Reflections on the Ascendancy of Biosocial Criminology
Kevin M. Beaver, Florida State University*
John Paul Wright, University of Cincinnati*

Biosocial criminology has recently received a fair bit of attention ranging from media coverage of important studies to scholarly discourse about the implications of the results. Even the past president of ACJS and ASC, Francis T. Cullen, has referred to biosocial criminology as the criminology of the future. What has generated this interest? In the past few years more articles and books have been published on the topic than have been published during the entire existence of criminology. More classes have been offered across colleges and universities and more students have been exposed to this material than ever before. More panels have been presented at academic meetings than at any time in the past. Scholars trained in biosocial criminology now also populate the faculty ranks not only at Florida State University and the University of Cincinnati, where we work, but also at the University of Texas at Dallas and Sam Houston State University, to name just a couple.

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President’s Message

Greetings fellow ACJS members! I am honored to serve as President of ACJS. It is a position previously held by others who dedicated their time in office, and thereafter, to developing and then growing the Academy to meet the demands of academics, professionals and students. It is also a position held by individuals who over time have contributed significantly to the study of criminal justice. I intend to continue the work of the recent presidents and seek to improve the overall prestige of the Academy.

I want to first congratulate Craig on a very successful presidency. His efforts on a number of critical tasks are worthy of special mention. He has placed the organization in a strong financial position that will make my goals easier to accomplish. Specifically, he was instrumental in negotiating a new contract with Taylor and Francis for our journals. These journals are thriving under the current editors Cassia Spohn and George Higgins; *Justice Quarterly’s* impact rating among journals has improved and funds from subscriptions and royalties are also on the rise. During the past year, Craig also sought to increase the diversity of members, Academy leaders and conference participants. Finally, Craig and Lorenzo Boyd, his Program Chair, and the 2013 Program Committee are to be commended for the excellent conference in Dallas.

I hope to expand upon many of the initiatives Craig and the Executive Board have supported during the past several years. We will continue to reach out to an international audience and also encourage diversity not only in membership, but also in leadership roles within the Academy. Additionally, we will continue the relationship with SAGE and the professional development workshops, which have been a tremendous success under Craig’s leadership. Recently, the Executive Board voted to continue its work encouraging policy makers to support scientific research on crime and criminal justice and to educate them about the importance of implementing evidence-based practices. These efforts were initiated during the presidency of Melissa Barlow and have been conducted in collaboration with the American Society of Criminology during the past several years. This year the ACJS/ASC policy coalition will begin work with the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) as part of this initiative.

Spearheaded by Executive Director Mary Stohr, the Academy will be expanding efforts to reach out to professional organizations. We have been in discussions with representatives from the National Institute of Corrections, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the American Jail Association about the...
formation of partnerships and the development of on-going research relationships, while also encouraging members of these organizations to participate in our annual conference.

At the same time, the Executive Board will also continue to assess where our organization is headed. It is my goal to make sure the Executive Board is listening to its members, our most important audience. One example of this which you should have received recently is a brief email survey asking your opinion on whether electronic conference programs should be continued at future conferences. Please respond to the survey so that we can plan for the 2014 conference as this is our best means for gauging member opinions, and deciphering if our own views mirror the preferences of the constituents we serve.

You should also have received an email from the ACJS office advising people that the electronic abstract submission system for the 2014 annual conference is now open. My co-chairs, Christine Famega and Nicole Leeper Piquero, have been working to ensure that next year’s program is a success. Please note that the 2014 conference will take place a month earlier than usual, so please mark your calendars accordingly. The conference will begin on February 18th and continue through February 22nd at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, a venue surrounded by bars and restaurants. Though the conference is earlier than in recent years, we have retained the traditional submission time frame and ask that people submit materials by September 10, with the final acceptance date being September 28.

In closing, First Vice President Brian Payne is seeking committee volunteers. Last year, I was overwhelmed by the number of people volunteering to serve on ACJS standing committees. This is an excellent opportunity for people to learn about ACJS, while also working with colleagues to improve the Academy. People appointed this year would assume their committee responsibilities at the 2014 annual conference.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia.

*James Frank is the President of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. He is also a Professor and the Interim Director of the Center for Criminal Justice Research at the University of Cincinnati. He has been the principal investigator for a number of policing-related research projects that primarily focus on understanding the work routines and behavior of street-level police officers. These research projects have examined officer use of evolving police technology, the hiring practices of police agencies, the influence of race on traffic stops, officer decision making, attitudes toward the police and the implementation of problem solving strategies. He has also worked on projects examining juror understanding of death penalty instructions and the impact of collateral consequences of conviction. He has published policing articles in *Justice Quarterly, Police Quarterly, Crime and Delinquency, Criminology and Public Policy, and the Journal of Criminal Justice and Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategy and Management*, among others.*

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**Upcoming ACJS Meetings**

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<td>February 18-22, 2014</td>
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Of course, when the benchmark is zero, any addition is substantial, but the elevation and spread of biosocial criminology almost didn’t happen. And despite its current recognition, biosocial criminology still hangs perilously close to criminological obscurity. Indeed, the battle for intellectual recognition has been hard fought and we and our colleagues have spent many hours over the phone and by email working to bring biosocial criminology to the forefront of criminology. As leading scholars in the area, we were on the ground floor of this expansion. We’ve watched as our work has generated research, we’ve listened to the controversy, and we’ve been part of a broader scholarly reflection on the nature (no pun intended) of criminology. We’ve experienced first-hand the institutional and intellectual constraints that almost kept biosocial criminology from emerging. We’ve dealt with the intellectual attacks, the snarky comments, and the almost libelous anonymous journal reviews. Our experiences in pushing this arena of research are thus unique and are punctuated by periods of success, moments of failure, and the sometimes stinging rebuke of our fellow criminologists. Through it all, however, we have gleaned several lessons, lessons born from time and experience. Some of these lessons reflect positively on the field, some do not.

In this essay, we present our experiences in revitalizing, if not reinventing, a line of research that for decades had been dismissed by criminologists. We explain how we strategically approached the topic, deciding initially to conduct tests on the biology of self-control as a way of introducing the topic to criminologists. We describe the reactions of fellow criminologists, many of whom confided secretly to us that they agreed with the approach but would never risk their careers or reputations to do so. We address our successes and our failures and some of the criticisms leveled at us.

In the Beginning
Trained as a sociological criminologist and convinced of the power of parenting to cause crime, Wright’s early work on the parenting-crime nexus nonetheless left him with serious questions. Contrary to his personal views and contrary to the often unconstrained statements linking parenting practices to youth misbehavior, he found most studies reported small and often insignificant results. His curiosity at the marginal parenting effects reported so frequently in the literature came to full bloom, however, after reading Judith Rich Harris’, The Nurture Assumption. For Wright, Harris’ arguments on the limits of parenting were provocative, were contrary to his beliefs, but were also intriguing. Setting out to “prove Harris wrong,” he quickly learned that Harris’ work was far deeper and more penetrating that even he had realized. Her award-winning articles and books had artfully drawn out not only the limitations of parenting, but they also pointed to the serious methodological shortcomings embedded in most social science research—shortcomings that emerged in part from ignoring biological influences. For Wright, confronting Harris was the jumping off point: It opened the door to taking biology seriously and to confronting his own preconceived biases.

Fast forward a few years, sitting in an office at the University of Cincinnati, we discussed the findings relating biological

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ACJS 2014 Annual Conference

“Perceptions of Crime and Criminal Justice”

February 18-22, 2014
Marriott Philadelphia Downtown
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Program Chairs:

Nicole Leeper Piquero, University of Texas at Dallas, npiquero@utdallas.edu
Christine M. Famega, California State University – San Bernardino, cfamega@csusb.edu

Host Hotel:

Marriott Philadelphia Downtown
1201 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
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and genetic influences on a range of behaviors, including aggression and violence, found in other disciplines. We discussed how these findings could be imported into criminology, how they had direct application to our theories, and how their inclusion could add to a deeper and more scientific understanding of criminal behavior. We discussed Harris and David Rowe’s work on the limits of parenting and we discussed how criminologists could point to obviously brain-based functions, such as self-control, without any reference to or awareness of brain structure or functioning or any reference to studies on early temperament. It was though entire fields of science simply didn’t exist. Even so, we knew that with the exceptions of a handful of criminologists, such as Anthony Walsh, Lee Ellis, Diana Fishbein, and Adrian Raine, no other criminologist showed an inkling of interest in biology. And we also knew that many criminologists were ardent, if not strident, in their defense of a purely sociological criminology.

