. Labor trafficking, while often overshadowed by the media attention given to sex trafficking, is a growing problem in the U.S., and one that is particularly exacerbated by current immigration enforcement policy. Dank is planning a fall 2018 forum to raise awareness and educate relevant professionals including journalists, immigrant advocates and policymakers about challenges faced by immigrant communities. “Children and parents are being torn apart,” Dank said, “and what we find is that immigrant communities are living in fear of being deported, which puts them in an even more vulnerable position to employers who might take advantage of them.”

Dank’s research on human trafficking and violence against women recently brought her to Nepal, where she was studying the involvement of minors in the adult entertainment industry; she has done similar work in India. Additionally, Dank has studied child labor and sex trafficking both here and abroad, including a study conducted in the U.S. on the labor trafficking of foreign-born individuals—one of very few studies of its kind.

In some ways, the communities that Dank is researching in Kathmandu, Nepal have

>“CHILDREN AND PARENTS ARE BEING TORN APART. AND WHAT WE FIND IS THAT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES ARE LIVING IN FEAR OF BEING DEPORTED, WHICH PUTS THEM IN AN EVEN MORE VULNERABLE POSITION TO EMPLOYERS WHO MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM.” —Meredith Dank
something in common with the immigrant communities of Dank’s New York City home. “There are employers who are very aware of the vulnerability and desperation of people to work and support their families, and they take advantage of that,” she said. “They might be underpaid or not paid at all, they might be placed in unlivable conditions, they might be threatened or harmed physically, sexually, emotionally… and [in the U.S.] just the threat and fear of deportation is enough for many individuals to remain in these situations.”

SOUNDS OF NUEVA YORK
With national conversation often focused on negative perceptions of immigrants, stories of their rich cultural contributions are often lost. Dr. Ben Lapidus is an associate professor and chair of the art and music department at John Jay, and one primary focus of his research is music as a product of immigration and other social forces.

Lapidus is the recent recipient of a grant from John Jay’s Office for the Advancement of Research for his project, “The Sound of Nueva York: How an American City and its Residents Shaped an International Sound from 1940-1990.” This project also received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and he is currently writing a book with the same title.

“I’ve been performing music professionally in NYC for 30 years, playing lots of music—Latin, Caribbean, jazz—and I’ve had a lot of opportunities to speak with musicians over the years and to ask questions about who they are and what their story is,” said Lapidus. Through these musical connections, Lapidus conducts oral history interviews with musicians from various backgrounds across the city, and analyzes their recordings from a musicological perspective. Through this research, he has come to define a new “international sound,” the subject of his forthcoming book.

The traditional narrative of Latin and Caribbean music usually focuses on how various immigrant groups brought their musical traditions to the United States. These genres are often thought of as distinct or self-contained, but what Lapidus has discovered in the course of his research is that once these various immigrant groups frequented the same venues in New York City, many established a codified sound, robust musical education and even created new instruments. This collaboration among immigrants from different countries led to innovations in the style and form of Latin and Caribbean jazz that eventually became the “international sound” that Lapidus articulates in his research. In fact, New York City immigrants took elements of this new sound back to their home countries, resulting in a thriving cross-cultural exchange of music that continues today.

“It really is a New York story,” he said. “There was a lot of back and forth between New York and Cuba, Puerto Rico and other places, and at a certain point what happened is New York started to take on its own flavor. Musicians took certain musical elements and elevated them in new ways, and this, combined with the fact that there are a lot of nightclubs, concert halls and dance halls in all five boroughs, created an atmosphere where innovation and adaptation could happen.”

Controversy surrounding immigration politics in the U.S. threatens to overshadow the reality that the immigrant experience is nuanced, complex and fraught with both positive and negative elements that continue to impact American life and culture in new and ever-changing ways. John Jay faculty scholarship continues to further the conversation and shine a light on some of the most important aspects of immigration studies. JJ
Race and identity politics are reshaping our national image. But what roles do they play on a personal level—on our mental health and self-image?
ON A CAMPUS AS DIVERSE AS NEW YORK CITY itself, race and identity are subjects not limited to classroom discussion, but rather permeate every aspect of John Jay faculty’s and students’ daily lives. The politics of race and identity are a driving force behind national discourse and remain subjects of intense interest to faculty like Kevin Nadal, Silvia Mazzula, Ed Paulino and Jonathan Gray, each doing compelling work that expands our understanding of the roles race and identity play in our past, present and future.

