Brian Wyant Interview

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SPEAKERS
Interviewee: Brian Wyant,

Interviewer: Elizabeth Epps

Elizabeth Epps
This is Elizabeth Epps. It is March 12, 2024, at 10am. And I'm with Professor Brian Wyant via the online zoom platform. We're going to begin today's oral history interview for the University of Baltimore stories, the 100th Anniversary Oral History Project. The purpose of this project is to celebrate the University of Baltimore's Centennial. by preserving the memory of those influenced by the University of Baltimore. Over many years, we will be creating a digital archive and exhibit and making these recordings available online. Thank you, Professor. Good morning. So, you are joining us from a little further away than Baltimore today. Would you like to tell us where you are now teaching? and then we will circle back to where you were born.

Brian Wyant
Well, currently I live in a suburb of Philadelphia, where I teach at La Salle University. We recently celebrated our 150th Anniversary, and I've been teaching there for almost 15 years.

Elizabeth Epps
Fantastic. And where were you born?

Brian Wyant
I was born in Fairfax, Virginia, but my hometown was Washington DC, and in Maryland, suburbs of DC, before I moved to Baltimore, right after college, and when someone asked me where I'm from, even though I've lived in Philadelphia, now longer than I've lived in Baltimore, I still say Baltimore, Maryland.

Elizabeth Epps

Interesting. Absolutely amazing. So, what was lifelike for you that makes you feel like Baltimore has to be your identifier as your hometown because that's a pretty special designation, especially for University of Baltimore. Graduates and professors and students.

Brian Wyant
Baltimore, it may sound cliche, but it is a, you know, large city, international city, but also has somewhat of a small-town feel. And it was affordable, coming out of college. So, it hit a lot of important points as a 22-year-old, and also those were some of my formative years in Baltimore. So that's why I think I look back so fondly and can still consider it home in many ways.

Elizabeth Epps
Amazing. Can you tell me about what your family life was like growing up and where you went to school? Sure.

Brian Wyant
I grew up as I said, outside of DC. And I was really lucky at a wonderful family. My dad was a Navy pilot who was in a training accident and lost almost all his eyesight making him legally blind, but then he worked in Veterans Affairs and vocational rehabilitation.

So, helping specially disabled veterans, particularly Blinded Veterans, with jobs and training and work programs, and my mom was a prison warden. She started off as a counselor, but she was the first woman in the state of Virginia's history to running male prison as a superintendent or warden. So, my summers growing up instead of going, you know, some people go down to, and here we go to the Jersey Shore, Ocean City, Maryland, I would go to unit 26, or unit 35, where she was a warden.

And my time was really spent inside with a lot of them, they were men locked up. And now it seems odd looking back now, but it's all I knew when I was treated great. So, I think really, I had a nice mix of parents who were doing service work in aspects of rehabilitation. That's probably where I got my interest in criminal justice.

Elizabeth Epps
I can see the tie in in the thread there. Where did you go to school? And what were those schools? Like? How did they prepare you for life at University of Baltimore, once you came,

Brian Wyant
I went to, growing up, I went to all public schools, but I was really fortunate to go to really well-resourced quality public schools, had a wonderful experience to prepare me great for my undergraduate; at what was called Western Maryland College about 30 minutes north of Baltimore, it is now called McDaniel College. And I was attracted there because I thought I would thrive better in a small school environment.

Also, I was a pretty good basketball player, but I wasn't good enough to play for the University of Maryland. So instead, I played at Western Maryland. And I was, you know, to this day, those are I keep in touch with the faculty. Some of my best friends are still, you know, it's been many years since I've graduated from undergraduate. But, you know, it was a situation where you're in smaller classes, you're writing a lot and that is something I looked for when I was looking at grad schools and PhD programs eventually.

Elizabeth Epps
And from McDaniel [McDaniel College], were there certain courses that you took that prepared you for transition? Turning to University of Baltimore, what courses set you up for? Transitioning from a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology to Criminal Justice, I know your summers prepared you greatly and more or less, perhaps inspired you and motivated you towards the line of work that you're now doing. But can you tell us how you formed the decision?

The decision to make a major commitment to a field is often a big one involves lots of big steps for students. So, can you break that down for those that will be listening to this interview in the future so that they can kind of see where your mind was what you were thinking and what perhaps, experiences you gained from the classroom that said, hey, University of Baltimore will be a great fit, I'm going to apply to? Absolutely.

