

were too weak to offer unbiased estimates of treatment effects, the authors essentially said “we don’t know” what works to rehabilitate criminals. In a series of less scientific and more popular publications, the summary of the study was transformed into saying that there is no evidence that criminals can be rehabilitated. Even the title “What Works” was widely repeated in 1975 by word of mouth as “nothing works.”

The Martinson review soon became the basis for a major change in correctional policies. While the per capita rates of incarceration had been dropping throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the trend was rapidly reversed after 1975 (Ruth and Reitz 2003). Coinciding with the publication of Wilson’s (1975) first edition of *Thinking About Crime*, the Martinson review arguably helped fuel a sea change from treating criminals as victims of society to treating society as the victim of criminals. That, in turn, may have helped to feed a three-decade increase in prisoners (Laub 2004) to more than 2.2 million, the highest incarceration rate in the world.

Warp Speed: 1982–2005

Stewart

In September, 1982, a former Oakland Police captain named James K. Stewart was appointed director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Formerly a White House Fellow who had attended a National Academy of Sciences discussion of the work of NIJ, Stewart had been convinced by James Q. Wilson and others that NIJ needed to invest more of its budget in experimental criminology. He acted immediately by canceling existing plans to award many research grants for analytic criminology, transferring the funds to support experimental work. This work included experiments in policing, probation, drug market disruption, drunk-driving sentences, investigative practices, and shoplifting arrests.

Schools

The 1980s also witnessed the expansion of experimental criminology into the many school-based prevention programs. Extensive experimental and quasi-experimental evidence on their effects—good and bad—has now been published. In one test, for example, a popular peer guidance group that was found effective as an alternative to

incarceration was found to increase crime in a high school setting. Gottfredson (1987) found that high-risk students who were not grouped with other high-risk students in high school group discussions did better than those who were.

Drug Courts

The advent of (diversion from prosecution to medically supervised treatments administered by) “drug courts” during the rapid increase in experimental criminology has led to a large and growing volume of tests of drug court effects on recidivism. Perhaps no other innovation in criminal justice has had so many controlled field tests conducted by so many different independent researchers. The compilations of these findings into meta-analyses will shed increasing light on the questions of when, and how, to divert drug-abusing offenders from prison.

Boot Camps

Much the same can be said about boot camps. The major difference is that boot camp evaluations started off as primarily quasi-experimental in their designs (with matched comparisons or worse), but increasing numbers of fully randomized tests have been conducted in recent years (Mitchell, MacKenzie, and Perez 2005). Many states persist in using boot camps for thousands of offenders, despite fairly consistent evidence that they are no more effective than regular correctional programs.

Child Raising

Criminology has also claimed a major experiment in child raising as one of its own. Beginning at the start of the “warp speed” era, the program of nurse home visits to at-risk first mothers designed by Dr. David Olds and his colleagues (1986) has now been found to have long-term crime prevention effects. Both mothers and children show these effects, which may be linked to lower levels of child abuse or better anger management practices in child raising.

Criminology: Analytic, Useful, and Used

This recitation of a selected list of experiments in criminology must be labeled with a consumer warning: *the*