As Americans collectively grapple with issues of race and its connection to past and current forms of oppression, it is inevitable that, with increasing frequency, news items bring an aspect of race into sharp enough focus that it sparks a new conversation on the topic. This is what happened in April when two black men were arrested at a Philadelphia Starbucks for requesting a restroom key without ordering anything, prompting national outrage at what was perceived as racial bias.

“As a result, there were lots of news programs that talked about the current state of race and racism, and many of them talked directly about microaggressions,” said professor of psychology Dr. Kevin Nadal. “And I think that’s very important, to know that an academic concept that was barely talked about at all is now being talked about on national television and is becoming a commonplace term.”

BIAS AND TRAUMA

Much of Nadal’s research focuses on microaggressions, a product of racism or other forms of bias that manifests as slights, snubs or insults directed at members of a marginalized group. One trait of microaggressions is that they are not always intentional and can be the result of unconscious bias, as opposed to other forms of racism that result from more direct bias.

“Being a person of color and a gay man, I think that’s really been influential in my trying to understand how the world works, and understand how systems have failed certain communities,” Nadal said. “So when I went into psychology, I really wanted to study cultural identity groups that were often invisible or written about way less.”

Nadal’s recent research looks at the impact of microaggressions in trauma. “When people think about trauma,” he said, “they tend to think about events that involve almost being killed, or being sexually assaulted—real heinous types of violence. And when people experience trauma, they develop symptoms of PTSD. For the past 10 or 20 years, researchers have discussed the idea that living under the systemic oppression of everyday racism is actually a cause of similar trauma symptoms—like avoiding certain situations, inability to concentrate, nightmares—and those are all things that we see in populations who experience pervasive discrimination throughout their lives.”

REPRESENTATION IN ACADEMIA

As a scholar and advocate, Nadal is working to raise the profile of faculty who don’t match the “traditional” description of a college professor. Along with colleague and fellow associate psychology professor Dr. Silvia Mazzula, the #ThisIsWhatAPProfessorLooksLike campaign highlights faculty of color through a series of photos and social media posts, some of which have gone viral. “We want to break the stereotypes that professors are these old white guys with tweed jackets,” Nadal said. “In reality, they can be a person of color, and young and queer and trans and an immigrant and all these things.”

According to Mazzula, who spearheaded the hashtag, “what I was trying to do was bring images of what a racial or ethnic minority leader looks like in these spaces. We’re active on social media, posting pictures of Latino men and women with their wonderful titles and credentials, but we also include all the things that make us us: being a first-generation college student, coming from poverty, things like that.”

Mazzula is not only a first-generation college student, but a mother of three; her third child was born just months after she submitted her tenure application. She is working actively to fight the stereotype that raising a family and working in academia are incompatible. Her research, like Nadal’s, looks at the impacts of discrimination, racism and acculturation on mental health outcomes among ethnic minorities.

“What my studies have shown is that skin color has a different effect on mental health outcomes for different populations. Some of these outcomes include depression, anxiety, negative outlook on life and poor perceived health.”

One of her current studies aims to discover the relationship between people’s racial identity and the levels of trauma they experience.

In order to help break down the barriers faced by Latina women in higher education, Mazzula founded the Latina Researchers Network, and is currently organizing the Network’s fourth biannual conference, scheduled for the fall. It will bring together scholars, investigators and leaders from across the country to highlight research that is informing policy and address major issues like immigration, racism and discrimination, with a goal of providing actionable steps toward improvement.

THE PARSLEY MASSACRE

Scholars of race generally acknowledge that issues of race do not exist in a vacuum, but are inextricably linked to other factors such as color, gender, class and religion. In the course of human history, conflicts over these factors have contributed to countless acts of violence, including war and genocide.

In 1937, Hispaniola—the island comprised of Haiti and the Dominican Republic—was the site of the “Parsley Massacre,” a genocide in which Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered his troops to systematically murder Haitians and Dominicans with Haitian backgrounds living on the border between the two countries. An estimated 17,000 people were killed.