Brian Wyant
As a professor, now I meet with a lot of, you know, 16, 17,18-year-olds and talk about career choices. And one thing, I always try to stress to them, if they're not sure, I tell them not to apologize. It's okay to be 18, and not positive what you want to do for the rest of your life. And I was no different. I was an accounting major at one point, and I liked it. But I didn't see myself doing that for the rest of my life.

At the same time, I took some sociology classes. Now at the time, this is many years ago, Criminal Justice was not as near common as a major it is today, every university will have a criminal justice major, most universities will, but at the time, they didn't. So, I was a sociology major. But I would take classes that dealt with deviance. That's kind of the cousin of criminal justice. And criminal justice was in a sense birthed from sociology.

I was exposed to many kinds of courses in criminal justice, I had an interest in it. But we didn't have a major at the time now since has transitioned, there was a criminal justice major undergraduate. So, these courses in deviance, and criminology, I did have the foundation to take classes in criminal justice. But it really kind of showed me that those were the class that interests me the most. So then, when I was looking at schools, as I mentioned, it wasn't that common.

So, University of Baltimore was one of the schools that had a criminal justice major. And that was one of the things that attracted to me, because it was as, as I was finding, that was what I was kind of more

interested in, in pursuing. And I thought there would be more of a direct line to different career choices in criminal justice than maybe some of the other majors which are well worthwhile. But I just felt in terms of ability to get a job and interest in the topic that, you know, it made an intelligent choice for me to seek criminal justice and University of Baltimore was one of the schools that had that.

Elizabeth Epps
Can you tell us what it was like when you walked through the doors the first time? And what your experiences were, from the perspective of your courses and your professors, the student body? How did the university look and feel to you as a student, if you can kind of go back and put yourself into the mindset of where you were? Yeah,

Brian Wyant
I was, absolutely. I was only 22. When I started attending University of Baltimore, quite frankly, I was maybe almost a little too young. And, but I still had a great experience. I walked in there; to the University of Baltimore, and I noticed now when I went back maybe 10 years ago to visit a faculty member, that the offices had moved to a different building. But the building I walked into in the classes, my first class, I was a little bit intimidated, because I was sitting in a classroom. And many of the people in a master's program, these are people who have a lot of experience in the field.

So, everyone's going around introducing themselves and one person was a sergeant in the police department, other person who worked in corrections for years other person and then a counselor with people with substance abuse problems. And while I had, you know, worked various jobs, I certainly didn't have the experience that these individuals had. And while at first is intimidating, I felt a little bit like an imposter.

Everyone was very nice to me, welcoming. Some of them when I started teaching later would come back to my classes to teach. And what I found at University of Baltimore, was a really nice mix of the faculty in terms of who had expertise in, you know, experience in the field, where they, you know, worked 20 years, 30 years, they are high up in leadership positions in criminal justice agencies in and around Baltimore. And you also have faculty who were well was well respected researchers. And I think you really want that nice mix, especially for master's program.

So, I was surrounded by people, you know, intellectually curious, people who are in the field, faculty who had experience both as a researcher and as a practitioner. And then we also have a small class size. So, I did get to know all of my faculty, I got to know the students in my cohort. And I think, you know, although I was young, and I was 22, because of those kinds of support systems, I was able to, you know, really thrive and excel while I was at University of Baltimore.

Elizabeth Epps

That's amazing. Are there professors that stand out and certain projects that perhaps you remember that maybe perhaps were foundational for some of the work that you're doing presently? Yeah, absolutely.

Brian Wyant
When I was in my second year, so I was there for two years for the Masters, I went full time, I was fortunate enough to get a Graduate Scholarship. So, it paid for part of my tuition and a small stipend. And as a, you know, 22-year-old who I was doing some federal work, studying time making only $5.15 an hour, that was a real lifeline.

And because of that I got hooked up with or kind of linked up with different faculty to help them on either projects, and do basic kind of office tasks for the department. And, you know, there's many faculty that stick out, but I'll just name a couple. And Dr. Benokraitis, was working on a book project, and I was helping her find contributors on the book who'd helped, you know, provide information for the book. And when that book was published, she thanked me and gave me acknowledgments as well, and since then, I've published a great deal. I've seen my name in a book! Yes, yes, it was very, I was so proud. And I appreciated her doing that. And, you know, of all my publications, I'm not going to say it's my most cherished, but I still have that book. And it meant a lot to me at the time. And then also, I was doing office work, when I wasn't helping faculty.

