

Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

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Welcome to Volume 4, Issue 1 of the Newsletter of the Academy of Experimental Criminology. My apologies for the longer-than-usual lag between newsletters. Much has occurred over the last year as our Academy grows both in stature and influence.

I would like to congratulate David Weisburd on winning the 2009 Stockholm Prize in Criminology as well as the AEC 2008 Joan McCord Award – these are great personal and professional achievements for David and I am sure we all join together in our heartfelt messages of congratulations. Given this was “breaking news” at the time of newsletter distribution, I will provide more about David’s Stockholm win in the next newsletter!

The other big news for the AEC is that the Executive Board of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) recently decided to establish a new Division of Experimental Criminology after we petitioned the ASC, led by our AEC President Doris MacKenzie. The purpose of the proposed division shall be “the promotion and improvement of experimental evidence and methods in the advancement of criminological theory and evidence-based crime policy.”

Finally, this edition of the AEC newsletter includes two interesting feature articles: the first is by Joan Petersilia which is a synopsis of her lecture and accompanying paper that coincided with her win of the 2007 Joan McCord Award. The lecture has a focus on the challenges of an embedded experimental criminologist. The second feature article is another “view from the inside” by AEC member Anthony Braga.

*Lorraine Mazerolle
Vice President & Newsletter Editor
Academy of Experimental Criminology*

FEATURE ARTICLE 1

**Influencing Public Policy:
An Embedded Criminologist Reflects on California Prison Reform**

By Joan Petersilia

Criminologists bemoan their lack of influence on U.S. crime policy, believing that the justice system would be improved if their research findings were more central in decision making. I had an opportunity to test that notion as I participated in California’s historic attempt to reform its prisons over the past 4 years. I became an embedded criminologist, where I was able to observe and contribute to the inner workings of state government. This article reports on my accomplishments with respect to fostering research activities and shifting the department’s focus towards prisoner reintegration. It discusses some of the lessons I learned, including the personal toll that such work entails, the importance of the timing of policy initiatives, and the power of rigorous methodology and clear communication. I conclude by recommending that other policy-oriented criminologists seek out similar experiences, as I believe our academic skills are uniquely suited and ultimately necessary to create a justice system that does less harm.

Lesson #1: Research matters, but the topic must have immediate and understandable policy relevance, and the results must be delivered without jargon.

Lesson #2: Know your audience and pay keen attention to their legal, political, institutional, and resource constraints.

Lesson #3: Timing is *everything*.

Lesson #4: The current literature on “what works” in rehabilitation programs is insufficient to guide policy without corresponding literature on program implementation.

Lesson #5: Rigorous research, especially randomized experiments, really does matter.

Lesson #6: Public criminology is incredibly demanding, both personally and professionally, and the price is probably higher than many academics are willing to pay.

Lesson #7: The science of criminology and our role in public policy is necessary but ultimately insufficient to alter fundamentally our nation’s justice system.

ABOUT THE AWARD

Since 2004, the Academy of Experimental Criminology has awarded one scholar with the Joan McCord Award annually. The decision is based on the contributions the scholar has made to experimental criminology, policy and practice, evidence of their commitment to experimental studies, contribution to the development of younger colleagues and conducts work in the ‘spirit’ of Joan McCord’s legacy.

Joan Petersilia won the Fourth *Joan McCord Award* in 2007. The 2008 award was won by David Weisburd, who will be presenting the Sixth *Joan McCord Award* during the 2009 AEC Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

Previous recipients of the award are:

- ◆ Richard Tremblay (2004);
- ◆ David Farrington (2005); and
- ◆ Lawrence Sherman (2006)

FEATURE ARTICLE 2... ANOTHER VIEW FROM THE INSIDE!