Today, tensions remain between Haitians and Dominicans, but according to Ed Paulino, an assistant professor of history at John Jay, the history of these two peoples cannot be solely defined by conflict.

Paulino’s recent book is Dividing Hispaniola: The Dominican Republic’s Border Campaign against Haiti, 1930-1961, and it tells a story unfamiliar to many. According to Paulino, Haitians and Dominicans share a rich history of cooperation and peaceful cohabitation, and despite efforts by Trujillo to forge a national Dominican identity in opposition to their Haitian neighbors, this history of cooperation continues to this day.
“Skin color has a different effect on mental health outcomes for different populations... depression, anxiety, negative outlook on life, and poor perceived health.” —SILVIA MAZZULA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

“What I learned through my research is that unlike the conventional wisdom that assumes, because of recent antagonistic events, that Dominican-Haitian relations had been historically adversarial, my book argues that at the local border level, relations have been more collaborative than adversarial,” said Paulino.

For Paulino, a Dominican-American, the process of discovering this genocide as a college student impacted him in a big way. A young Paulino, who would visit the Dominican Republic with his family and was proud of his Dominican roots, was shocked to learn about a “dramatic campaign of extermination against all Haitians” committed by his own people. The genocide would come to define his life’s work.

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“So I’ve written a book about it, I’ve written a one-man show called Eddie’s Perejil. I co-founded a social movement to bear witness to these crimes that officially have never been recognized, and more recently, I collaborated on writing a script for a TED-Ed video that explains the massacre,” he said.

Paulino’s TED-Ed video has a half million views online, and Border of Lights, the social movement he co-founded, hosts a yearly event to memorialize the massacre. Today, Paulino continues to perform Eddie’s Perejil for audiences on college campuses across the country.

“I think we are expanding the notion of race, and how that plays out,” said Paulino. “And it’s particularly important at John Jay, because many of the students are transnational, they have roots in another part of the world, and many of them are Latino or Dominican. So they’re coming from a different kind of racial experience, which can sometimes overlap with U.S. racism.”

RISE OF THE FALCON

Many scholars are paying particular attention to the representation of race, specifically how different racial groups are represented in various forms of media. But while most are looking at traditional forms of media like movies or television, assistant professor of English Dr. Jonathan Gray has chosen a more unique form to study: comics. Gray’s forthcoming book Illustrating the Race: Representing Blackness in American Comics tells the story of both progress and setbacks.

Perhaps the most high-profile example of black representation in comics today is Black Panther, a Marvel comics title and recent smash hit film that has been lauded by critics for its progressive portrayal of a black superhero. Gray dedicates part of Illustrating the Race to Black Panther, which traces its roots back to the 1960s when the character was created by famed Marvel Comics editor Stan Lee.

According to Gray, the original portrayal of the Black Panther in the Silver Age of comics was surprisingly ahead of its time. “One of the things he [Stan Lee] takes pains to say is that the Black Panther is the intellectual equal of the super scientists. He’s just as smart as Tony Stark, so that’s huge,” Gray said. “The fact that he’s a ruler, that he’s empowered, he’s a head of state, that’s all pretty radical at the time.”

Gray points to several examples of black superheroes from the 60s and 70s who are portrayed with varying degrees of nuance, like Storm from X-Men, Luke Cage, and the Falcon—Captain America’s partner.

“The Falcon is interesting because he shows up in 1969, which is less than a year after Dr. King is assassinated,” said Gray. “So the Civil Rights movement is happening, and the comic was changed from Captain America to Captain America and the Falcon.”

Gray argues that the portrayal of black superheroes in comics closely follows the timeline of national politics, with a surge of black representation in the late ’60s and early 70s, followed by a backlash during the Reagan years when black superheroes were sidelined. For the Falcon, this meant that after a decade of being a major part of the Captain America comic, he was suddenly removed around 1979. This, Gray points out, is just one year after the Supreme Court decided Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, striking down aspects of affirmative action as unconstitutional.

According to Gray, black superheroes didn’t return to prominence until after 9/11, but today things seem to be swinging back toward the modes of the 1960s. Some present-day examples are the blockbuster success of Black Panther and the fact that the Falcon has not only returned, but is actually set to become the new Captain America.