And there's an administrative assistant there, and Linda Fair, who was one of the just nicest, best people I've ever met in my life. And she was I have wonderful parents. But while I was in Baltimore, my parents were in DC. She was somewhat of a parental figure to me, and really just helping me in life. And I look forward to talking with her, now she's retired, but she was at the University of Baltimore for many years. And then finally, and I'm, I'm excluding some other faculty has been 25 years. And I still remember many of them.

But Dr. Benjamin Wright, and, you know, to this day, the book that he uses, is, I still use some of those articles from the book that that he uses, and I tried to emulate, you know, whether it's from Dr. Wright or other faculty members, as a professor, now, you take the best parts, or the parts that you feel worked really well in the classroom, you try to emulate that, and you try to bring that into, and I try to bring that into the classroom when I'm teaching, you know, many years later.

Elizabeth Epps
Talk to us about how your education deepens that teaching spirit, because lots of students, especially those that have furthered on and gone to advanced degrees, really zoom in on how learning and learning excellence is delivered. How they see themselves developing over the course of time and are influenced by their professors is extremely meaningful.

It's extremely powerful. And, you know, like you said, you circle back to the materials, you circle back sometimes to the style you incorporate it or embrace it into your own. What are some of the things that

you can specifically say that you have done that you've had your students say, hey, this is really helpful for me, this opened pathway for me, I have greater understanding, you know, all of those wonderful accolades and thank you'?

Brian Wyant
When I teach, I tried to do, a lot of times the term critical thinking is thrown out, and that's fine to use. I like to use, higher order thinking, and when I'm most excited in the classroom, is when students can, I can teach information or concepts, and then when a student is able to apply that information, or that perspective or concept to a new novel situation. In other words, I talk about, you know, how we balanced crime control and due process concerns. And I can talk about a crime control in a in a context of policing, and then they can apply that to terrorism, and how we want to combat terrorism. And when they can make those connections as we call higher order thinking. And I know as a student, whether it's University of Baltimore, other places, when I found myself kind of making those connections, I didn't know, I didn't know that term at the time, but I knew that was powerful. And that's what I've tried to do as a professor now and I think really a lot of the best professors.

You know, you're not just memorizing concepts. You're not just talking, you know, in academic terms about things that don't have real life application. But if you can talk about academic concepts that do have real life consequences for people, who are going to be working in policy. At the same time, you can do it in a way that you can use that knowledge to kind of, to further apply it to new, you know, as I said, novel situations. I think that's, that's the success. And that's what, when it sparked in me, and what I hope to spark and other students.

Elizabeth Epps
Excellent. Can you tell us about your other teaching, before you got to Temple [Temple University] and your Ph. D. The experiences that you've had after the University of Baltimore, can you share a little bit about what those journeys were like, and maybe some of your key takeaways? Absolutely.

Brian Wyant
I, right after I graduate from the University of Baltimore in 1999. As I was finishing the degree, there was so before I get to the teaching, there was a kind of important event that influences my teaching to this day, a university started advertising, they were doing a study in Baltimore, where they needed participants to help with the studying conducting ride-along with the Baltimore Police Department. I said I would do it at the time, I think we were getting, you know, $12 an hour, which was a lot.

And I would do ride along, don't remember how many it was multiple weeks, riding right along for the Baltimore Police Department, I would take notes as part of this larger study on what they do in their downtime. I didn't know at the time that I'd be a professor one day conducting kind of similar type studies. But riding around with the Baltimore PD [Police Department], fresh out of University of

Baltimore, was just really impactful in terms of to better understand policing, better understand Baltimore.

And then from there, I transitioned to when I was fortunate enough to with a master's to teach at my alma mater, McDaniel College on a full time and part time basis. And then a few other universities, I've taught it small, rural liberal arts colleges, I've taught at large state, you know, urban institutions. And while they're their differences, you know, you're in front of students, you're in front of kind of a captive audience.

They are most are eager to be learning. And, you know, at the time I again, I had some of this impostor syndrome, I was very young teaching, probably 24, 25 teaching in front of college students, some students were older than me. But I did feel fairly well prepared. And what I didn't have an experience, being somewhat of a novice, I certainly made up in kind of passion, dedication, and, you know, having great mentors, helped prepare me, I think, to teach these classes. And while I was teaching in either kind of a part time, full time, but wasn't stable.