Discussions with colleagues almost always yielded the same advice: Do not pursue this line of research. The reasons, too, were almost always the same. Time and again we were admonished that our colleagues would think us to be fascists, to be racists, or to be politically conservative—a redundancy in the eyes of many criminologists. Obviously, these warnings went unheeded. Sometimes in the research process we learn not only about the processes under study, but we also learn a little bit about ourselves. We get to confront, on occasion, our own biases, our own anxieties, and our own intellectual limitations. Ignoring the many and varied cautions offered by our friends and colleagues, we have learned that it takes a unique set of personality characteristics to pursue controversial research. As a group, biosocial criminologists seem willing to pursue science at great personal and career risks. Indeed, many current biosocial criminologists seem almost contrarian in their orientation—questioning the core findings of entire bodies of research. We have learned that we each had a willingness to take risks, that we each had a resistance to, but not immunity from, sometimes seething criticism, and that we each shared an allegiance to the scientific method more than we shared an allegiance to criminology. At the end of the day, we decided some time ago, science will work to prove us correct or to prove us wrong.

Thus it is fair to say that had we been swayed by the advice of friends and colleagues, criminology would still be arguing that biology is irrelevant to criminal behavior. Yet we do not reduce the rise of biosocial criminology to personality characteristics alone. Instead we believe it instructive that we were both at the University of Cincinnati (UC) at the same time. While we are clearly biased in our feelings towards UC, we believe it true that the environment at UC served (and still serves) as an incubator for ideas, no matter how controversial they may be. It is fair to say that at UC nobody cares what you research, nobody censures your ideas, and nobody would ever interfere with another’s research agenda. The environment is intellectually stimulating and remains to this day a place where ideas are discussed openly. Criminologists at UC fully supported this line of scholarship, not necessarily because they agreed with it, but because they strongly believe in and support academic freedom. Yet another factor, however, was also involved in transforming biosocial criminology from an
idea to a reality—that of luck. Few people know this, but after Beaver received his Master’s degree in criminal justice from UC he began a Ph.D. in sociology at UC. During this time, a series of events unfolded (all of which swirled around his research interests in biosocial criminology) that led to him being invited to leave the sociology program. Ultimately, he decided to continue to pursue his Ph.D. in the criminal justice department at UC. For students reading this column, we hope the message is clear: Adversity is sometimes opportunity.

It’s safe to say that when we started conducting research using biological markers, twin data, and full family samples, that we were neophytes. We had a lot to learn as neither of us had formal academic training in the area or in biological mathematics or behavioral genetic modeling strategies. It would be an understatement to say that biosocial criminologists have to know much, much more than their traditionally trained counterparts. Darwinian evolution, evolutionary psychology, organic chemistry, brain development, human and behavioral genetics, and various other fields contain the knowledge necessary to conduct reliable research in this area. Obviously, nobody can be fully trained in each area so we quickly recognized that we had to learn enough in each field to understand the operative mechanisms. Understanding, however, does not always translate into a specialization—something we have never claimed. From the beginning we recognized that biosocial criminology was going to be highly inter-disciplinary and that we would have to rely on the genius found in other fields for direction and guidance. This created an almost dual citizenship role for us. At one level we were criminologists, at another level we were working in many of the “hard sciences.”

This dual citizenship fostered not only a unique self-identity but also created a chasm that would emerge on occasion. On one hand, our criminological critics would argue that we were not really conducting criminological work. On the other hand, when we sent our work to genetics or biology journals we would be criticized for not being more biologically sophisticated. Thus we sometimes found ourselves rejected by criminologists and then rejected by scholars in the hard sciences. Having now published in a broad range of journals, across the hard and soft sciences, we can report with some accuracy that reviewers share many of the same characteristics! Nonetheless, we grew to appreciate that political agendas, disciplinary boundary enforcement, reviewer idiosyncrasies, and unreasonable methodological criticisms were not restricted to criminology.

When the first author received his Ph.D. from the University of Cincinnati another problem immediately emerged. At the time no junior scholar dared to conduct research into the biology of crime. He, however, had published papers on genes and crime and his dissertation focused on genetic influences on delinquency. From the outset he was rejected from various jobs. On occasion members of hiring committees would report back, anonymously of course, that his work in biosocial criminology was the determining factor. After being recommended for an interview by the hiring sub-committee at one prestigious university, his application was canned because, as we were told, faculty “didn’t want someone like that.” Nonetheless, thanks to the courage of Tom Blomberg, the Dean of the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University (FSU), along with the support of the faculty, the first author found a home at FSU.
All of this is to point out that many factors had to emerge at the right time for us to be able to advance biosocial criminology. Not only did these factors have to emerge but we had to overcome a series of unique obstacles. These obstacles were unique in the sense that criminology, specifically, and the social sciences in general, had a long history of seeing the role of biology in behavior as “taboo.” When we first started our efforts to publish results showing a biological link to criminal conduct, we were immediately greeted with two inter-related issues. First, because biology had essentially been excommunicated from criminology, journal editors had few, if any, scholars who were appropriately qualified to review our work. Indeed, we received several letters from journal editors saying they didn’t know who to send our paper to for review. Other editors sought out experts in the hard sciences, experts who understood biology and genetics but who knew nothing of criminal behavior.

Second, we regularly received reviews that were purely ideological or full of rhetoric. Most of these reviews accused us of wanting to revive Lombroso—a criticism we still sometimes receive. Other reviews accused us of having less than charitable, indeed, ulterior motivations. Moreover, many reviewers stated simply that our research was potentially dangerous and thus should be held to extremely high methodological standards—standards no social science paper could meet, of course. Of all the criticisms we have received from anonymous reviewers, however, it is the policy criticism that draws our ire the most. It draws our ire because we believe it is a weasel way of killing an otherwise acceptable paper. On the one hand, it allows the reviewer to accept the findings we have presented and thus for the reviewer to psychologically maintain their scientific integrity, but on the other hand, it also allows them to reject the paper based on purely political motives.

**Changing the Tide**

When we first became interested in the biosocial foundations to antisocial behaviors, we were amazed at how much evidence had accrued in other fields of study linking biological factors to all different sorts of human behaviors and traits. When we would discuss these findings with colleagues, the response often centered on the fact that the behaviors and traits being studied by these other fields did not align perfectly with what criminologists studied. Sure, tons of studies showed that conduct disorder, self-regulation, ADHD, aggression, violence, and psychopathic traits were under substantial genetic influence, but those findings would not necessarily apply to delinquency, criminal involvement, or self-control. We learned early on that the findings being produced in other fields of study would not be accepted as evidence of biological influences on measures studied by criminologists. We thus needed a new plan of action to figure out whether biological factors mattered to criminological constructs.

Being empiricists, we figured we could conduct our own studies to figure out the extent to which biological factors mattered. We were told, however, that the datasets analyzed by criminologists simply did not include biological markers. At first, this left us in a precarious situation; we couldn’t cite research outside of criminology, but at the same time, we couldn’t conduct our own studies. If we had taken criminologists’ words
at face value, then we simply would not have conducted any research. After a bit of investigative work, however, we realized that there were many different samples available that included information that could be used to study biosocial factors. Large samples, such as the NLSY and Add Health, included kinship pairs and others, such as the NYS, now have genotyped their subjects (but these data are not publicly available). Still others, such as the ECLS-K, ECLS-B, and CPP, also are publicly available, can be used in biosocial studies, and have measures directly relevant to criminological theories. Once we realized that criminologists simply ignored the biosocial measures/designs of these samples, we were in business. We knew we could analyze samples previously used by criminologists and would be able to estimate biosocial influences (if they existed) in a way that was more consumable to criminologists. And so we published and published and published.