The various ways John Jay scholarship grapples with questions of race and identity reflect the degree to which questions of race and identity penetrate our society and culture. Nadal, Mazzula, Paulino and Gray have unquestionably inspired other faculty and the public to explore and contribute to the growing conversation, creating a leading role for John Jay in the field. JJ
Evidence-based, data-driven approaches to policing can help improve effectiveness and accountability

BY CHASE BRUSH
RESEARCHERS: PREETI CHAUHAN, PHILLIP ATIBA GOFF, CHRISTOPHER HERRMANN AND ERIC PIZA
In 1994, shortly after his nomination to its top brass, then-New York Police Commissioner William Bratton introduced a novel system for combating crime in the city. It was inspired by the work of a deputy who as a transit officer had used paper maps and pins to track robberies in the city’s subways, discerning the larger patterns and dispatching manpower accordingly. The system has since received technological upgrades, from statistical databases and computers to today’s even more sophisticated visual mapping and management programs, but has always worked in much the same way: by keeping regular tabs on where and when crime happened, and by systematically analyzing and sharing that information among officers, departments could more efficiently and effectively devote resources to fight it.

Today, CompStat, as the system came to be called, remains one of the first major efforts by police to take a more scientific approach to the job, an early example of officers using real data and statistics to make evidence-based decisions about how, when and where to tackle crime. Rather than rely on theory or tradition to inform practice, CompStat forced departments to think critically about their work and whether it was, simply put, actually working.

This concept—the “what works” model of policy—is known as evidence-based policing, and it has become a guiding principle for members of police and academic circles looking to further improve the practice in the 21st century. At a time when budget cuts to public safety have forced departments to think more carefully about where they devote resources, evidence-based policing offers to ensure the cost-effectiveness of new technologies and methods. Perhaps more important, it also promises to increase the transparency and accountability of law enforcement, especially in the wake of recent high-profile—and sometimes fatal—police-civilian encounters.

SPACE AND PLACE

“I look at it from a medical perspective—you had an infection, we put some ointment on it, and now the infection is gone,” says Dr. Christopher Herrmann, assistant professor in the Law and Police Science Department at John Jay College. “That’s what evidence-based policing is all about—find the problem, try to solve it, and show that your solution worked.”

Herrmann is one of the figures at John Jay—and beyond—helping to move the needle in this area. A former crime analyst with the NYPD, his work can be seen as a continuation of the kind of spatial analysis begun under CompStat, which reinforced the idea that crime is not ubiquitous, but tends to cluster in small geographic units. Knowing where those clusters occur—and when, as crime often takes place during predictable time frames in such areas—is key to the “hotspot” strategies that make up much of evidence-based policing.

Since crime committed in these hotspots can have ripple effects across a neighborhood, locating and proactively patrolling them could lead to widespread reductions. But as Herrmann also notes, it’s not always that straightforward. In the past, police might have labeled entire neighborhoods as hotspots—“just a big blob on the map,” he says—when in reality the crime was occurring on only a few problem street corners. What’s more, they might have only been looking at crime occurring in these areas in week- or month-long intervals, ignoring the spatiotemporal shifts that were happening by the day or even the hour.

Herrmann has therefore focused on tracking what he calls the “micro-level” changes in crime hotspots. “For me, the process is the most important thing,” he says. “We say, okay
here’s a problem, let’s zoom in on the problem. Then we see it’s not one big problem, it’s actually five small problems. Then we say, okay let’s zoom in on those.”

In his latest work, Herrmann has applied that analysis to the city’s public housing projects, working on a research team at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to study gun violence throughout its 328 developments. Using cluster maps and other Geographic Information System (GIS)-generated material, he looks at where gun violence hotspots overlap NYCHA developments across the city, and drills down to figure out exactly where and when gun violence is occurring.

What he’s found is that, just as in his other studies, crime is not spread evenly throughout the projects but is instead often concentrated in a just few problem units. In New York City as a whole, for example, an average of 12 out of 100,000 people become victims each year of gun violence; across the city’s public housing projects, that number increases to 68 out of 100,000. But there are some individual housing projects, he says, where the rate reaches a staggering 800 out 100,000.

