
CRIME, LAW, & DEVIANCE NEWS

Newsletter for the Crime, Law, & Deviance section of the American Sociological Association

Moving the National Institute of Justice Forward July, 2010 thru December, 2012¹

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April 2013*

When Ross Matsueda asked me if I would be interested in writing a retrospective on my experiences as the Director of the National Institute of Justice for the Crime, Law, and Deviance newsletter, I was faced with having to reconcile in print three seemingly contradictory “facts.” Fact one, the job was not what I expected it to be. Fact two, it was the hardest job I have ever had in my life. And, fact three, I was very glad to have had the opportunity to have served as the Director of NIJ. Indeed, I would do it again. In this essay, I discuss each of these facts in turn.

SPRING/SUMMER 2013

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I. What was I expecting the Director’s job to be?

When I was considering applying for the Director’s position, I was advised that this was a management position. In fact, I was told in no uncertain terms that I would be managing research, not actually doing any research. I was also advised that I would have to deal with the bureaucracy in the federal government. All well and good, but I still believed that the bulk of my job would be articulating a broad strategic vision for NIJ. Moreover, in order to do this well, I expected to share my vision with Congressional staff as well as staff from Justice Department, the Office of Management and Budget, and ultimately the White House as I charted a course for NIJ moving forward.

What I learned very quickly was that everything that happens at NIJ, no matter how large or small, eventually comes to the desk of the Director. During my first week, I was signing time sheets, approving rental cars, and the like. This was long before “Muffingate!” After that crisis, my new responsibility included extensive review of spreadsheets on conference costs for all NIJ events.

I was also not prepared for running an agency within the federal government. I was immediately faced with thorny personnel matters and I had to learn about the union and HR. I was not prepared for reviews by the General Accounting Office or investigations by the Office of the Inspector General. In addition,

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Moving the NIJ Forward *(continued from page 1)*

NIJ sat in the Office of Justice Programs and that meant that I had a “boss” – the Assistant Attorney General. For a 30 year academic, this was a shock. Yes, in the university there are chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents. But this was different and all of you that are tenured faculty members reading this know what I mean.

Last and perhaps most important, I was terribly naïve about the federal budgeting process. I did not expect to become so enmeshed in matters relating to the budget, but it is the most crucial part of the job. At one of my first “meet and greet” sessions that I had with senior leaders in the Office of Justice Programs, I was told “John, I do not care how many good ideas you have, if you do not have appropriations you got nothing.” Welcome to government! I quickly learned about Continuing Resolutions (CRs), the OMB Passback, and the dreaded Spring Call.²

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II. Why was the job so hard?

The pace of the NIJ Director’s job was in a word relentless. Each day was a constant swirl of decisions, decisions, and more decisions, with no time to breathe, let alone think. Moreover, I confess that I was naïve about what it meant to be a PAS – a presidential appointment with Senate confirmation. It is a big deal, both in NIJ and outside of NIJ. You are a public figure and the face of the organization. As a professor you hope and pray that someone will listen to you. As NIJ Director, I found out that everyone listens, and they parse and deconstruct each word. You also can’t work at home or go in to your office and shut your door. I repeat you are the face of the organization and are responsible for everything, including the organization climate.

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Besides the long hours I spent in the office and the fact that I felt on the job 24-7, one of the biggest challenges was the steep learning curve I faced. As a former grantee, I thought I knew NIJ. Sure, I knew about some of the social science research NIJ funded, but I was not prepared for the wide range of topics covered in the social sciences. Then there was the work of the Office of Science and Technology where I learned about body armor, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) protective suits, less than lethal technologies (can you say Tasers), unmanned aircraft for law enforcement, and the Assault Intervention Device -- a device designed to control rowdy inmates using energy beams that penetrate the skin to cause a burning sensation. Finally, there was the Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences which represents a large share of the overall budget at NIJ.

The program covered Research and Development work across a wide array of forensic sciences, including DNA; the DNA Backlog Reduction Program; Post-conviction DNA testing; Solving Cold Cases with DNA; Using DNA Technology to Identify the Missing; and overseeing the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (known as NamUs), to name, but a few of the programs.

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Member News

JOHN EASON is transitioning to the Department of Sociology at Texas A&M this fall as Assistant Professor from his current Assistant Professor position at ASU.

DAVID GREENBERG's paper on the New York Crime Drop, which appeared in a special issue of *Justice Quarterly* (Jan. 2013) devoted to that topic, was highlighted in articles appearing in the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Atlantic* online, the *New Yorker*, and *gawker.com*. He was interviewed about it on the Leonard Lopate show (NPR) and the Brian Lehrer show (CUNY-TV).

XAVIER L. GUADALUPE-DIAZ has formally accepted an offer for a tenure-track position at Framingham State University. The university is expanding a new undergraduate criminology program in their Department of Sociology.