The evidence, at least to us, is now so overwhelming in favor of a genetic influence on all of the behaviors and traits studied by criminologists that to argue otherwise is simply anti-scientific. Biosocial studies have shown genetic influences on measures of crime, delinquency, and self-control as well as violence, aggression, and virtually every environment central to criminological theories. Although precise estimates vary, genes tend to account for about 50 percent of the variance in criminal behavior, with the remaining variance attributed to nonshared environmental influences. Rather than accepting these findings, criminologists have come up with (and continue to come up with) criticisms to downplay these findings.

In the beginning, the criticisms against biosocial criminologists were tied to Lombroso, as though we were measuring cranial volume with plant seeds, or we were accused of advancing a new eugenics movement. As empirical evidence emerged (and continues to emerge) connecting biological/genetic factors to antisocial behaviors, the criticisms have become savvier. We now are told, for example, that biosocial criminologists have been too productive, that many biosocial studies are simply replication studies and not all that important (as if somehow replication—the bedrock of science—is something to be ashamed of), that the research studies are iterative and derivative, that existing criminological studies do control for genetic confounding, and that virtually all criminological theories recognize the importance of genes/biology (really?).

We leave it up to the reader to evaluate the merits of these criticisms. However, we find it interesting that many of these criticisms have not been advanced towards other segments of criminology. “Do we really need another study showing the genetics of self-control,” we were recently asked? Maybe, maybe not. But do we also need more studies on social bonds, delinquent peers, race effects in criminal justice processing, or federal sentencing? And exactly where is the evidence that current criminological theories, excluding Moffitt’s work, have anything at all to say about biology? We’ve looked. They don’t.

The Way Forward

Unlike the biosocial criminology of the past, contemporary biosocial criminology is here to stay and it is becoming stronger and more influential with each passing year. Now more
than ever, graduate students are applying to programs where biosocial criminology courses are taught and where they can make biosocial criminology their research area of expertise. Even students who are skeptical of this perspective are enrolling in these types of courses on a level that has never before been seen. In short, with each successive cohort of Ph.D. students, biosocial criminology is becoming more and more mainstream and, at the same time, it is becoming a more integral part of graduate-level training. Still, however, at most Ph.D. programs biosocial criminology courses are not available and nobody on faculty actively studies this perspective. So, given the rise of biosocial criminology, how can this omission be addressed? Below we offer three key answers.

First, it is necessary that all samples that are collected include biological variables or are designed so that behavioral genetic methodologies can be utilized. This could be as simple as including at least two siblings from the same household, including measures of low resting heart rate, including measures of cortisol, including measures of 2D:4D ratios, or it could be more complex, such as genotyping respondents or subjecting them to brain scans. Given all of the research findings produced in an array of fields, it would be antiscientific to continue to collect samples that exclude biological data.

Second, and relatedly, it has become abundantly apparent that criminological studies must employ research designs that are capable of controlling for genetic influences. For instance, there have been a number of recent studies published in criminology and sociology journals that have since been replicated within a behavioral genetic design. These studies show that the original set of results were significantly biased or were incorrect due to genetic confounding. By developing samples that always include genetically informative data, it will be possible to create higher quality studies that are not open to attacks of genetic confounding. We should also point out that most of the existing samples that criminologists analyze are able to be conducted within a genetically sensitive research design. It’s just that criminologists don’t exploit these data in the ways that they could or should.

Third, criminological theories need to be changed to take into account the findings showing that genetic influences matter for antisocial outcomes. Certainly there has been a good deal of work done already on this for some theories, such as Gottfredson and Hirschi’s theory of low self-control, but many other theories are compatible with a biosocial perspective. Social learning theory, strain theory, and social bonding theory are just a few of the many theories that could be scientifically enhanced and better specified by taking biology seriously. Ultimately it will be up to mainstream criminologists as to whether this type of theoretical modification is accomplished. As it stands now, most theories have remained relatively intact despite mounds of empirical research showing that they should be altered to stay consistent with the existing research findings.

Although we have witnessed a change in the field of criminology since we began working in this area, we still see ideological resistance to examining the biosocial correlates to antisocial behaviors. To illustrate, in a recent review of a
manuscript submitted for publication, a reviewer made the following comment to us: “It’s not that criminologists are antagonistic towards biosocial criminology, it’s that they simply don’t care.” We believe this to be progress, since antipathy has apparently replaced outright hostility. Of course, our hope is that this apathetic reaction to biosocial criminology is unique to this single reviewer. We hope that criminologists do care about biosocial criminology and at least confront the findings emerging from this line of research in a straightforward and scientific way. If they do so, then in the end we will be closer to not only identifying all of the factors that cause crime, whether they are purely social or biosocial, but we will also be closer to predicting behavior at the individual level and, hopefully, in short-circuiting the pathways that lead to a life of crime.

We believe biosocial criminology offers scholars entirely new sets of research questions and because of the lure of these puzzles will eventually attract a broader range of interests. We also believe that the ideological resistance to biology will be lessened when criminologists realize that biosocial criminology points to the need for early intervention and for the use of scientifically validated treatments. Moreover, we believe that the injection of biosocial findings into criminology has been intellectually healthy and can help to move criminology into the 21st Century. Yet we also believe that for all of our publications, for all of the students we have produced, and for all the struggles we have experienced in this field, that our greatest contribution has been largely overlooked: Quite simply, we have brought biology out of the shadows and have made talking about biology and behavior safe. Scholars with established reputations, as well as those who are moving up the academic ranks, can now discuss biology without fear of “academic mobbing.” In the end, then, our real hope is that we have advanced science simply by talking about the link between biology and crime publicly.

*Kevin M. Beaver* is an Associate Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. Beaver has published more than 150 articles and more than 25 book chapters and is the author/editor of 10 books, including *Biosocial Criminology: A Primer* (Kendall/Huent, 2009). His research examines the biosocial underpinnings to antisocial behaviors. He has employed behavioral genetic and molecular genetic methodologies to unpack the gene-environmental basis to a range of criminal and delinquent outcomes. His research has appeared in journals such as *Criminology, American Journal of Public Health, Biological Psychiatry, Justice Quarterly*, and *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, among others.

*John Paul Wright* is an Associate Professor and Graduate Director at the University of Cincinnati. He has published numerous articles and books and consults regularly with various criminal justice agencies. His work can be found in leading criminal justice, genetic, and psychological, and psychiatric journals. His most recent book is *Life-Course Criminality: Criminals in the Making*. Wright’s focus is on the development of criminal violence across the life-course, especially biological and genetic factors related to behavioral maladaptation. His work also seeks to integrate findings from a number of disciplines, including human behavioral genetics, psychology, and biology.
Dallas Conference Highlights

Craig Hemmens, ACJS Past President*

The 50th Anniversary of the founding of ACJS was celebrated at the Annual Meeting in Dallas, March 19-23. The program included a Past Presidents Panel, moderated by former president Dick Bennett. Included on the panel was Ed Farris, who was present at the founding of ACJS in 1963. The panelists discussed the challenges they faced during their presidency as well as what they saw as the challenges for ACJS going forward. After the panel, the annual President’s Reception (renamed for this year as the Past Presidents Reception, was held).

Other highlights related to the 50th Anniversary included the inclusion in the materials provided to everyone who registered for the conference a book on the history of ACJS, written by ACJS Historian Will Oliver, and a commemorative t-shirt. Included in the book were one-page biographies and a photo of each of the past presidents. These biographies were also enlarged and placed in the lobby area outside the Exhibit Hall. There were also several invited speakers at the Annual Meeting. These included Dallas District Attorney Craig Watkins, who established a “Conviction Integrity Unit” tasked with reviewing claims of wrongful convictions. Also, noted attorney and author David Dow spoke about the death penalty and his representation, on appeal, of a number of death-sentenced Texas inmates. Another speaker was Rachel Toor, who writes a regular column on writing and publishing for the Chronicle of Higher Education (as well as a column on long distance running for Running Times). We were fortunate to have some great invited speakers at the conference.