Herrmann chalks this increase and its impact on the city’s overall average up to the 80/20 rule—or the mathematical principle that for many events, roughly 80 percent of the effects comes from 20 percent of the causes. “So you have this one housing project where you’re literally 50-plus times more likely to get shot than the average New Yorker,” he says. “Obviously, that’s a problem.”

THE HUMAN COMPONENT OF POLICING

But Herrmann doesn’t only track where and when crime is happening. He also examines the solutions proposed in response to it, whether they are public policy initiatives or new technologies. In the case of gun violence in public housing, these include continued backing of space-time crime analysis; improved lighting in and around buildings; and
more cameras and ShotSpotter locations, which can help police thwart crime by alerting them to incidents happening in real time.

These latter technologies are of particular interest to Dr. Eric Piza, associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice, and another faculty member leading the evidence-based policing effort. Like Herrmann, Piza’s resume straddles a unique border between analyst and academic—he too has served as a crime specialist in operating police departments, including as a GIS specialist in Newark, New Jersey. (Because there are only a few people in the criminal justice world with GIS expertise, Piza and Herrmann have been asked by the International Association of Crime Analysts to collaborate on a training manual to share their expertise.)

“One of my favorite analogies is that police like to use all technology like a refrigerator—they plug it in, make sure it’s running, open the door, close it, etc.,” Piza says. “But if you’re trying to do something as complex as prevent crime with technology, it’s not quite as straightforward.”

Figuring out what impact, if any, those technologies have on crime reduction is another major part of evidence-based policing. Much attention in recent years has been paid to the use of body cameras, for example, which have been heralded as a way to both deter crime and to increase the overall transparency and accountability of law enforcement in the wake of controversial police-on-civilian shootings. In theory, experts argue, these devices should work, on the principle that people behave better when they think they are being watched.

In reality, the results are a little more ambiguous. Last year, a major review of the use of body cameras in Washington, D.C., found they had little discernible effect on police-civilian interactions, with officers wearing the device facing complaints at about the same rate as officers without them. Those findings have led some to question whether the recent surge in body camera investment—following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO in 2014, the federal government alone spent $40 million in an attempt to get departments across the country to adopt the technology—is worth it.

Piza, who has studied both body cameras and ShotSpotter technology, attributes findings like these not to the technologies themselves, which he says show obvious promise, but to their implementation. Officers and researchers are still learning the proper techniques for using cameras as a crime-deterrent tool, such as making sure the camera is visible on the officer’s body as well as announcing explicitly that they are wearing cameras when they arrive on a scene. Incorporating this knowledge in procedural justice trainings, he says, could go a long way toward maximizing effectiveness.

Piza calls these proactive efforts part of the “human component” of policing. “The technology itself is not going to prevent crime,” he says. “It takes the police using the technology in an evidence-based manner to generate the benefits that we anticipate.”

A BIRD’S-EYE VIEW
Still, evidence-based policing doesn’t only deal with the kind of micro-level research in which Piza and Herrmann specialize. Just as crime analysts and criminologists are working to determine the efficacy of various strategies and technologies at the local enforcement level, evidenced-based policing also seeks to find out what effect state and national policy has on more general criminal justice issues.

This sort of analysis is the purview of people like Dr. Preeti Chauhan, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology and the director of the Misdemeanor Justice Project (MJP). The MJP seeks to understand the criminal justice response to lower-level offenses in New York City and elsewhere, using data analysis to produce reports on the fairness and effectiveness of various policies, and then disseminating its findings to the wider public. “We see it as providing a bird’s-eye view of what’s actually happening in the city,” Chauhan says.

MJP started in 2012, just as public outcry over New York City’s controversial “stop-and-frisk” policy was reaching a fever pitch. Advocates of the practice—which involves the broad-scale searching of pedestrians for weapons—believe it’s an effective strategy for reducing crime in neighborhoods. But critics argue that its impact is overstated and, perhaps more concerning, that it encourages racial profiling by law enforcement; in 2017, almost 90 percent of individuals stopped were African-American or Latino, and the vast majority of searches turned up no weapons or other contraband.