WENDI JOHNSON has been awarded a two-year grant from the National Institute of Justice to fund postdoctoral research at Bowling Green State University under the guidance of distinguished research professor, Dr. Peggy Giordano. The project, "Patterns, Precursors and Consequences of Teen Dating Violence: Analyzing Gendered and Generic Pathways," will draw on five waves of data from the Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS) to examine not only the context of teen dating violence during adolescence, but also any long-reaching consequences into young adulthood. TARS includes measures of both victimization and perpetration across all five waves of data. This research will provide much needed information to help shape policy on prevention and intervention that is specific to teens and young adults.

WILLIAM ALEX PRIDEMORE has accepted a position as Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, where he will also be a member of the 4-person Evidence-Based Policy cluster. He will begin in the fall of 2013.

HEATHER SCHOENFELD has taken a new position (starting Fall 2013) as an Assistant Professor of Legal Studies and of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University

STEVEN STACK, Professor at Wayne State University, served as the opponent for a PhD defense hearing, lasting 2.5 hours, of now Dr. Tanya Jukkala, at the Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. The dissertation title is *Suicide in Russia: A Macrosociological Study*. All dissertation defenses at Uppsala involve an external expert, an opponent, who critically evaluates a dissertation. The audiences are large, comprising up to 100 professors, graduate students, the media, and other interested parties.

MONICA WILLIAMS has accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the Department of Criminal Justice at Weber State University.

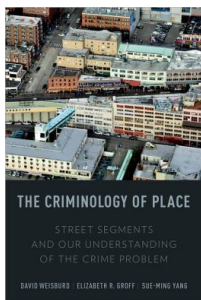
Member Publications

“Collective Action, Collective Reaction: Inspecting Bad Apples in Accounts for Organizational Deviance & Discrimination” by **Tim Berard**. In *Interaction and Everyday Life: Phenomenological and Ethnomethodological Essays in Honor of George Psathas*, ed. Hisashi Nasu and Frances Waksler. (Lexington, 2012).

“The Transformation of America’s Penal Order: A Historicized Political Sociology of Punishment” by **Michael Campbell** and **Heather Schoenfeld**. *American Journal of Sociology*, March 2013, Vol. 118, No. 5: 1375-1423.

The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence, and the American Dream by **Randol Contreras** (UC Press, 2013). Dr. Randol Contreras examines the lives of Dominican Stickup Kids, or drug robbers, in a South Bronx neighborhood. The research covers over a decade of fieldwork, where he hung out with men who brutally robbed drug dealers storing large amounts of heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and cash. Through rich field data and theory, Contreras examines a drug robbery’s organization and violence; the emotional and gendered aspects of torture; and how the relentless pursuit of the American Dream led these men to growing violence and eventual self-destruction. In all, *The Stickup Kids* urges readers to explore the ravages of the drug trade while masterfully uncovering the hidden social forces that produce violent and self-destructive individuals.

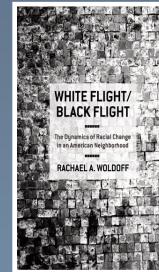
Crime and Justice in India edited by **N. Prabha Unnithan** (Sage, 2013). 19 substantive chapters linked by 5 commentary chapters on policing, criminal courts and corrections India.



The Criminology of Place: Street Segments and Our Understanding of the Crime Problem by **David Weisburd, Elizabeth R. Groff** and **Sue-Ming Yang** (Oxford, 2012). This book presents a new and different way of looking at the crime problem by examining why specific streets in a city have specific crime trends over time. Based on a 16-year longitudinal study of crime in Seattle, Washington, the book focuses our attention on micro communities, defined as street

segments. The authors identify a large group of possible crime risk and protective factors for street segments and an array of interventions that could be implemented to address them. This groundbreaking book radically alters traditional thinking about the crime problem and what we should do about it.

BOOK AWARD



CLD member **RACHAEL WOLDOFF**, associate

professor of Sociology at West Virginia University, received the 2013 Best Book Award for *White Flight/Black Flight: The Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood* at the Urban Affairs Association's Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The award is given every other year for the best book in the field of urban affairs/urban studies.

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In the end though, it was the federal budget that caused me the most stress and concern. In my first fiscal year at NIJ, we had a continuing resolution which gave us funds until mid-April. In effect, this meant that I did not know with any certainty what level of funds we could provide the research community in fiscal year 2011. Moreover, I had no idea what our budget would be for fiscal year 2012 which began October 1, 2011. In March, 2011, I learned about Spring Call when I was asked to provide my plans for fiscal year 2013! I said I do not know my budget for FY 11 or FY 12, how can I plan for FY 13? I was told (once again) "Welcome to government!"