I realized at that time; I want to keep doing this. But if I want to keep being a, you know, teaching college level classes, I'm going to have to earn my PhD. So, after a few years, I decided that while this is good, I'm making a decent living, I'm really enjoying it. I'm going to have to transition into a PhD if I want to do this long term.

Elizabeth Epps
Can you tell us before we go on to talk about your journey with the PhD Can you tell us about the climate in Baltimore during the time that you were doing the ride along and what you learned from those experiences?

Brian Wyant
Baltimore, as I always get angry, if someone says something kind of negative about Baltimore, Baltimore, like a lot of cities, has pluses and minuses. At the time, Baltimore did have well, I don't want to get in my teaching. But around the United States, crime started to really decrease it kind of peaked in the early 90s and had a really sharp decrease starting early 90s.

So, crime went up for about 30 straight years. And then it started to really go down. This is a great crime declined early 90s, Baltimore's a little delayed, it did have a crime, huge crime declined, but it didn't start quite as early as it did, in many other cities. Therefore, still quite high in the 90s, even though it was starting to go down by 99. So, when I was going around with these rides-along there were some pretty high crime areas. And actually, some of these areas is now gentrified. So, what would be I think, some place called, like pig town, we'd be in in parts of the Southwest.

There would be, you know, what I really learned about policing at the time is policing, still to this day, they deal with everything. Everything that fall, everything falls to the police. Police are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They're the only profession that really are one of the few that still make house calls. So, what I saw in that was, you might see someone you know, responding to a big crime. But you saw a lot of little stuff. And it was just kind of nonstop stuff that the police deal with wasn't just, you know, unique to Baltimore than ride-along in other cities. And, and there's a lot of overlap.

But it really kind of shined a light on the, what I like to talk about the really nuanced role of the police. And I was, and while I can read about that, and I present students with different statistics that shows that, I'm really glad I got to experience that kind of firsthand.

Elizabeth Epps
And that goes back to some of the initiatives that were spoken about in Baltimore, not too many years ago, from the perspective of are they police officers? Are they social service agents? Are they educators? Are they care providers, and it's kind of sort of like this wraparound service model idea, depending on who you talk to. And depending on their interests, their specialties, you know, the things that they've studied and experienced in their lives as well.

How did that set you up for walking towards the PhD, you'd already made the decision? Okay, this is the field that I'm interested in. To prepare myself for a longer journey. I need to do some additional work. And what led you to Temple [Temple University]? And how did you tackle some of your biggest challenges? What were some of those big challenges? Because a PhD is a very long-term commitment. You are often giving your life over to the PhD rather than anything else.

Can you talk to us from those varying perspectives not so much to scare someone, but to give them a real, you know, an insider's view as to what it was like for you and what they should prepare themselves for, if they're looking for a very rigorous, but challenging and rewarding career?

Brian Wyant
What you say is absolutely correct, it is a very big commitment, you're often maybe leaving a job to do this to where you're going to get paid, you know, very little, or you're paying to go to school, I'm obviously happy that I made this choice. I selected Temple [Temple University], I applied to a lot of places, and I was fortunate enough to not just get accepted, but then get accepted with a graduate kind of assistance. So, I'd be what they call an RA or TA. So, a teaching assistant or research assistant, I did both where I fortunately, didn't have to pay any tuition. And you know, I selected Temple [Temple University]. For those not familiar, it's in Philadelphia. And it is a large state institution, however, it is in a city. So many of the things that I you know, liked about UB [University of Baltimore] also are true it you know, for Temple, it's a state school, it's urban, it's affordable, you have a diversity of the student

body, of faculty, but also being in a city you have access to different agencies that maybe some other places just wouldn't just by their location and their school.

So, I wanted to pick a school that, you know, met that criterion of like living in urban areas. It's also important for me to have full funding, I always tell students that they are interested in graduate degrees, one thing to consider is, will your job pay for it? Or can you apply for, you know, funding. And I took the GREs [Graduate Record Examination] is the graduate, kind of like the graduate SATs, I took a course twice. And I thought it was an investment because the better I do on the GREs, the more likely I'm going to get funding. And it really paid off. And I can graduate from Temple [Temple University] and it took me two years of coursework already with a master's and then about four years working on the dissertation. I didn't have to pay really anything, and I was working and getting a small stipend. And at the time, my wife is from off the East Coast. So, we wanted to stay on the East Coast, I was also important to us. And at the same time when you're trying to start a family so, so a lot was going on. But you know, looking back those you know, I wasn't making much but I also wasn't stressed about much either just trying to finish the dissertation. Let's say the best dissertation is the finished one.

