

READING 1

In this selection, Lawrence Sherman provides an excellent review of the policies that have resulted from the very early stages of classical theories, through the early positivist era, and into modern times. Sherman's primary point is that experimental research is highly important in determining the policies that should be used with offenders and potential offenders. Although many important factors can never be experimentally manipulated—bad parents, poor schooling, negative peer influences—there are, as Sherman asserts, numerous types of variables that can be experimentally manipulated by criminological researchers. The resulting findings can help guide policy makers in pushing forward more efficient and effective policies regarding the prevention of and reaction to various forms of criminal offending. There is no better scholar to present such an argument and support for it; Sherman is perhaps the best-known scholar who has applied the experimental method to criminological research, given his experience with studies regarding domestic violence and other criminal offenses.

Readers are encouraged to consider other variables or aspects of crime that can be examined via experimental forms of research. Furthermore, readers should consider the vast number of variables that are important causes of crime or delinquency but could never be experimentally manipulated for logistic or ethical reasons.

— The Use and Usefulness of Criminology, 1751–2005 —

Enlightened Justice and Its Failures

Lawrence W. Sherman

Criminology was born in a crime wave, raised on a crusade against torture and execution, and then hibernated for two centuries of speculation. Awakened by the rising crime rates of the latter twentieth century, most of its scholars chose to pursue analysis over experiment. The twenty-first century now offers more policy-relevant science than ever, even if basic science still occupies center stage. Its prospects for integrating basic and “clinical” science are growing, with more scholars using multiple tools rather than pursuing single-method work. Criminology contributes only a few drops of science in an ocean of decision making, but the number of drops is growing steadily. As experimental criminology provides

more comprehensive evidence about responses to crime, the prospects for better basic science—and better policy—will improve accordingly.



Enlightenment, Criminology, and Justice

The entire history of social science has been shaped by key choices scholars made in that transformative era, choices that are still made today. For criminology more than most disciplines, those Enlightenment choices have had enormous consequences for the use and usefulness of its social science.

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