

# Crime and criminal justice research at the University of Sydney

## Research brief 6

At the University of Sydney we not only conduct diverse and innovative research projects, we encourage our students to do the same.

The following brief is the sixth in a series of briefing papers. This brief showcases the work of some of our university's doctoral candidates in the fields of juvenile justice, policing, violent extremism and the treatment of homicide victims in the media.

### **Reviewing risk: juvenile justice risk assessment tools and their impacts on young people**

**How do juvenile justice risk assessments shape how young people are categorised as offenders? How do they justify the supervision, control and imprisonment, of young offenders?**

**Lobna Yassine**

Young people who come into contact with the justice system are guaranteed two things: to be assessed for their risk of reoffending, and then to be treated for their offending behaviour, based on their predicted risk.

A young person's risk is typically assessed by the use of a standardised risk assessment tool. However, the use of risk assessment tools is often taken for granted, and is an often overlooked aspect of the juvenile justice system.

In NSW, the tool administered and implemented by Juvenile Justice NSW is the Youth Level of Service Inventory Case Management, Australian Adapted (YLS/CMI-AA). Lobna is conducting a study of the YLS/CMI-AA and how it is implicated in the way that juvenile offending is understood. Her study suggests that

although the YLS/CMI-AA tool relies on specific understandings of causes of youth crime and is promoted globally as an accurate and objective tool, it is in fact gendering, classing, and racializing, and contributes to the overrepresentation of some kinds of young people in the juvenile justice system.

### **Dealing with the digital: police accountability in the social media age**

**Does social media make the police more accountable and in what ways? Is social media a suitable platform through which to educate the public about police accountability?**

**Justin Ellis**

Direct police access to the public through a range of social media platforms has enhanced police connectivity and the ability to prevent and solve crime. It has also enhanced police capacity to respond in real time to crises and the co-ordination of major public events. At the same time, amateur video distributed through social media has increased the capacity to expose and scrutinise police transgression.

Justin's research interrogates the impact of social media and amateur video on the policing of the 2013 Mardi Gras Festival, which generated a scandal. Through close to 40 interviews with LGBTQ community and police, Justin's research analyses community, complainant and police expectations of police accountability in relation to the scandal.

Notably, his research includes interviews with 20 sworn and unsworn current and former police employees, providing a rare insight into the impact that such incidents have on police who work closely within the NSW Police Force Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer Program.

## Managing public representations of homicide victims

**How are homicide victims represented in the media? How does the digital age affect the construction of the news story and the public's engagement with it?**

**Laura Wajnryb McDonald**

Laura is researching the media treatment of homicide. Her study is interested in how the media use representations of victims – such as CCTV footage, family photographs and personal Facebook photos – in crime reporting. These images saturate contemporary mainstream crime reporting so that the public's engagement with crime is increasingly mediated through a proliferation of images and videos.

While these images arguably have immense power to shape the public's understanding of crime, law, and justice, their use can be problematic, especially when it comes to victims' rights. Laura is examining the way these kinds of images are managed in the digital age by three main groups: the bereaved, the criminal justice system, and the media. This research seeks to address the ethical and policy implications of contemporary media practice for victims and the bereaved.

## Analysing interplay between online and offline worlds: the role of the internet in violent extremism

**Do internet-based extremist activities have more impact than face-to-face activities? Does improved internet accessibility by extremists facilitate an increase in violent attacks?**

**Saimum Parvez (Department of Government and International Relations)**

Saimum's research is centred on investigating whether internet availability is positively correlated with increasing violent attacks, and if the use of the internet is likely to make violent organisations more violent – in terms of recruitment, propaganda, mobilization of resources, planning and coordination, nature and number of attacks, diffusion of ideology, communication strategy, organisational structure, and establishing networks with local and transnational groups.

Saimum will also explore to what extent and how the

internet has brought changes in violent extremist groups, in particular whether in-person or internet-based interactions have greater influence in promoting extremist group activity.

To investigate the issue, Saimum will conduct interviews of convicted/former extremists along with government officials, journalists, and security experts. The research project selects Bangladesh as its main case, which will be compared with the cases of Indonesia and the USA.

## Employment and the law in Australian policing: options for the development of a new police collective bargaining dispute resolution law model

**Is the current industrial relations system for police fit-for-purpose? Can the current system be tailored to reduce uncertainty and stability for police?**

**Giuseppe Carabetta**

Police industrial relations in Australia are ripe for review. Police officers are working citizens, entitled to fair employment conditions; however the new Australian collective bargaining system which permits protected strikes is ill-suited to police employment. The demise of arbitration, combined with differences between State systems, has created uncertainty and potential instability in police industrial relations.

Giuseppe's study examines options for the development of a new collective bargaining dispute resolution model for police, by identifying best-practice methods for police collective bargaining and dispute resolution; and making recommendations on when and how those methods can be adapted to the existing Australian system.

The current phase examines problems arising from the existing Australian regime, assesses international solutions applying results from recent field-work research, and considers challenges for any proposed recommendations arising from the research.

Giuseppe Carabetta is a Senior Lecturer at The University of Sydney Business School. His research expertise lies in the field of employment law, particularly, public sector employment law.

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