Elizabeth Epps
Would you like to tell us what your dissertation focus was?

Brian Wyant
Absolutely. My dissertation when I started the Ph. D program, I thought I'd want to do something kind of studying juveniles and delinquency. And I didn't really have an interest in even though policing interests me. They're a particularly hard group to kind of break into their little insular and they're somewhat and I think tend to be skeptical of researchers from the outside sometimes. But I luckily worked with some wonderful faculty mentors. And I started to focus on crime mapping, where you see if you think of like a weather map where the rain or more snow hits, I make those with crime.

And there's other types of maps and the more sophisticated but looking at shootings and arrests. So, my interest in crime mapping with policing, what I ultimately looked at was, and I won't bore you with all the details, but what we call a micro spatial temporal analysis of shootings and firearm arrests, basically seen at a really small scale, meaning when the police make an arrest for someone what we call a VUFA [Violation of the Uniform Firearms Act], you know, from firearm actually, they don't they're not supposed to have a gun and they have a gun illegally. When the police arrest someone for that, does that depress shootings, in that very immediate area? Meaning one or two blocks? And for how long would it do that. And there were some impacts where the, it would depress shootings, just very temporarily.

And that's what my focus was on working with the Philadelphia Police Department. And then, since then, I've transitioned a little bit to I still look at policing. But I also, in more recently been looking at health care in prisons. So almost kind of circling back to my initial interest in criminal justice from the work of my mom.

Elizabeth Epps
I was going to say, that leads me to two questions, two very different questions. When you began your studies, with micro spatial temporal analysis, I'm sure that lots of your experiences from ride along and in the classroom kind of flooded your mind. And, you know, you're gleaning, you're extracting from experience as well as source material.

And your studies. What jumped out at you what surprised you? And then what did you; what did you learn ultimately that perhaps you hadn't seen at the beginning of the project, you know, those things that change by the time you've finished, your research can be most meaningful.

Brian Wyant
The challenge with these big research projects, you get so involved in them, and you're using these kinds of large datasets, you sometimes can forget that they're real people. So, every time whether it's someone's arrested, or there's a shooting victim, you have to remind yourself that these are not just numbers, I tell students often when I report, oh, the homicide rate went up or down. You know, this isn't some, you know, soccer, basketball or football score.

These are real people. And I tried to keep that in mind as I was doing it. And my faculty, they are, as I mentioned them with UB [University of Baltimore], is a nice mix of not just research are not to say just read research is very important. But researchers who also have an eye to how this can practically help, say influence police decision makers. So, as I was doing this, I was you get bogged down in the research.

And we often think of so when I, off, excuse me, what I also discovered, was not just that when there is an arrest, that shootings may become depressed afterwards. But what the direction of the relationship actually might go the other way, that when there's a shooting, then the police swarm the area, make more arrests, and trying to disentangle that is kind of part of the challenge of you know, research is finding causation is always one of the challenges of research. And that's, that's true when I did the dissertation.

You know, I finished that in 2010, or when I'm doing research, you know, later today, I'll you know, working on some research on that same challenge of trying to kind of untangle the causation. And then it's also hard, kind of answer your first question. As a researcher, I want to be careful not to focus too much on an anecdote, you know, that this one thing happened, that one of the things that I think a good researcher does, is they can, you know, understand that, but I was trying to look at the bigger picture. And I always say that, you know, as a researcher, sometimes practitioners can be a little skeptical. But I say, all I'm doing is I'm taking a lot of anecdotes and putting them all together and seeing what the whole trying to put a whole puzzle together.

So, it's not just what you've seen, but I'm taking what you've seen, plus what another person you've worked with seen plus what another person they've worked with seen. And I do that over a few years, and this kind of large data set. I'm going to try to analyze that data and tell a story. And I tell that story. Hopefully, that can be beneficial to those in the field.

Elizabeth Epps
And so, when you transition from this particular subject to healthcare, how did you draw on your experiences because you had some very personal, direct experiences from your summers, you've had this wealth of education, you're now a researcher. And you start, my guess is that you start to see the world, not just analytically, but also very compassionately. Like you said, you have an eye and a non-new bent towards service. So, talk to us about how you then pivot to health care, and the type of work that you're doing now.