For Chauhan, the controversy highlighted a gap in the academic literature. At a time when much of the focus in the wider criminal justice arena was on violent crime, Chauhan realized that little attention was being paid to lower-level offenses, such as misdemeanor arrests and criminal summonses. “The idea was that there were all these other touchpoints between police and communities that weren’t getting documented that were really high volume,” Chauhan says. She added that the 2014 deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police helped further emphasize the importance of these “everyday encounters.”

Since then, MJP has produced reports on a wide range of low-level enforcement issues, from pretrial detention to incarceration rates. In 2015, it released one of its most significant analyses, which found that misdemeanor arrests, criminal summonses and pedestrian stops had decreased by 61.5 percent since 2011. The biggest drop, however, was in street stops—a 93 percent decline between their 2011 peak and 2014. The fact that this decline accompanied a continued drop in NYC’s crime rates suggested that critics of the city’s stop-and-frisk policy, which was ruled unconstitutional and discontinued in 2013, may have been correct.
Chauhan says the findings of that report made up part of the foundation for the city’s Criminal Justice Reform Act, a landmark piece of legislation passed last year that directs police to issue civil summonses, rather than criminal ones, for petty offenses such as public urination and littering. MJP, with the help of funding from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, is replicating its model through a research network that now includes cities like Los Angeles, Toledo and Louisville.

Though MJP doesn’t make policy recommendations based on its findings, Chauhan says she hopes the group’s work will encourage criminal justice stakeholders to ask “what’s the point” of existing policies and policing strategies.

RACISM AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Chauhan’s focus on misdemeanor arrests demonstrates the potential for researchers who may have even more specific targets in mind. As violent encounters between police and citizens continue to capture the public’s concern, some experts are turning their attention to the social aspects of policing—including the ways in which police behavior, as well as police-community relations, affect law enforcement work.

One of the most prominent of these researchers is Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff, inaugural Franklin A. Thomas Professor in Policing Equity at John Jay College and co-founder of the influential Center for Policing Equity.

A 501(3) research center and think tank established in 2006, the CPE brings together law enforcement agencies and leading researchers to study the social components of policing, using big data to show how various factors—such as racism and bias, job stress and other psychological issues—influence the way police treat and respond to different communities. In doing so—and in keeping with wider evidence-based efforts—CPE strives to provide a scientific basis for reforms in police departments around the country.

To this end, one of the tools Goff and his team at CPE have helped develop is the National Justice Database, a National Science Foundation-funded effort that tracks and compiles statistics specifically on police behavior from around the country. Spurred by police shootings like that of Michael Brown in Ferguson, and the recognition among law enforcement officials and other experts that no national repository of such incidents existed, Goff and CPE launched the project in 2014. Since then, they’ve worked to standardize and analyze data on things like police stops and use-of-force incidents.

The NJD has already begun to provide some answers to fundamental questions around justice and equity in policing. In a study that used statistics collected through the database, the CPE found in 2016 that, although police officers employ force in less than 2 percent of all police-civilian interactions, the use of that force is more than three times higher for African Americans than for whites. (The study notes that this discrepancy remains even when racial disparities in crime are taken into account.)

For Goff and others, the results confirmed a long-held suspicion: that racism and bias do in fact play an important part in police behavior.

Much if not most of this bias, according to Goff, is implicit rather than expressed openly. “Ninety percent of behavior is driven by how we react to situations, not by attitudes. The question is how to reshape situations so that fear or dislike of black people does not produce an armed response.”

The database isn’t the only initiative CPE has undertaken in their mission to address racism in law enforcement. Goff and his team are working to apply the tools and strategies of CompStat to policing equity and accountability, combining the aforementioned information with census data and geographic markers to systematically target those factors that a department can control, such as problematic police behavior. In a way, the center’s work represents a kind of next step in CompStat’s evolution, as well as the evolution of evidence-based policing at large: to improve policing practices not only by better utilizing technology and resources, but by examining and strengthening the very relationship police have with the people they’re meant to serve. JJ

"THE TECHNOLOGY ITSELF IS NOT GOING TO PREVENT CRIME. IT TAKES THE POLICE USING THE TECHNOLOGY IN AN EVIDENCE-BASED MANNER TO GENERATE THE BENEFITS THAT WE ANTICIPATE."