I would like to extend a(nother) thanks to my awesome Program Chair, Lorenzo Boyd, as well as the members of the Program Committee, for their hard work this year. They did an amazing job! As you read this issue of ACJS Today, please enjoy looking through all of the photos which highlight the wonderful time we had in Dallas. Thanks, again, to those of you who came to the conference; and I hope to see you in Philadelphia for the next one.

Craig Hemmens
ACJS President, 2012-2013

*Craig Hemmens is the immediate Past President of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. He is also Department Head and Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Missouri State University.
The newest recipient of the ACJS Certified Program, shown here with President Craig Hemmens, was North Carolina Central University for their Bachelor of Science Program. Receiving the award was Chair and Associate Professor, Harvey L. McMurray.

Dallas District Attorney Craig Watkins is given a plaque for being a guest speaker. In his speech, Watkins discussed the “Conviction Integrity Unit,” which he helped to establish.

Past ACJS Presidents James Marquart and Melissa Barlow.

Dick Bennett enthusiastically leads the discussion at the Past Presidents Panel.
The 2012-2013 ACJS Executive Board did an excellent job of organizing the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Dallas.

1st Vice President Brian Payne celebrated a birthday while at the conference.

ACJS President, Craig Hemmens, and Program Chair, Lorenzo Boyd, manage to get away from the conference, for at least a few minutes, to do some sightseeing.

Mark Stafford and Donna Vandiver at the 2013 ACJS Annual Meeting.
More than twenty years ago, Rik Scarce was a doctoral student at Washington State University researching the radical environmental movement. As part of his research design, he conducted in-depth interviews with individuals involved in direct action campaigns and civil disobedience. After a break-in at the university, law enforcement officials interrogated Scarce, asking him to reveal confidential information he collected during the interviews. Scarce was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury and was jailed for 159 days for contempt of court after refusing to violate confidentiality agreements he made with research subjects. Recently, I caught up with Rik Scarce, author of Eco-Warriors. Though he was in the midst of grading a stack of papers, Scarce graciously agreed to answer a few questions and shed light on this very important topic.

RS: A major reason why I was able to gain activists’ trust, I think, was because the government had yet to crack down on the movement. So a guy with no credentials within the movement, and no credentials as a scholar or journalist other than six months writing for a small-town paper in Florida, could fairly easily get folks to open up. Looking back, it was probably naïve on their part and foolish on mine.

RW: I always enjoy reading how qualitative researchers gain entrée.

RS: Yeah, I think the “gatekeeper” phenomenon also played a role. I interviewed one of the Earth First! co-founders, Mike Roselle, fairly early in my research, and I think he probably spread the word that I didn’t seem dangerous. When I made my initial contacts I let folks know whom I had interviewed, so they could easily make a phone call and ask about what others thought of me—whether I was legit or not.

RW: Evidently, you became friends with one of your key informants, which occasionally happens when doing this type of field work. In retrospect, did you get too close to the fire?

RS: You know, I understand those kinds of questions, but I think ethnographers are often troubled by them as well. If our goal—and, according to Max Weber, all sociologists share this goal—is to achieve Verstehen, then what kind of people are we if we get close for research purposes but once the work is over we walk away? Verstehen means deep, empathic understanding. It’s the
opposite of empathy to connect with people and then abandon them. Of course, when you invite someone to house sit for you and they end up being wanted by the FBI, you do have to wonder about your judgment or your luck or both!

**RW:** And, that’s basically what got you into this mess, correct?

**RS:** Yes. The person you alluded to—Rod Coronado—was the guy who was house sitting for us. When Rod’s name came up in press reports about a break-in at my university, I got a sinking feeling in my stomach. Ever since I first interviewed activists who committed property destruction to protect the environment (“ecological sabotage” or “ecotage”) for my book *Eco-Warriors*, I had understood that journalists and scholars enjoyed no legal protection along the lines of religious figures and their parishioners. So, when I saw Rod’s name in the local paper, I started to be concerned that I would be caught up in the FBI’s dragnet. That’s when the anxiety began, but it didn’t really kick in until I was subpoenaed. The possibility of being involved in the case still seemed remote.

**RW:** You were subpoenaed in May of 1992 and tried to keep this a secret from most of your family members as well as most of the University community. Why did you do this?

**RS:** That’s a great question, because I was so foolish to be thinking the way I was. I wanted it to all go away. I was thrilled to be working on my doctorate and was terrified of jail—which is where I knew I was going to go if I was actually taken before a grand jury, since I firmly committed to my research participants and myself that I would never betray a confidence. So not telling others was, I suppose, a way of trying to convince myself that I wouldn’t be locked up.

**RW:** I can certainly see that.

**RS:** There were other, secondary, concerns as well: the stigma of being under a federal grand jury subpoena, for one. The assumption most people make is that if you’ve been subpoenaed, you’ve done something wrong. Also, my attorney thought we might be able to quash the subpoena, and his cautious optimism played a role in my not going public about my situation sooner—why get everyone riled up if it might all go away? He tried legal maneuvers, and my (now) ex-wife sat for an interview with the FBI. But the government wasn’t satisfied. It wanted red meat.

**RW:** And, you were the piece of filet mignon that was about to be devoured by the government. You had not committed a crime and were actually doing the right thing, yet you had this secret that you felt compelled to hide.

**RS:** Correct. It was very difficult, and I didn’t handle it well. In the first two weeks after I was subpoenaed, I barely slept. I lost ten pounds and began feeling paranoia. I remember driving to Portland, Oregon, for a conference that I’d planned on attending for months, and I sweated constantly. I stayed with my brother-in-law and his family, and they must have thought something was wrong with me, since I looked terrible and couldn’t sleep. I was a ball of nerves, constantly nauseous. I knew that if it came to it, I wasn’t going to answer the grand jury’s questions, and I figured I’d be sent to jail as a result. Jail, jail, jail: it was all I thought of.

**RW:** Eventually, you were unable to keep your secret. The local newspaper ran a story on you. What was it like when the secret was out?

**RS:** A lot of people rallied around me, and it was only at that very point that I realized how foolish
I’d been. People were so wonderful. Bob Greene, Steve McGeehee, Cass Davis and his friends—all local people from the Pullman-Moscow community—plus so many grad students and faculty members: They all embraced me. There were fundraisers, and folks from my department eventually took up a monthly collection to support my wife and stepson while I was “away.”

RW: That’s great!

RS: Not everyone was so great, though. Sociology can be a stunningly conservative discipline! A couple of people in my department were openly skeptical of my stance and refused to support a very strong resolution backing my stance; ultimately, a resolution did pass with one “no” vote—cast by a dear friend who said he wouldn’t vote in favor of something so watered-down. Another professor accosted me, saying I wasn’t “behaving like a victim.” It took a long time to understand that she was implying that I was a perpetrator, and in retrospect that was the single ugliest thing anyone said to me. I guess deer in the headlights don’t know how to behave like victims. And the dean of the graduate school openly worked with the FBI, never caring about the principles I stood for or my powerless position. But the WSU faculty senate passed a great resolution, and my close friends drew me and my family even closer. It quickly became clear that I should have been open about the subpoena from the start.

RW: I would assume there were substantial legal fees associated with your involvement in this situation? How did you, as a poor graduate student, manage to keep your head above water during this time?

RS: My wife and I had little savings, and we drained those almost immediately. As I mentioned, there were fundraisers and the like that helped, and ultimately both the American Sociological Association and the American Civil Liberties Union supported me with amicus briefs. But briefs don’t pay bills. I once asked my attorney, Jeffry Finer of Spokane, how much we owed him. He said something like, “More than you’ll ever make!” He never was completely recompensed, not even halfway, I’m sure. Members of a famous rock band actually sent him a good-sized check—they were big supporters of animal rights activists, and my case was viewed in some circles as all about animal rights—so things like that helped, too. But, ultimately, Jeffry took my case on an all-but pro-bono basis.

RW: What was it like testifying before the grand jury?

RS: A lot of words come to mind, surreal, and unjust foremost among them. There’s no judge in a grand jury room, and the witness is not allowed an attorney (although there can be as many prosecutors in the room as there is space). So the grand jury offends Americans’ sense of justice. All that we know about fairness in a courtroom is thrown out, there. It’s not a courtroom at all.