Brian Wyant
The pivot to healthcare started, like many projects do, almost by luck, that another colleague was working in a women's prison and wanted to do some research in a men's prison but wasn't allowed in. And we work together, she was actually a former nurse in a prison, and who then subsequently got her, earned her PhD.

One thing though, my experiences kind of taught me about working in, you know, doing research with, you know, those incarcerated is, I had a really wonderful experience in prison, I know that most people won't say that they're not good places, they're not, I'm not someone who I think they have a place. Some people, you know, society can benefit from some incarceration or incarcerate too much, not probably we do. However, my experience is kind of my earlier point that these aren't just numbers with someone who's shot or arrested, that when you interact with someone in person, you just have a different view of them.

And I don't, you know, and I think there are people, you know, there's, there's a saying that 100% of people incarcerated are people. And when I do research on health care in prison, it's not necessarily I don't think what I study is that controversial or kind of pro person incarcerated or anti. Basically, what my colleague and I were looking at is to get to see a medical professional, so a doctor or nurse, someone like that, while incarcerated in most states, you have to pay a copay, and people don't realize that. And with a copay, you know, it's, it's minimal. In Pennsylvania, for example, it's only $5. However, people incarcerated only make, I think, at a high 42 cents an hour. Therefore, it can be a real barrier to people, and especially women, see the doctor more need to see that or they have certain gender specific health needs that they need to see the doctor more.

So, this, this, this barrier, or the $5, copay can be a barrier for, you know, men and women, particularly women in prison. And when I've talked to correctional officers about this, some will say, hey, I have to pay a copay. And I said, I understand that. But you know, think about it this way, I don't want you to get

sick. So, if someone's not seeing the doctor while they're incarcerated, that's not good for them. It's not good for other people in prison, and it's not good for you as well. And it's just kind of about fairness. And so, it doesn't mean that what they did didn't cause harm, it doesn't mean maybe they still need to be incarcerated. But it is, I think, a very kind of clear issue that I could present to someone and say, look, from a policy perspective, there's $5 copay, it's really not saving.

You're not, it's not saving the Correctional Institution money, and actually may have long term impacts, that kind of negatively impact, not just your budget, but also individuals, whether it's correctional officer or, or staff or those incarcerated. And I think my experience is some are just, you know, I wasn't nervous necessarily go into a prison. I've done that many times. Because I'm one on one in these institutions with you know, I was the men who have done something great harm from, you know, murder, sexual assault to, to less serious things. But at the end, I'm collecting, you know, data with an eye on how can this data kind of inform policy.

Elizabeth Epps
When you talk with your students, what areas of specialization do you find they're most interested in now? And how are you helping to guide them into their future professions?

Brian Wyant
It's been interesting how even I've been teaching at La Salle [La Salle University] for almost 15 years prior to the summer of 2014 when Officer Darren Wilson shot and killed Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri. Policing was not that much in the news. So, when I talked with students in teaching classes, the discussion of policing was very different, there was no talk about body worn cameras. And then since you know, the summer of, of 2020.

In Minneapolis, the discussion of policing has kind of, I wouldn't say, shifted again. But it's just, it's just changed. And, you know, the number of students who maybe want to go into policing or not some police departments are having trouble making recruiting classes. So, I would say I've, I always tell students, if you want to go into policing, great if you don't, don't, but I tried to kind of set their expectations on what's realistic, and what they should expect, what they're getting into kind of positives and negatives. I always say I want really good people in policing, because I think it's an important job. But at the same time, I don't want people in there who think that it's about just kicking down doors, I want, you know, compassionate people who, if need be, can kick down a door, but that's not their first inclination. And then I talked to other students who want to go into a more kind of service oriented, where they're going to be case managers and have caseloads of people who have substance abuse problems.