Experimentation in Criminal Justice Agencies: Timing is Everything

By Anthony A. Braga

In a recent issue of the *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, Joan Petersilia (2008) provides an inspiring description of her rewarding experiences as an “embedded” criminologist in the State of California’s prison reform efforts. She then offers a series of insightful lessons on increasing the relevance of criminology in public policy. Her third lesson, which is closely tied to her observations on the importance of understanding the details of the broader policy environment, is “Timing is everything.” Her observation is particularly salient when considering the legal, political, institutional, and resource constraints inherent in the successful execution of randomized controlled trials in criminal justice agencies.

In this brief essay, I reflect upon the issue of timing as it directly affected my ability to conduct evaluations of hot spots policing initiatives in two police departments led by the same executive – Edward F. Davis III. Much to my good fortune, I formed a collaborative relationship with Ed Davis when he was the Superintendent of the Lowell Police Department (Massachusetts) in 1997. Over the next six years, I worked with the LPD on a series of problem analyses and quasi-experimental evaluations to guide their gang violence reduction efforts.

In 2004, Davis expressed a desire to make a substantive contribution to the policing field on what works in preventing

crime by conducting a randomized controlled trial to test the effects of policing disorder strategies on crime hot spots. We collaborated on the research design and jointly made a successful argument for research funds to the State of Massachusetts. It is important to note that, at that point in time, Davis had served as the chief of the LPD for nearly ten years, crime was very low in the city, research funding was available, and Davis had gained considerable trust and legitimacy among community members and politicians through his commitment to community policing. In other words, the timing was ripe for experimentation.

In December 2006, Davis was appointed the Commissioner of the Boston Police Department and soon thereafter he appointed me his Chief Policy Advisor. Boston was facing a troubling increase in gun violence when he took charge of the BPD. Davis immediately led the BPD in developing a hot spots policing initiative that borrowed heavily from the lessons learned from the Lowell experiment and other evidence-based crime prevention practices. However, at this point in time, Davis was not able to pursue a randomized controlled trial of the new program. The conditions were very different in Boston when compared to Lowell a few years earlier. His mandate from Mayor Menino was very clear. Davis needed to make Boston’s neighborhoods safe by addressing gun violence wherever it

FEATURE ARTICLE 2 (CONT)

presented itself in the city. He was also a new chief who needed to develop the necessary political support to permit potentially controversial decisions such as creating treatment and control conditions in gun violence hot spots.

Clearly, these experiences suggest that experimental criminologists need to be “commonsense opportunists” who are sensitive to the needs of their practitioner partners. Sometimes we are able to pursue the gold standard in evaluation. Other times we need to respect the political environment and simply provide program development and implementation advice that is rooted in solid research evidence. In either case, the experience is very rewarding.

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ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The Academy of Experimental Criminology was founded in 1999 in order to advance the development of experimental criminology. It seeks to increase awareness of randomized experiments in crime and justice, and to aid in the improvement of experimental methods in criminology.

The Academy also supports the Journal of Experimental Criminology, which publishes major advances in criminology and its methods through field experimentation, as well as quasi-experiments and other forms of research involving systematic manipulation of social or other variables. A newsletter concerned with the Academy and experimental criminology more generally is published twice a year.

The Academy recognizes criminologists who have successfully led randomized field experiments in criminology through their election as Fellows. Since 2003, the Academy has also recognized persons whose work has made substantial contributions to the advancement of experimental criminology, without actually conducting randomized field experiments. These people are elected as Honorary Fellows.

Fellows and Honorary Fellows are elected annually by vote of Fellows in good standing, and are installed at the annual meeting held in conjunction with the meeting of the American Society of Criminology. The Academy is governed by an Executive Board.

PRESIDENTS

- Lawrence Sherman, Founding President, 1999-2001
- David P. Farrington, 2001-2003
- Joan McCord, 2003-2004
- David L. Weisburd, 2004-2007
- Doris MacKenzie, 2008-2010

VICE-PRESIDENT

- Lorraine Mazerolle, 2004-2007, 2008-2010

AEC ACTIVITIES

AEC ANNUAL MEETING

November 4-7, 2009

The Academy of Experimental Criminology annual meeting is held in conjunction with the American Society of Criminology meetings. This year, the ASC meetings are in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th November.