—ERIC PIZA, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
You can draw a direct line between Dr. Maureen Allwood’s past work in child welfare to her academic career. Today Allwood, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology since 2007, focuses on the connection between community violence and childhood trauma. Her experience working with children taught her that crime and delinquency don’t occur in a vacuum, but are often the cumulative result of a whole host of problems over an individual’s life, traceable to earlier experiences and events. Seemingly isolated incidents during childhood, such as violence in the home or community, can turn out to have “long-term, cascading” effects on personal growth.

“We know delinquency; what we don’t is how they get there,” Allwood says. “What happens to them educationally, what happens cognitively, what happens to them emotionally, how do they begin to shift their view about the world?”

“I think whenever we’re thinking about forensics or criminal justice, we have to just remember that what we see in adulthood isn’t where the person or problem started,” she adds.

She first realized the devastating role environmental adversity can play on young people’s development while working in Detroit, where gun violence was a major issue. In her research there, she found that kids who had experienced such violence were likely to exhibit symptoms more generally associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, a common mental health problem among sol-
diers returning from war. This finding has in turn become the driving focus of her academic work, exploring the question of “whether community violence was similar to war violence, whether there would be similarities across the board.”

In her most recent project testing this hypothesis, Allwood has been studying the physiological effects of community violence exposure on urban youth. By taking physical markers such as blood pressure and reaction times, she hopes to ascertain whether these kids are more prone to aggression and other PTSD-like symptoms. “Under conditions of stress and under conditions of provocation,” she asks, “are they more likely to use aggressive strategies and react faster?” Early findings—in particular, that children’s perceived levels of stress are more strongly associated with physiological symptoms than the “objective” severity of events they experience—point to the importance of highly visible stressors as contributors to adolescent aggression.

Allwood’s early findings are a promising contribution to a burgeoning field. She is looking forward to testing new hypotheses in her research: whether arrests, which are particularly common in urban communities afflicted by violence, can lead to similar traumatic stress. It’s an especially relevant issue in New York, where hundreds of kids watch family or community members being handcuffed by police every day, or may be placed in custody themselves. In her data, Allwood has found that these kids “just serendipitously are having heightened symptoms of PTSD—but we don’t ask them, even though we know they have high symptoms, about the experience of being arrested and being detained itself as a potential trauma.”

Allwood hopes her work with community violence and childhood trauma encourages people to think differently about criminal justice outcomes – particularly those relating to young people. “What I really want to stress is that kids are feeling, thinking human beings who strive to survive the best way they can,” she says. “And when you live in a community where your alarms are constantly going off because of violence, you try to survive.”

— CHASE BRUSH
$31M+
Grant and contract awards to faculty and research centers

2.0
Peer-reviewed works per capita, highest average among all 8 CUNY senior colleges

2,168
Total works of scholarship produced, averaging more than 5 per faculty member

$923K
Internal research awards, travel support and indirect recoveries reinvested in faculty

94
Books published by faculty

160K+
Faculty and research organization Twitter followers

600+
Faculty media appearances

To read the full report go to IMPACT.JJAY.CUNY.EDU
BIG DATA

Two new big data databases are putting John Jay on the forefront of social science. Criminal justice graduate students working with PI Dr. Joshua Freilich are collaborating with colleagues from other universities to establish the first-ever school shootings database. The tool documents where and when school violence occurs, as well as key characteristics of perpetrators, weapons and locations to help develop prevention strategies and relevant policy, a vital source of information in a country where a mass shooting is perpetrated nearly every day.

And, under the guidance of Dr. Ned Benton and Dr. Judy-Lynne Peters, master’s students in Public Administration created the New York State Slavery Records Index, which draws on tens of thousands of records and original source material to identify enslaved individuals and their owners from 1625 through the Civil War. The researchers found evidence of the slave trade in New York years before its “accepted” start date, and are shining a light on individuals often overlooked in our nation’s history.
GREATER GOTHAM

Unlike its hefty prequel published in 1999, Greater Gotham by Mike Wallace gives us an in-depth look at a city we can nearly recognize, with five consolidated boroughs and many of the same characteristics as the metropolis we know today. This social, cultural and political history spans tycoons, Tammany Hall and the city's seedy underbelly of gangsters and vice, from 1898 to 1919. Readers should keep an eye open for some of the big public debates that remain extant today, like those on policing or social welfare policies.