And when I talked with them, and now they're young and wide eyes, I tried to put myself in their position of, you know, this is going to be your first job. It may be your job forever, but it may be a job that you do for three years, and you get experience, you move on to something different. I always just

try to be realistic about what the job actually entails. And then I also try to set them up with whatever classes I'm teaching, when I teach policing, or sometimes students like, you know, I teach statistics, which students don't start off liking. And I'm not saying that they love it, but if I can show them the utility at it, and I always tell them, I've never lost a patient in statistics, if they come to class, they do the work, they're going to do fine. Some even eventually like it, that students, you know, they like some of the kind of, I don't want to say more practical, because some of the skill base classes, but also, no matter what job they have, as a case manager, police officer, FBI, they're going to be writing a lot. So, I want to try to stress to the students that you're going to need to be writing no matter what. So, whether you're a philosophy, major, criminal justice major, business major, you're going to be writing. And I try to make it where it's interesting, where they're engaging in, where they're interested in the topics, whether it's policing, or crime mapping or statistics.

Elizabeth Epps
Can you tell us what other courses you're teaching?

Brian Wyant
So as chair, I don't teach as much as I used to, because I've transitioned somewhat into kind of administrator position. But I do teach Intro to Criminal Justice, which is still one of my favorite classes to teach, we touch on what we call the three C's of criminal justice, cops, courts, and corrections. And then I said, I teach crime mapping criminal statistics, I'm teaching a class about violence, with a particular focus on gun violence, the United States, which I find, you know, interesting, also sad to kind of teach some of the same things over and over, you know, that, you know, said we're going to have another mass shooting, there might even be one, you know, while we're having this class, you know, somewhere in the United States.

And so, I teach those classes. And then what I also found; I've really enjoyed teaching a class where I created myself about current events. And what I do is I use kind of a current event as a case study. And what I found is, if I can spend time on something on a, on an on a specific event or case study, I think it's a little more memorable for the students. So instead of, you know, broadly, or just kind of in an academic sense, talking about police community relations, what I do is, I will take them back to the early 90s. And we'll study, you know, the Rodney King case, or really, maybe stated the LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department] case in the beating of Rodney King. And it's not just to focus on that incident, but really the lead up.

And what I found is then we can use that information. And you have to remember the students I'm teaching now, you know, were born in the 2000s. So, this is very far from them, they might have very little knowledge of it. Or even I go back to the, you know, Watts riots and in the 60s, or that, when we look at these events, not just the event, but the lead up to it, I think that helps them understand current situations, and we can see a lot of parallels between what happened if there, you know, if we want to look at Freddie Gray in Baltimore, and you know, LA in the early 90s.

There are some differences, but there's also some parallels, and you can kind of see history repeating itself a little bit and I think that's going to be really valuable for students to help understand current events by having better kind of context and background of historical events.

Elizabeth Epps
So do you see University of Baltimore City isn't making their way to your class is Tim LaSalle.

Brian Wyant
Um, so we don't have a master's program at La Salle [La Salle University]. But I will say the word I, you know, think back of, you know, the students that I had, as I mentioned earlier, these were kind of professionals in the field who were taking classes with me.

When I hire adjuncts, we need someone to teach a class on corrections, or we need someone to teach a we had a violence class that I teach, sometimes a former FBI agent teaches that, I think back to many of those speakers that had come to my classes after I graduated from UB [University of Baltimore], the people who were in my classes who were leaders in their field, who were I assume, at the time, they're looking back, they're trying to, you know, credential up, gain more knowledge, and get a promotion, they were probably very, they were very ambitious.

And those are the people that my interactions are with a lot of the kind of graduate type students who are leaders in the field, who was a, you know, is a chair of a department, I look to hire when I need someone to teach a class. So, the students get that, you know, on the practitioner experience in the classroom.

Elizabeth Epps
Because you've held so many different roles, and you have a wide perspective of the field that you study, what goals do you have, for the next 12 months, for your department, and for the students that you will be producing for the workforce? What are your top three goals? Sorry to put you on the spot.

Brian Wyant
I always say I can broadly talk that what I've found, and this is true for a lot of, you know, positions of leadership as chair of my department. I always you know, struggle to it's a challenge, I should say, to balance in kind of long-term thinking with putting out fires. So, my goal always is to, you know, my short-term goal right now, is to make sure that these students who are, you know, set to graduate, that they're going to graduate, and we're going to help them and support them to first graduate, and then also set them up for gainful employment.

And, you know, doing that isn't just making sure, you know, teaching, being a professor chair is not just about teaching, as I've learned, it is about helping them with resumes, and we have a Career Services

helped them do that, but they really trust us as faculty, and they'll meet with them, but they'll also meet with us.