The AEC session is open to all ASC participants. Indeed we view the session as an opportunity to showcase the AEC and encourage new people to join our Academy. So please invite your friends and colleagues to come along to the events at the ASC this year. The session information will be available from the ASC website in the coming months.

The Joan McCord Award Lecture (delivered in 2008 by Award winner, David Weisburd) will be presented during the session.

New Fellows and Honorary Fellows will be officially inducted during the session.

The **2nd Young Experimental Scholar Award** will be presented.

Please come along to the Annual Meeting of The American Society of Criminology (ASC) in Philadelphia, PA, November 4-7, 2009. Our session will be held from 1:30 - 2:50 (room TBA) on Thursday, November 5, 2009. At this session new Fellows, Honorary Fellows, and award winners will be introduced, awarded a plaque, and have time to say a few words about their work.

2009 AEC Award Winners

Joan McCord Award: Professor Denise Gottfredson

Young Experimental Scholar Award: Dr Sarah Bennett and John McDonald

New AEC Fellows

Honorary Fellows

Laurie Robinson
Howard Rolston

Fellows

Pam Lattimore
Ed McGarrell
Cynthia McDougall

BREAKING NEWS!

In April 2009, the American Society of Criminology Executive Board approved the creation of a Division of Experimental Criminology. Led by our President, Doris MacKenzie, the argument put forth for the creation of the new Division involved how there are great complexities and challenges in delivering high-quality experiments under the standards of field research set by the CONSORT statement organization. These problems provided fertile ground for the coming together of an intellectual community that will now be recognized and supported in the form of an ASC Division.

The dues for membership in the new Division shall begin at \$10 per annum for full members, with \$5 dues for student members.

The New Division will host a meeting for new and existing members at the forthcoming ASC meetings in Philadelphia. Please check the program for time, date and location details.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

◆ **9th Annual Campbell Colloquium; *Better Evidence for a Better World***

Oslo, Norway 18 – 20 May, 2009

This conference will focus on low and middle income countries. In the global effort against poverty, do we know enough about the effectiveness of measures designed to improve the lives of people in poor countries?

This Colloquium will also examine how social and health policies interrelate, bearing in mind the need to systematically build the best possible evidence base for future policies and programmes.

With over 100 presentations in the programme, all of Campbell's key sectors are well represented. In addition to education, welfare, and justice streams, there will be a strong focus on research methods, including training workshops, and on knowledge utilization.

www.campbellcollaboration.org/Colloquium/Colloquium.shtml

◆ **Stockholm Criminology Symposium; *When Mankind is the Victim, Counteracting Organised Crime and Contemporary Criminology***

Stockholm University 22 – 24 June, 2009

The 2009 Symposium is organized around three themes:

1. *When Mankind is the Victim*; Significant research and strategies in the fields of genocide, crimes against humanity, state crimes, human rights violations, and other crimes against international law.
2. *Counteracting Organised Crime*; Disseminating experience and improving knowledge in order to combat organised crime more effectively.
3. *Contemporary Criminology*; Studies and practice from contemporary criminology and criminal policy.

The deadline for the call for papers is May 8, 2009. Registration closes June 1, 2009.

<http://www.criminologyprize.com/extra/pod/>

◆ **British Society of Criminology Annual Conference 2009**

Cardiff, Wales 29 June – 1 July, 2009

The theme for this year's BSC conference is *A 'Mirror' or a 'Motor'?* *What is Criminology for?* Plenary speakers at the conference are Gary Marx and Lawrence Sherman.

The call for papers has been extended to May 15, 2009.

<http://bscconference2009.glam.ac.uk/>

◆ **2009 European Society of Criminology Meeting; *Criminology and Crime Policy Between Human Rights and Effective Crime Control***

Ljubljana, Slovenia 9 – 12 September 2009

This conference brings together Europe's leading researchers and professionals from the field of criminology. This year's meeting will explore whether a balance can be found between the standards of human rights protection in crime policy and the strong demand for greater effectiveness of crime policy in crime reduction; the question arises, can greater effectiveness of crime policy only be achieved at the expense of human rights?