RW: You refused to reveal confidential information you collected as a researcher and went to jail for contempt of court. What impact did this have on your personal and professional life?

RS: It was hard. My stepson, Alex, was profoundly affected. At times he refused to
make the three-hour round trip with his mother to visit me, and he also turned violent at moments over the months—understandable for a nine year-old. So it was deeply painful in that regard, and I missed him and my wife terribly. Fortunately, it had no long-term effect. Alex grew up to be the opposite of the angry child he became in the summer of 1993, and twenty years later I am as proud of him as any father could be. As for my graduate studies, I could not take classes from jail, but I did read a tremendous amount of material—thousands of pages relevant to my new dissertation topic (I changed it during my ordeal) or that benefitted me as an intellectual—reading John Dewey’s philosophy was particularly enlightening. I was allowed unlimited books, and Bob Greene, who owned a local bookstore, sent me anything I wanted.

**RW:** I love John Dewey’s work myself. So, you spent a total of 159 days of your life in jail for refusing to break the confidentiality you’d promised your research subjects.

**RS:** Yeah, it was unlike anything I’d ever experienced—not even close. To some extent, that observation is true for anyone the first time they’re “inside.” The instantaneous and complete loss of freedom was shocking. Concrete, steel, plexiglass, and a few hundred square feet of rock-hard floor were my new home. We were on lockdown most of the time, and I lived in a dormitory-style setting with six or seven other inmates whose backgrounds were wildly different from mine. It was other-worldly in the worst sort of way. Men charged with or convicted of manslaughter, drug running, drug selling, arson, burglary were my constant companions.

**RW:** That would have made for a very interesting study in its own right.

**RS:** I was prohibited by the WSU Institutional Review Board from conducting an “in-prison ethnography,” but I did keep an extensive journal. It was later published as *Contempt of Court,* and I also wrote a couple of pieces that were published in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* and *American Sociologist.* So I tried to be productive. I think imprisonment deeply affects everyone who is forced to endure it. “Cruel and unusual punishment” begins with handcuffing, let’s not kid ourselves. It changed me psychologically—I saw that clearly when I edited my jail notes for *Contempt of Court.* Goffman knew what he was writing about regarding “total institutions.” Instantaneously, the resocialization started occurring, and it wasn’t pretty.

**RW:** Were you ever threatened or intimidated by any inmates?

**RS:** The opposite, actually. The only times I ever ran into trouble, I made it myself. Twice I came within a hair’s breadth of getting into a fight, and I would have been torn to shreds. That I’d have consciously courted such violence was a measure of how broken-down I’d become. Otherwise, the other inmates showed me unlimited respect. To them, I had refused to “snitch.” They were stunned that I could walk out of that jail at any time—a phone call to my attorney promising to answer the thirty-six questions I’d refused to answer in front of the grand jury and I’d be gone. One guy who was in for manslaughter and whom I’d never before met said to some others, “You know what pisses me off? It’s what they got him in here for.” I turned because I could tell he was referring to me, and he said, “You all right, brother.” If I’d known that I’d have been so well-respected, I’d have been far less anxious after my subpoena!
RW: Anyone who does qualitative research would like to think that they would be willing to go to jail for their subjects. But, fortunately, this rarely happens. You actually did go to jail for your subjects. And, for 159 days! Where does this strong moral compass come from?

RS: Growing up in the desegregating South was the key, I think. I never marched or even attended a civil rights rally—this was the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, and much of the activism had faded after the legislative successes of 1964 and ’65. But Dr. King’s assassination and George Wallace’s candidacy for president deeply affected me. My school district in Charlotte, North Carolina, was the one named in the Supreme Court decision allowing mandatory busing to integrate schools, and my best friend in seventh grade was black, which caused other white kids to taunt me. Growing up in a liberal household and with friends who were union organizers, I was intensely aware of racial and class injustices. So you put it all together and I think those socializing moments were why to this day I respond viscerally to inequality.

RW: Plus, you had the backing of your professional organization, the American Sociological Association.

RS: Absolutely. The ASA’s Code of Ethics and the First Amendment of the Constitution were why I gave myself up for jail. At the time, the Code forbade sociologists from betraying a confidence. Indeed, it was the strongest code of ethics of any of the social sciences, something I was extremely proud of. My discipline had a spine.

RW: Not long after your situation was resolved, the American Sociological Association revised its Code of Ethics and actually limited guarantees of confidentiality between a subject and a researcher.

RS: Yes, and I was deeply offended by the ASA’s decision. It’s funny: members of the committee that drafted the revised Code attended the 1996 Applied Sociology meetings in Atlanta and they were at the talk that I gave. But not one of them spoke with me privately, and at no time did any ASA official communicate with me. They didn’t want to hear what I had to say about their new, weakened Code—I suspect they knew what I’d say!

RW: I would assume that ASA tightened guidelines which related to confidentiality between researchers and subjects to cover its legal hindquarters.

RS: You hit the nail on the head: I think the ASA’s view was my case made the old Code untenable. Some attorney got to them and probably said something like, “Hey, you could get sued for taking such a hard-line stance for academic freedom!” The importance of safeguarding research participants’ interests came first under my Code. In their’s—just as in so many campus’ IRB guidelines—what comes first is the interest of the institution. I find it disgusting. I think the new Code’s language gives the ASA a way out of supporting researchers who refuse to cave into authorities’ demands when push comes to shove. Familiarizing oneself with the law (there is no relevant law by the way) and only making promises we feel we can keep, which is basically what the Code says are our obligations, is completely unsociological, for one thing! Our discipline begins with the dyad; why rely on the agent to make ethical decisions? Moreover, ethical codes are statements of a profession’s ideals and expectations. The ASA abandoned its
ideals as soon as it made ethics more about personal expectations for conduct rather than communal ones. Why is “risky” research risky? Sometimes because there are dangers to participants, sometimes because there are dangers to researchers, and occasionally because there are dangers to social groups. Participants and social groups can usually be protected by researchers, but who or what protects them? The law does not. The case law in my and Mario Brajula’s cases are all that we have to work with. The closest Supreme Court decision, Branzburg v. Hayes, concerns journalists and is a nightmare even for them. We got nothin’. IRBs won’t protect us. The rare ones will, but the process almost always privileges the institution’s interests above all others.

RW: So what can we, as researchers, do about this?

RS: One alternative is for us to undertake risky research without the legal safety net that IRBs provide (the legalities they’re most concerned with are their institutions’, of course, but IRB approval covers researchers’ legal needs). Doing so places us at huge personal, professional, and economic risk. The personal risks will always be there—it takes courage to inquire about extreme social movements or battered women or decaying city neighborhoods, for example. Lots of us are willing to take measured risks. We want to produce new knowledge and to help solve serious social problems. But none of us wants to expose our participants to legal or other forms of danger, and going it alone certainly has that potential. But, here’s what really concerns me: risky research must be undertaken. Assuming willing participants and willing groups, the insights we obtain shed light on dark, sometimes dangerous, always misunderstood reaches of the social world. Ironically, that research often benefits the authorities. A local reporter told me that when he asked federal agents where he could find out more about radical environmentalists, he was told, “read Scarce’s book.”

RW: What happened to you should never have to happen to someone else. What, if anything, can researchers do to protect themselves?

RS: We have two options. The first is the least palatable: fight through the courts as I did. That approach means someone’s liberty is almost certain to be on the line, and no one should have to go to jail again in the struggle for scholars’ rights. The other approach is legislative, and it’s exactly what the federal courts have called for. They’ve basically said, “if Congress wants to provide First Amendment ‘privileges,’ it can do so.” But Congress hasn’t done a thing. Imagine Congressional inaction! There have been several bills introduced to create researchers’ or scholars’ privilege—a “shield law,” as it’s commonly known—over the last few years, but the bills have never even received a hearing. They’ve been hollow exercises.

RW: Today you are a Department Chair and things have calmed down considerably over the last twenty years. But, I would imagine that you haven’t forgotten about all those days you spent in jail for doing what was the right thing.

