

Message from the Managing Director

The Justice Center continues its work on the important topic of child sexual abuse with the visit by Sheldon Kennedy. We also welcome a second new post-doctoral scholar to the Center – Dr. Susan McNeeley – whose profile is presented below. Both she and our other new post doc – Michaela Soyer (profiled in the previous Docket) are already actively developing and expanding their research agendas at the Center. Grant activity also remains a strong focus of the Center as discussed below. Center core staff also delivered a total of 10 presentations at the recent ASC conference. Finally, we congratulate Dr. John Kramer on his recent Faculty Award!

PENN STATE JUSTICE CENTER FOR RESEARCH

Doris L. MacKenzie, Director
Gary Zajac, Managing Director

Dr. Gary Zajac

Sheldon Kennedy Event – October 10-11th

Sheldon Kennedy, former professional NHL player, child sexual abuse survivor, and international child advocate visited campus for two days (October 10-11) for multiple events.

- He met with both the men's and women's varsity hockey teams separately and after a brief introduction, took questions from the students on a range of relevant topics.
- Later that evening, Mr. Kennedy gave a public talk entitled "Tragedy to Triumph: Overcoming Child Sexual Abuse and Leading Social Change" at the Bennett Pierce Living Center. He focused much of his talk on the importance of raising awareness and educating the average person about child sexual abuse and how that can move them from being a bystander of a possible wrong to an advocate for children. His talk was followed by a panel discussion that included four experts: Dr. Jennie Noll, PhD, the Director of Research and Education for the Penn State Network on Child Protection and Well-Being; Teresa Smith, LSW, PhD, Northeast Regional Children Advocacy Center Training and Outreach Coordinator; Pamela McCloskey, MEd, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and certified child forensic interviewer; and John Soubik, HDFS alumnus and former child welfare investigator. This event was co-sponsored by the Network on Child Protection and Well-Being.

Film Maker to Visit in Spring Semester

Next spring, the Justice Center will welcome documentary film maker Joshua Rofé to campus for a screening of his recent documentary, *Lost for Life*, a film focusing on juveniles receiving life without parole prison sentences. In June 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that this practice constituted "cruel and unusual punishment." Pennsylvania has more juvenile lifers than any other state, making this a highly relevant issue for student and community discussion. *Lost for Life* is winning awards in film festivals and receiving very favorable reviews since its debut at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC this past summer. More details about his visit will be available shortly.

Mr. Rofé is currently making a feature-length film about Sheldon Kennedy's life and his crusade for children, tentatively titled *Swift Current*. He recently accompanied Mr. Kennedy to Penn State to film some of his events and said he views Penn State as "a brothers and sisters in arms working toward positive change in society at large." The film is being produced by a three-time Academy Award winner, Mark Jonathan Harris, who is also a distinguished professor at USC. It is intended for debut at next year's Toronto Film Festival.

Faculty Affiliate News

- Professor John Kramer, faculty affiliate in the Department of Sociology and Criminology, recently received the department's Faculty Award. During the past 40 years, Dr. Kramer has taught courses, conducted numerous research projects, and was the founder and long-time Executive Director of the PA Commission on Sentencing, located at Penn State. Professor Kramer was also elected for the Justice Innovator Award by the Law and Public Policy Section of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.
- Professor Darrell Steffensmeier was recently awarded an NIJ grant.
- Faculty affiliates, Professors Jeffrey Ulmer and John Kramer, along with Dr. Gary Zajac received a second grant from the Falk Foundation to continue their study of racial and ethnic disparity in death penalty sentencing in Pennsylvania.
- Professor Wayne Osgood recently received a grant renewal from NIH for his study on "Friendship Networks and Emergence of Substance Use."

Justice Center Welcomes New Post-Doc, Susan McNeeley, Ph.D.

The Justice Center is pleased to welcome its second new post-doc of this academic year, Dr. Susan McNeeley. Susan joins us after recently completing her Ph.D. in Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati. Her main research agenda involves developing and testing theories of criminology and victimology. Specifically, she seeks to integrate traditional criminological theories with opportunity theories in order to better understand crime events. Additionally, she is interested in the influence of macrolevel characteristics on individual effects on crime and delinquency. Her dissertation attempts to provide a more complete understanding of the relationship between the adoption of criminogenic subcultural values and victimization by incorporating routine activities theory and examining the theoretical models across neighborhoods.

Susan's additional research interests include the application of the death penalty, issues surrounding race/ethnicity and immigration, and public opinion regarding crime and criminal justice. She is currently involved in research projects on the relationship between lifestyles and delinquency over time, the prosecutorial decision to seek the death penalty, public opinion on sentencing and prison conditions, and the effect of neighborhood racial context on attitudes toward the police. Publications have appeared or are forthcoming in *Victims and Offenders*, *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, and *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*. She has also written chapters for the *Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences* and *Handbook of Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice*.

Prior to her graduate work at University of Cincinnati, Susan received a Master's degree from University of Memphis and a B.A. from Centenary College of Louisiana.

ASC Conference

Several Justice Center researchers presented their work at the annual American Society of Criminology conference this month in Atlanta. Dr. Zajac and Professor MacKenzie gave presentations on the HOPE project, Dr. Soyer and Dr. McNeeley focused on their dissertation research, and the Center's graduate students presented their thesis research. Dr. Zajac also presented on the COSA project with the Center's former post-doc, Ian Elliott; the rural reentry study; and was the discussant on the CJDATS panel.

Grant Submissions

- Derek Kreager, Justice Center faculty affiliate, recently submitted a grant to the National Institutes of Health for a study of social networks in the context of a prison-based therapeutic community. Dr. Kreager would serve as the PI and Dr. Gary Zajac would be the co-investigator on this proposed two-year project.
- Dr. Michaela Soyer, Justice Center post-doc, recently applied for funding to conduct a year-long, in-depth interview study of 25 young men under the age of 21 who were tried for adult crimes as juveniles and are now currently serving their sentence at Pine Grove correctional institution in Pennsylvania. The research study is designed to raise awareness for the ongoing struggle of young men who continue to be punished for crimes they committed when they were underage. Dr. Soyer plans to interview the inmates as well as their families and friends in order to gain a better understanding of the young men's pre-incarceration life. Identifying certain events and processes that led up to a "negative turning point" in the teenagers' lives will provide valuable information that can be used to develop specific intervention programs.

Distinguished Lecture Series – Professor Ray Paternoster

On December 5th and 6th the Justice Center for Research, along with co-sponsors the EPISCenter and the Department of Sociology and Criminology, will be welcoming Professor Raymond Paternoster from the Criminology and Criminal Justice Department at the University of Maryland. As part of his visit, Dr. Paternoster will speak on, "Is There Room for One More? – An Identity Theory of Desistance from Crime." The lecture will take place on **Friday, December 6, 2013 at 12 noon in 302 Pond Conference Room**. A light luncheon will be served.

Recent Publications

Soyer, M. (2013). The Imagination of Desistance: A Juxtaposition of the Construction of Incarceration as a Turning Point and the Reality of Recidivism. *The British Journal of Criminology*. First published online: October 24, 2013. [Abstract available here.](#)

Welsh, W.N., Zajac, G., & Bucklen, K. (2013). For Whom Does Prison Based Drug Treatment Work? Results from a Randomized Experiment. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*. Online First.

Justice Center for Research

The Pennsylvania State University

327 Pond Laboratory

University Park, PA 16802

814-867-3292

www.justicecenter.psu.edu

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