<http://esc.sazu.si/>

◆ **Institute of Criminology Conference; *Challenging Crime: A Conference to Celebrate 50 Years of the Institute of Criminology***

Cambridge University 24 September, 2009

This conference will look at the history and current work of the Institute, and invite academics to submit papers around three main themes:

- (1) Policing; (2) Prisons and Punishment (Legitimacy), Prevention and Treatment; and (3) Crime and Modern Communities.

<http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/events/>

◆ **22nd Annual ANZSOC Conference –**

Perth, Australia 22 - 25 November, 2009

On 22–25 November 2009 the University of Western Australia's Crime Research Centre will host the 22nd Annual Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology (ANZSOC) conference in Perth.

The ANZSOC Conference is a key crime and criminal justice research forum in Australia. The 2009 conference program will include keynote plenary sessions, moderated panel sessions and a number of concurrent sessions in which abstract papers will be presented.

Website: <http://www.law.uwa.edu.au/research/crc/anzsoc>
<http://www.anzsoc.org/conferences/>

OTHER NEWS

◆ **Campbell Colloquium Bulletin: TRAINING SESSIONS**

Parallel to the scientific colloquium program, six hands-on training sessions concerning systematic reviews and meta-analysis will be offered. The training sessions will be particularly interesting for researchers and students. Completing the training sessions will help qualify for undertaking a systematic review.

http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Colloquium/colloquium_programme/training_sessions.php

◆ **Stockholm Symposium CRIMINOLOGY PRIZE NOMINATIONS**

Nominations for the annual Stockholm Criminology Prize are closing soon. The last day to nominate for the 2010 award is May 15, 2009.

Note that nominations do not need to be renewed; once a nomination is complete, the nominee is eligible for all future awards.

<http://www.criminologyprize.com/extra/pod/>

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY

The *Journal of Experimental Criminology* is published four times a year in cooperation with the Academy of Experimental Criminology. A subscription to the Journal is included in the Academy's membership dues. The *Journal of Experimental Criminology* focuses on high quality experimental and quasi-experimental research in the development of evidence based crime and justice policy. The journal is also committed to the advancement of the science of systematic reviews and experimental methods in criminology and criminal justice. The journal seeks empirical papers on experimental and quasi-experimental studies, systematic reviews on substantive criminal justice problems, and methodological papers on experimentation and systematic review. The journal encourages submissions from scholars in the broad array of scientific disciplines that are concerned with crime and justice problems.

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www.kluweronline.com/issn/1573-3750

A new development for the Journal of Experimental Criminology....

SHORT REPORTS

The JEC is developing a new section within the Journal called the "Short Reports." The proposed format for these short reports (approximately 1,000 words) is outlined below.

Introduction

Brief review of key background research and rationale for conducting this study

Methods:

Objectives

- Specific objectives and hypotheses

Participants

- Eligibility criteria for participants
- Settings and locations where the data were collected

Interventions

- Details of the interventions intended for each group
- How and when they were actually administered

Outcomes

- Clearly defined primary and secondary outcome measures
- Measurement methods (timing, etc.)

Sample size

- How sample size was determined

Randomization

- Method used to generate the random allocation sequence
- Method used to implement the random allocation sequence
- Who generated the allocation sequence
- Who enrolled participants
- Who assigned participants to their groups

Blinding (if relevant)

Statistical methods

- Statistical methods used to compare groups for primary outcome(s)
- Methods for additional analyses, such as subgroup analyses and adjusted analyses

Results:

Participant flow

- Flow of participants through each stage
E.g.: numbers of participants randomly assigned receiving intended treatment completing the study protocol analyzed for the primary and secondary outcomes

Baseline data

Outcomes

- Summary of descriptive results for each primary and secondary outcome, including a measure of effect size and an index of precision

Ancillary analyses