RS: There is nothing romantic about those days. They were the worst of my life, a nightmare that drew-in my family and demonstrated the potential for depravity in a system I wanted to believe in (somehow, Abu Ghraib was not all that surprising to me). But my fellow inmates and I were stripped of everything else, and I saw a lot of humanity and decency in them. Plenty were convicted of crimes,
I know, but I also know that almost no one commits crimes by simple choice and without complex but identifiable social phenomena influencing their choices. I haven’t put the experience behind me. It doesn’t loom, but it is not gone. I think I probably left jail with post-traumatic stress disorder, though I never sought a diagnosis, and it took years for my angry outbursts to subside. But I know I left jail with a deeper understanding of the American Tragedy—the corollary of the American Dream. How is it that the wealthiest nation in world history refuses to ensure that every one of us is adequately fed, clothed, housed, educated, and receives good medical care? In jail, I witnessed the American Tragedy first-hand. I wish every judge and every elected official in the U.S. could spend a week in a county jail. It would strip them of their void of Verstehen, and we would all emerge the better for it.

**RW:** But, you spent five months of your life in jail. You must have been livid.

**RS:** I wasn’t angry about standing up for what’s right, but I was angry that the government could be so wrong—that prosecutors and federal judges could be complicit in such an injustice. The years have made it a lot easier for me to feel pride first and move my anger back down the line of emotions. And good things came to me from my experience. There were the publications, which were quite rewarding, and there was the sense that I could summon the courage to fight for right. It’s a hard thing to do, looking evil in the eye and telling it to go to hell, particularly when that evil is your own government and administrators at your own institution. And it’s deeply meaningful that I’ve been called on for interviews like this one and that my case is mentioned in so many introductory and methods textbooks. I have never felt that it was all for nothing or anything like that. It was a meaningful act for me and for social science.

**RW:** You have the dubious distinction of being the social scientist who has been jailed the longest for refusing to divulge confidential research data. Have you made an effort to shed yourself of this label or do you still wear it proudly?

**RS:** I do wear the label proudly. I wish the “jailbird” stigma didn’t go with it, however! Some of my colleagues still think of me as “the guy who went to jail.” But I’ve been able to use my hard-won, unsought after status as a platform to advocate for important issues regarding research ethics.

*Rik Scarce joined the Skidmore College faculty in 2003 and became the Chairperson of the Department of Sociology in 2010. He is the author of *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Left Coast Press). Originally published in 1990 and updated in 2006, *Eco-Warriors* explores the history and actions of self-described “radical” environmental groups such as Earth First!, the Animal Liberation Front, and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. In 1993, Rik was jailed for more than five months on a contempt of court citation. He refused to fully cooperate with a federal grand jury investigating an Animal Liberation Front break-in. At the time Rik was researching the radical environmental movement for his Ph.D. dissertation, and he argued that the First Amendment shielded him from forced testimony. Rik never answered the grand jury’s questions, and eventually a judge released him.
Pictures from 2013 ACJS Annual Award Ceremony

Receiving the 2013 Program Chair Award for his hard work and dedication for chairing the 50th Anniversary meeting in Dallas, Texas, was Lorenzo Boyd of Fayetteville State University.

Departing ACJS Board Member, L. Edward Day, Chapman University, receiving an award for his service as Region 1 Trustee.

ACJS Board Member Nicole “Nicky” Piquero, University of Texas, Dallas, receiving an award for her service as Trustee-at-Large.

Departing ACJS Board Member Melissa Barlow, Fayetteville State University, receiving an award for her service as Immediate Past President of ACJS.
The recipient of the 2013 Academy Fellow Award “for distinguished teaching and scholarly achievement” was Frank P. Williams, III, of the California State University, San Bernardino.

The first recipient of the 2013 Founder’s Award “for outstanding contributions to criminal justice education and ACJS” was Laura J. Moriarty of the Virginia Commonwealth University.

The second recipient of the 2013 Founder’s Award “for outstanding contributions to criminal justice education and ACJS” was Janice Joseph from Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

Receiving the 2013 Bruce Smith, Sr. Award for “recognition of outstanding contributions to criminal justice” was Freda Adler from the University of Pennsylvania.
Joshua C. Cochran receiving the Michael C. Braswell/Anderson Publishing Outstanding Student Paper Award (for outstanding student paper presented at the 2012 ACJS Annual Meeting).

Daniel P. Mears receiving the Book Award for his book titled, American Criminal Justice Policy: An Evaluation Approach to Increasing Accountability and Effectiveness.

Outgoing President Craig Hemmens (2012-2013) passes the official ACJS gavel to incoming President James Frank (2013-2014).

Mark Stafford being recognized for his service as chair of the Awards Committee.
Realigning the Toughest Beat: Why the California Officers Union Changed Its Tune

Joshua Page, Author of The Toughest Beat*

The biggest criminal justice story coming out of California today is “correctional realignment.” In response to the landmark decision in *Plata v. Schwarzenegger*, which, in 2009, mandated that the state shed roughly one-quarter of its 150,000 prisoners by May 2013, California realigned its system to incarcerate many “non-serious, non-violent” offenders in jails rather than prisons, shift parole responsibility for low-level felons from the state to the counties (these offenders cannot go to prison for parole violations), and ended the practice of sending technical parole violators to prison. Through this shape-shifting, California has decreased its overall prison population by more than 17,000 (CDCR, 2013).

Another important, but less discussed, development has occurred in recent years: The state’s enormously successful and influential prison officers union has changed criminal justice policy. As I document in my book, *The Toughest Beat* (Page, 2011a), the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), which gained formal recognition in 1982, became one of the Golden State’s most powerful interest groups in the 1990s. The union’s growth was a product of the state’s incredible prison boom (Page, 2011a: Chapter 2), and its membership grew alongside the state’s prison population.

As I have argued elsewhere, an important “collateral consequence” of “mass imprisonment” has been the growth and empowerment of interest groups like the CCPOA who have stakes in the continuation of this uniquely American penal experiment (Page, 2011b). By the early 1990s, the CCPOA was using its economic resources, ever more abundant as the union gained dues-paying members, to develop an impressive political apparatus. It hired lobbyists and developed political action committees, becoming a serious political player that could reward its friends and punish its enemies through massive contributions to political candidates and the financing of ballot initiatives (Page, 2011a, Chapter 2).

As the union grew in size, strength, and reputation in the mid-1990s, it became an effective proponent of punitive criminal justice policies, such as the state’s expansive Three Strikes and You’re Out law. Moreover, it helped to create enormously influential,
punitive crime victims organizations, and, through its public relations materials (including television commercials) and campaigns for and against penal policies, it contributed to popular prejudices about prisoners; promoted warehousing as the central mission of imprisonment; and characterized prisons as volatile, vicious institutions filled with manipulative, depraved predators. In short, the CCPOA helped anchor punitive segregation as the dominant approach to criminal punishment in California. As defined by David Garland (2000: 350), punitive segregation is a penal strategy characterized by “lengthy sentence terms in no frills prisons and a marked, monitored existence for those who are eventually released.”

In the mid-2000s, the CCPOA began to show signs of change. For one, the union changed its rhetoric about crime and punishment. In April 2007, CCPOA’s President Mike Jimenez, who had replaced the union’s original leader, Don Novey, in 2002, spoke at the California Democratic Party’s state convention in San Diego. As part of his speech, he proclaimed: “Today I have a dream that an ounce of prevention will be embraced instead of a pound of cure by the California legislature and this administration… I’m going to stand with you until we win this battle, and until we put money in schools and quit putting money in prisons, and we use our good senses” (The California Democratic Party, 2007, emphasis mine).

In an interview with the liberal magazine Mother Jones, Jimenez described the penal system as “assembly-line justice” and, drawing on the notion that prisons are “crime schools,” contended that the state should not imprison low-level offenders because these convicts “get worse” behind bars. Jimenez advocated crime prevention and suggested that California’s prison sentences were too long: “We plan to fail… You can put all the police officers you want on the street, but if we don’t give those kids hope of a future, of a life, of an ability to make something of themselves, they don’t care about life. Nobody’s willing to forgive anymore. And we are willing to lock people up for unreasonable periods of time” (Abramsky, 2008, emphasis mine).

