

# Research Statement

## Advancing Evidence-Based Justice and Diaspora-Centered Criminology

*Dr. Leo Gilling*

My research is grounded in the pursuit of more just, accountable, and culturally responsive criminal justice systems. I am particularly committed to bridging empirical research with policy and practice, using data not only to critique systems of power but to reimagine them through innovation and equity. My work interrogates the intersection of policing technologies, community engagement, and diaspora identity, drawing from both North American and Caribbean contexts to inform holistic, evidence-based approaches to justice.

My doctoral dissertation, *“The Impact of Body-Worn Cameras on Citizen Complaints: A Longitudinal Study of the NYPD,”* catalyzed this agenda. Through the analysis of extensive citizen complaint data over time, I explored the impact of body-worn cameras (BWCs) on police accountability. The study revealed both anticipated and unexpected consequences, challenging overly simplistic narratives about technology as a fix-all for systemic problems. This work contributed to the growing literature on surveillance and reform, while also highlighting the importance of understanding the organizational culture, policy implementation strategy, and community dynamics that shape outcomes.

Building on this foundation, my immediate research focuses on conducting a **comparative study of BWC implementation in Canadian police departments**. This project examines pre- and post-adoption trends in citizen complaints, use-of-force incidents, and officer-involved shootings across multiple jurisdictions. By contextualizing these trends within Canada’s distinct legal frameworks, community demographics, and law enforcement cultures, I aim to:

- Identify the conditions under which BWCs improve transparency and public trust.
- Assess implementation strategies and accountability mechanisms;
- Offer evidence-based recommendations for effective, culturally attuned BWC policies in Canadian policing.

Looking ahead, I am also developing a second major research stream: **Bridging Caribbean Criminological Innovation with Canadian Justice Reform to Reduce Recidivism in Diaspora Communities**. While much of Western criminal justice reform focuses on system-level changes, there is a critical gap in culturally relevant programming and research that speaks directly to diaspora populations, particularly those of Caribbean descent who face disproportionate contact with correctional systems.

This line of inquiry will:

- Systematically examine restorative justice models, community-led initiatives, and criminological frameworks from the Caribbean that have demonstrated effectiveness;
- Investigate how cultural identity, systemic exclusion, and community disconnection shape the post-incarceration experience for Caribbean diaspora individuals in Canada.
- Develop and pilot a culturally specific reintegration model that incorporates faith-based networks, mentorship, and elder-led restorative circles.

My ultimate aim is to co-create justice frameworks that are not only data-driven but culturally grounded, advancing solutions that reflect the lived realities of marginalized communities. I believe criminological research must extend beyond critique toward construction—building systems rooted in equity, dignity, and transformative potential. Through comparative research, cross-regional innovation, and policy engagement, I aim to expand the role of scholarship in shaping a more inclusive future of justice.