And we'll do all some role playing. Or I'll say, give me your one-minute elevator pitch of why you want to be a police officer, because they're going to ask you that. And they're going to ask you this question. And so, I my goal and with the other faculty is we're going to work with students to make sure that we're kind of helping these students graduate, and at the same time making sure all our students are supported. And then in the long term, as you know, many may realize that, on the east coast, the number of college aged students has declined, the number of kinds of students who wouldn't normally go to college is also slightly declined.

So, we need to make sure that La Salle [La Salle University]; I'm sure UB [University of Baltimore] is doing the same thing is you need to make sure that you are sharing why your university offers value. There's a lot of choices students have, and so part of the challenge is to say, why UB [University of Baltimore] why La Salle [La Salle University] why, you know, when I was at Temple [Temple University], what is unique about your university, that the student will not only have kind of a wonderful experience and grow, but at the same time, get back value on their investment, and then you know, they're investing in themselves.

And I want to make sure that I'm part of that, you know, that that it pays off, that it was a worthwhile investment. And that could mean it's not just jobs, but they become after, you know, hopefully four years, I'll just tell students, as much as I love them, I don't want them there more than four years that I want them to, you know, leave as, you know, better, smarter, more engaged, more knowledgeable citizens with you know, hopefully they're doing something that they find passionate, and we'll sustain them as they you know, go throughout their career and if they have loans, help pay back those loans, but also really live a fulfilling life.

Elizabeth Epps
So, you've said a few things that will resonate with the UB [University of Baltimore] community engagement, passionate, but that you are also sustainably contributing to an ongoing future your Future is every day as we make it. And as we step into it, it is in fact being reinvented. Can you give me a word or a phrase that sums up your UB alumni experience or, you know, your experience from your days at UB that you can say is reflective of the beacon that has become your career your career is wide and vast, you are very successful. If you don't mind me saying that to you. It's a compliment to your investment in yourself and the investment that others have placed deeply into you as well. So how did how would you sum up the UB experience as a contributor to your life? And I know that after this, your answer may even expand this. So again, putting you on the spot.

Brian Wyant

I am appreciative. And the reason I use this, you know, that kind of term is I look back and when I selected UB, I wish I could say it was some grand scheme where I had researched all these different schools, and I found faculty that I wanted to work with. But really, it came down to a, you know, one of my undergraduate faculty mentioned, hey, have you considered UB [University of Baltimore]? And I've really started to, I really thrived as an undergraduate.

And when I got there, I was appreciative of how I was welcomed by other students, even though I was younger, didn't have the same work experience as appreciative Miss Linda Fair to take me kind of under her wing, Dr. Benokraitis, Dr. Brownstein, these all these things Cindy Smith, Dr. Smith, all these faculty where I had one on one time, I think Dr. Senese, you know, down to this 25 years, I still remember all these different faculty members. And, you know, kind of one story that kind of sums up is kind of why I'm so appreciative as I've been, I'd graduated from UB [University of Baltimore], it had been at least 10 years, because I was already at La Salle [La Salle University] at this time, and I go to different conferences to present research.

And when there's a Conference in Baltimore, I tried to go to Baltimore, because I'd love to return to Baltimore. And as I'm finishing up my presentation, in the back, the door opens up, and I see Dr. Benjamin Wright walk in, who's one of my professors there. And when I saw him walk in, I'm so appreciative of him, you know, looking at the program, deciding to stop in and just say hi to me, and we call up back caught up with him a few years ago, right before COVID.

When he stopped over, you'd be but that that little? You know that that time that he took, that he didn't have to he's not getting anything from it, you know, professionally, he just did it personally, because it was a nice thing to do. And I really appreciated him stopping over. But I think that was it shows larger that those kinds of small classes and the connection that I have a faculty that that was an extension of it. And I'm really appreciative of that gesture, but I think that gesture is indicative of something much larger.

Elizabeth Epps
Yeah, I think that many will, will agree with you, but caring nature of the community. The deep investment of seeing someone get what they need to thrive and be successful and wanting to see that momentum continue. And as you continue to do your good work and others continue to do their good work, they are contributing to what will be a better society. I think we have enjoyed our time with you today. Is there anything that we have not asked you that you would like to comment upon or share with future audiences?

Brian Wyant
No, I think we covered everything. Thank you so much for the compliment.

Elizabeth Epps

Thank you very much for joining us. This concludes today's oral history. We've been speaking to Professor Brian Wyant, a UB Alum [University of Baltimore Alumni]. Have a great day. Thank you!