Although CCPOA officials had long recognized the need for better crime prevention programs, they had never before argued that prison sentences were too long. Moreover, CCPOA spokespersons had never before encouraged forgiveness. Until this turn, they had always argued that crime is a personal, rational choice, and the state must punish offenders swiftly and harshly to deter crime. To forgive is to excuse, the union had argued. Jimenez’s remarks in Mother Jones further indicated a potentially dramatic ideological shift.

The union also began taking intriguing policy positions that signaled a break from its past. For example, it put out two “blueprints for reform” that advocated for the establishment of an advisory sentencing commission, improved rehabilitative programming, additional re-entry facilities to help decrease recidivism, and shorter periods of parole for some ex-offenders (CCPOA, 2007; CCPOA, 2010). Eventually, the CCPOA even officially endorsed legislation that would have allowed juveniles sentenced to life in prison without parole to petition courts for a reduced sentence (the legislation failed) (Page, 2011a). More surprisingly, in 2012, the CCPOA declined to oppose a ballot initiative to reform the state’s Three Strikes law. The union had been the foremost
defender of the Three Strikes statute, since its passage in 1994 (Page, 2011a: Chapter 5), and, when a similar reform proposal was put before voters in 2004, the CCPOA had helped organize, finance, and ultimately defeat the measure. Nearly as surprising, the union did not campaign against a ballot initiative to eliminate California’s death penalty. Since its inception, the CCPOA has been a staunch supporter of capital punishment, but it stayed mum in 2012. Taken together, these actions seem to be a case of policy positions aligning with a new leadership’s rhetoric.

So what explains the CCPOA’s realignment? The first and most obvious reason is Jimenez. After serving 20 years as the union’s president, Don Novey resigned in 2002. His successor, Jimenez, was not (and is not) as committed to his predecessor’s “lock ‘em up” views on crime and punishment or his animosity toward “liberal” ideas and people or anything related to “prisoners’ rights.” On this topic, Chuck Alexander, CCPOA’s vice president, says, “the prior regime [of CCPOA leaders] grew up in the era of lock them up and throw away the key, warehouse type prisons. The current regime—while we came into the system at the tail end of that, I think we look at things with a different eye” (Author interview, August 11, 2006).

The union also seemingly shifted course because Jimenez had personal experiences that forced him to reevaluate his ideas about crime and punishment (this is not unlike a number of current national politicians whose views on same-sex marriage have evolved as they learned of gay and lesbian family members). Mother Jones explained that one of Jimenez’s two sons, Joshua, “got into drugs, went to a boot camp in Utah, ...was charged with a string of low-end felonies, dropped out of high school, and told his father he had nothing to look forward to in life.” In response, Jimenez claimed to have realized, “there are lot of Joshuas who don’t even know their dads. They get involved with the criminal justice system. It’s a terrible reality. I realized there are a lot of kids in there who shouldn’t be.” About his reaction to Joshua’s experiences, Jimenez told the Los Angeles Times, “I’ve been humbled… I gotta believe in redemption. I gotta believe that you can convert” (Abramsky, 2008).

The CCPOA’s apparent changes were not solely due to its leaders’ own experiences. They were also reactions to external pressures. In the first half of the 2000s, state leaders (especially Governor Schwarzenegger), federal court monitors, and newspaper editorialists forcefully argued that the CCPOA’s contract, legal maneuverings, and behavior inside prisons handcuffed management and facilitated a “code of silence” that protected “rogue officers” from detection and prosecution. By 2005, the image of the CCPOA as a major block to reforming the state’s tragically mismanaged prisons had solidified.

The concern with prison mismanagement was tied to a greater problem—the state’s monumental budget deficit. California could no longer afford to build more prisons to alleviate overcrowding, and the possibility that federal judges would take control of California’s prison system—or, at least, order major reductions in the inmate population—was increasingly real by the end of the 2000s. Apparently, mass imprisonment had reached its limit in the Golden State, and politicians and state bureaucrats had to do something to stem the flow of incoming
prisoners. The status quo could not continue. It was in this context that the CCPOA began to change its tune. If the union continued to press for tough penal sanctions or fight against even minor reforms, authoritative actors would keep painting the group as a self-interested organization that hindered the general good. At the same time, the union was locked in a heated contract battle with the Schwarzenegger Administration, which demanded contract changes to decrease union influence on prison management and save the state money. The CCPOA, therefore, was at pains to show that it was helping to solve—not fuel—California’s “correctional crisis” (Page, 2011a: Chapter 8).

When Jerry Brown replaced Schwarzenegger as governor in 2011, the CCPOA was forced to act on its reform rhetoric. One of Brown's first orders of business was reducing the prison population in response to the Plata ruling. Because of the union’s clout in the legislature and reputation for “killing” bills, Brown needed CCPOA’s backing for his criminal justice realignment legislation. Brown proposed a deal with the union: Support realignment (even though it would eventually reduce prison officer and parole officer jobs) and get a solid new contract. The CCPOA took the deal. Along with finally landing a contract after protracted negotiations, the union also got credit for supporting reform (Page, 2011c). Over the next year, the union would further chisel away at its reputation as one of the main bolsters of “law and order” and mass imprisonment by sitting on the sidelines in the campaigns to reform Three Strikes and eliminate the death penalty.

By no means has the CCPOA become a leader of penal reform. Still, the fact that it is not leading anti-reform efforts is a major development because of the union’s wealth, political expertise, bi-partisan connections in local and state government, and history of running expensive, hard-hitting campaigns against electoral candidates. In key respects, both the CCPOA’s ascent and its recent transformation have been products of mass imprisonment; its realignment owes to changes within and external to the union. Without the prison boom of the 1980s and 1990s, the organization would not have gained the financial resources necessary to become an effective, successful political player. Its influence and achievements were also the product of its leaders’ strategic choices and skillful playing of California’s unique political game (Page, 2011a: Chapter 2).

In recent years, when California could no longer afford to build new prisons, overcrowding and its disastrous consequences (e.g., constitutionally inadequate inmate health care) became the “new normal.” When federal judges demanded that the state decrease overcrowding, lawmakers had no choice but to reduce the prison population. If the CCPOA would have continued to fight for “tough on crime” sentencing laws, the union likely still would not have a contract, but would be a target of scorn for judges, newspaper editorialists, academics, and state officials. Getting out of the way of reform was necessary for self-preservation, but the CCPOA might not have taken the path of least resistance if the new generation of leaders had not taken over the organization. Because of their openness to reform, these officers were willing to loosen the union’s commitment to “law and order” policies and explain the necessity of the move to
outspoken members who opposed it. Ultimately, mass imprisonment (combined with an emaciated economy and federal intervention) made the CCPOA’s recent changes necessary. Among the so-called unintended consequences of the prison boom we must include the rise and eventual realignment of the California prison officers union.

References


*Joshua Page is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota and a Faculty Affiliate at the Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice. His research, teaching, and public engagement focuses on criminal punishment, politics, labor unions, sports, and an assortment of other topics. His book, The Toughest Beat: Politics, Punishment, and the Prison Officers Union in California, examines how politically powerful interest groups helped to create some of the nation’s most ultra-tough penal polices, such as Three Strikes and You’re Out. Page has published articles in journals, such as, Punishment and Society, Criminology and Public Policy, Women and Criminal Justice, and Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, among others.

Editor’s Note: I have read The Toughest Beat and thoroughly enjoyed it. It would make excellent supplemental reading material for any graduate level course related to prisons and corrections.
GREETINGS!

For those of you who were in attendance at the 50th Annual Meeting of ACJS in Dallas, Texas, I think you will agree it was an exceptional conference. The hotel was accommodating (although at times confusing), the number of panels and activities going on were both plentiful and varied, and the event planning was well done. Kudos to President Craig Hemmens (now Immediate Past President) and his trusty side-kick and Program Committee Chair, Lorenzo Boyd, for a conference well done.