III. Why am I glad I did it?

As a professor, you write articles and books, you teach undergraduate and graduate students, you can choose to be involved in professional organizations like ASA or ASC, and you can serve as an editor of a journal or sit on an editorial board. All worthy actions, but being the Director of NIJ is quite different. Simply put, NIJ is a larger stage and an incredible platform. I had a wide range of experiences that I cannot even begin to recount. To illustrate but one, it was personally gratifying for me to have had the opportunity to brief the Attorney General, the Associate Attorney General, the Assistant Attorney General, and the staff of the Office of Justice Programs, respectively, regarding my research on crime and the life course.

The fact is I had a once in a lifetime opportunity to shape criminal justice research and practice for years to come. I strongly believed that NIJ needed to develop a cutting edge research agenda that addressed the major topics of interest in the field. Consider the following. In the last 40 years in the field of criminal justice, two of the most important

developments were the run-up in the rate of incarceration, sometimes referred to as mass incarceration, and the crime rate increases during the 1980s, followed by an equally large crime rate declines during the 1990s and continuing into the new century. Yet NIJ had no active, systematic research portfolio on either topic. In FY 2011, NIJ co-funded with the MacArthur Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences to create a panel to study the causes and consequences of high rates of incarceration. In FY 2012, NIJ funded the National Academy of Sciences to host a series of roundtables to better understanding crime trends.

In addition, in FY 2011 and FY 2012, NIJ has funded research in a number of new areas including: California realignment; race, crime, and victimization; victim-offender overlap; desistance from crime; police legitimacy; and criminal sanctions. We have also continued our work in our signature research programs such as violence against women, teen dating violence, and sexual assault.

One of the ideas that I emphasized at NIJ was "Translational Criminology." I believe translational criminology acknowledges NIJ's unique mission to facilitate rigorous research that is relevant to the practice and policy. The idea of translational criminology is simple, yet powerful. If we want to prevent, reduce, and manage crime, scientific discoveries must be translated into policy and practice. Translational criminology aims to break down barriers between basic and applied research by creating a dynamic interface between research and practice. This process is a two-way street -- scientists discover new tools and ideas for use in the field and evaluate their impact. In turn, practitioners offer novel observations from the field setting that stimulate basic investigation.

It has truly been an honor to serve my country under the leadership of President

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Barack Obama. Being the Director of NIJ has been one of the highlights of my career. But this is not about me. Because of the dedicated and hardworking staff, I believe NIJ is in a very good place today. Moreover, I am confident that the progress we have made together during my tenure will continue in the future. Indeed, NIJ is on an irreversible trajectory and the future will only be brighter and better and that is very good news for the field of criminology and criminal justice.³

Endnotes

¹ I thank Kris Rose and Rob Sampson for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

² A continuing resolution is a type of appropriations legislation used by the United States Congress to fund government agencies if a formal appropriations bill has not been signed into law. After decisions by the OMB director and President, OMB tells the agency what funds it can have. This is commonly called the passback. Spring call is planning for a budget submission for two years into the future. For more details see http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/about/pdfs/budget_process.pdf (accessed March 11, 2013).

³ This essay is culled from a larger paper that is in preparation for a session scheduled for the 2013 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association entitled "Lost in Translation? The Role of Research in Policy and Practice."

Call for Papers



societies

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Conferences and Workshops

The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) 2013 Conference

The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) conference this year celebrates 50 years of Sociology in Australia. The conference is being hosted by the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University (<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/psi/>), which has great sociology and criminology programs. For more information, visit <http://www.tasa.org.au/tasa-conference/tasa-conference-2013/> or contact CLD member Helen Forbes-Mewett: helen.forbesmewett@monash.edu.

Indiana University Workshop in Methods

The mission of the Workshop in Methods is to provide introductory education and training in sophisticated research methods to graduate students and faculty in the social sciences. Our goal is to supplement statistics and methods courses across campus with topical workshops led by leading methodological scholars. Workshops take various forms, including (1) seminars on specific research methods and tools and (2) informational presentations on topics such as grant writing, statistical and methodological consulting, and successfully navigating IRB.

Distinguished guests include Ken Bollen, Katherine Curtis, Peer Fiss, Chris Hansen, Jim Jaccard, Bill Jacoby, Karen Kafadar, Ken Land, Rod Little, Scott Long, Sara Mitchell, David McDowall, Daniel Nagin, Lisa Pearce, Aline Sayer, Phil Schrodt, Tom Smith, and Doug Wiebe. Presentation slides and videos are available on our website: <http://www.iub.edu/~wim/index.shtml>.

During the summer WIM also hosts a small number of ICPSR short courses in statistical methods. We will host at least two this summer, one on missing data and one on Bayesian methods. More information on these is available on our website or on the ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods website: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/sumprog/>.

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