If you were in attendance, I hope you were able to secure a copy of the history of ACJS and have had a chance to read through our official history. I received a number of compliments, as well as a number of admonitions for a few mistakes in the history (all minor, thankfully!). If you do have a chance to read through the history and you happen to come across a mistake, please let me know, that way I can make the corrections in future drafts. If you were not able to attend the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting, the ACJS website has the complete history with appendices available online, as well as links to the past presidents’ biographies through the “past presidents” list on the website - click on a past president’s name and their one page biography will appear in PDF format.

During the conference, on Wednesday afternoon, many of the past presidents gathered for a “Past Presidents Roundtable.” I was able to have the panel session digitally recorded with some assistance from Sam Houston State University, namely Patrick and Harriet McHale (thank you!). We are checking on the quality of the recording, as it was a rather large session, and will determine how best to use the recording in the near future. At the very least, the panel discussion may find its way into a future Historian’s Corner.

In addition, immediately after the “Past Presidents Roundtable,” I had the pleasure and interesting experience of interviewing Professor Ed Farris, a retired professor from New Mexico State University. Professor Ferris was present at the retirement party for V. A. Leonard at Washington State College (now University) in 1963, where ACJS began as the International Association of Police Professors (a take-off of the International Association of Police Chiefs). In the 1970s, Ed Farris became the first official ACJS Historian, a position he held until the end of that decade. I was able to interview Ed Farris, a very colorful character who sharply recounted events throughout his life associated with ACJS, and this too will become a basis for a future Historian’s Corner.

One other project that is currently ongoing is the scanning of searchable past issues of ACJS Today. I was able to deliver digital copies of many past issues to Cathy Barth at the conference, and in the near future these will be uploaded to the

Willard M. Oliver*
ACJS Website’s *ACJS Today* Archive. Once again, if anyone happens to have any issues prior to Vince Webb assuming the duties as editor, copies would be greatly appreciated. This would be any issues from the late 1970s and the years 1980-1982. So far I only have two.

For those of you who are history buffs, I hope you also had a chance to see the presentation by the Sixth Floor Museum, as well as the chance to visit the museum. I toured the location of John F. Kennedy’s assassination on the Saturday of the conference and it presented an excellent review of the history behind the assassination, which also, by the way, will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary this November. This has been a much talked about anniversary here in Texas.

I also would like to make another acknowledgment for the sake of our ACJS history – in the ACJS History it was noted that there was a First Annual Run with ACJS 5K (with no evidence there was ever a second one). President Hemmens thought it would be a great idea for a bunch of us from ACJS to run the Dallas ½ marathon on Sunday morning after the conference. For various reasons, only three of us ended up at the starting line on that cold blustery morning. So, kudos go to both Nicky and Alex Piquero for running the race and finishing with very nice times!

As ACJS Historian, one of my duties is to create a visual record of the award ceremony. Unfortunately, I was not well prepared. I forgot my camera! I borrowed a friend’s and quickly discovered as the ceremony began that her camera’s batteries were dead. Thus, my many thanks extend to Mary Stohr for bailing me out and letting me borrow her camera to take pictures at the award ceremony. In the earlier pages of this issue, please find pictures from our very own “Academy Awards.”

Finally, at the request of at least three Bruce Smith Award winners, I have been asked to write a short biography of our important award’s namesake. Over the summer, my plan is to conduct the research on Bruce Smith, Sr. and compose the biography for one of the fall columns of the Historian’s Corner (somewhere amongst my two weeks sailing the Florida Keys!), so if you have ever wondered who Bruce Smith was, look for the answer this fall.

In the meantime, I hope all of you have an enjoyable, restful, and productive summer.

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**ACJS 2014 Awards**

Criteria, nomination, and contact information for all 2014 ACJS Awards are now online at [http://www.acjs.org/pubs/167_770_3512.cfm](http://www.acjs.org/pubs/167_770_3512.cfm). Please be sure to note the deadlines on the website for individual awards:

**2014 ACJS Awards** – Includes Bruce Smith, Sr. Award, Academy Fellow Award, Academy Founder’s Award, Outstanding Book Award, William L. Simon/Anderson Publishing Outstanding Paper Award, Michael C. Braswell/Anderson Publishing Outstanding Student Paper Award, Donal MacNamara Award, ACJS Minority Mentorship Grant Award, Outstanding Mentor Awards, and the Sage Junior Faculty Professional Development Teaching Award.

**2014 ACJS Student Scholarship Awards**

**2014 Affirmative Action Awards** – Includes Minorities and Women Section Esther Madriz Student Travel Awards and Affirmative Action Student Scholarship Mini-Grant Travel Awards.

**2014 ACJS Section Awards**

Questions regarding the above awards should be directed to the contact individuals listed on the ACJS Awards website page (link above).

Be sure read through all the award information and send in your nominations today!
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The ACJS Nominations and Elections Committee is soliciting nominations for the following Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences offices: Second Vice President, Treasurer, Trustee-at-Large, Region Two Trustee, and Region Three Trustee. All candidates for office must be regular ACJS members in good standing. The individuals who are elected will take office at the Friday 2014 ACJS Executive Board Meeting.

The person elected to the office of Second Vice President will have a four-year term of office on the ACJS Executive Board and will hold the offices of Second Vice President, First Vice President, President, and Immediate Past President in turn. The person elected to the office of Treasurer will have a three-year term. The person elected to the office of Trustee-at-Large will have a three-year term. The person elected to a Regional Trustee position will have a three-year term. Only current ACJS Regular members holding professional employment affiliation in the Region (Two or Three) and having been a member of the respective regional association for at least one full year immediately prior to being nominated or petitioning may run for the respective Trustee position. Region Two includes the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia; and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Region Three includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; and the Canadian Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Individuals seeking ACJS office may achieve candidacy by either petition or nomination. Individuals who use the petition process automatically secure candidacy, as long as the petitions are deemed to meet the minimum number of signatures required. Individuals who are nominated for office shall compete for placement on the slate via review by the Nominations and Elections Committee, which will make a recommendation to the ACJS Executive Board regarding the final slate of candidates.

Those nominating individuals for ACJS office are expected to contact the nominee to ensure that the nominee is willing to run for the office in question. An ACJS member seeking an office via petition must obtain seventy-five (75) signatures of Regular ACJS members in good standing. The petition must state the name and complete address of the candidate, e-mail address, home and office phone numbers, and the office the candidate is seeking. To facilitate verification, the petition must also include the clearly printed name, signature, and institutional affiliation or address of each ACJS member signing it and the signature date. More than one petition form may be submitted on behalf of a specific candidate.

Nomination Forms Must Be Postmarked By July 1, 2013. The Nomination Form can be accessed directly from the ACJS Home Page or at: http://www.acjs.org/uploads/callformnominationsFORM.doc

Petition Forms Must Be Received No Later Than June 15, 2013. The Petition Form can be accessed directly from the ACJS Home Page or at: http://www.acjs.org/uploads/Petition.doc

Mail all nominations and petitions to:
Craig Hemmens, Chair
ACJS Nominations and Elections Committee
Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
7339 Hanover Parkway, Suite A
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Address any questions to the Committee by contacting Dr. Hemmens at craighemmens@missouristate.edu (417) 836-6290.

As per ACJS Policy 303.01, the following rank-ordered criteria will be used by the Nominations and Elections Committee in making recommendations to the ACJS Executive Board regarding the final slate of candidates.

1. Dependability, demonstrated experience, record of accomplishments.
2. Demonstrable service to the Academy.
3. Demonstrable record of scholarship or contributions to the field of criminal justice.

ACJS Policy 104.01 states its goal of inclusivity. ACJS seeks to provide opportunities for all its members to participate in the business of the Academy, including policy and decision-making.

NOTE: The final slate of candidates approved by the ACJS Executive Board will be asked to complete a Candidate’s Information Form. This document will include length of ACJS membership, previous service for ACJS, previous service to other criminal justice organizations, major publications, and a candidate’s statement.
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The editor will use his discretion to accept, reject or postpone manuscripts.

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Articles may vary in writing style (i.e. tone) and length. Articles should be relevant to the field of criminal justice, criminology, law, sociology or related curriculum and interesting to our readership. Please include your name, affiliation and email address, which will be used as your biographical information. Submission of an article to ACJS Today implies that the article has not been published elsewhere nor is it currently under submission to another publication.
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