

Ortiz and TietjenFINAL

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SPEAKERS

Jennifer Ortiz, Grant Tietjen, Jenn Tostlebe, Jose Sanchez



Jose Sanchez 00:00

Hey everyone, this is Jose with the Criminology Academy. If you aren't already make sure to follow us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook at the crime academy after listening please let us know what you think by leaving us a review wherever available. This podcast is sponsored by the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder. Hi everyone, welcome to the first episode of the Spring 2022 lineup of the Criminology Academy podcast where we are criminally academic. My name is Jose Sanchez.



Jenn Tostlebe 01:01

And my name is Jenn Tostlebe



Jose Sanchez 01:03

And today we are excited to have professors Jennifer Ortiz and Grant Tietjen on the podcast. Both professors are part of the Division of Convict Criminology and the American Society of Criminology. Our discussion for the episode will center around the topic and area of study, convict criminology.



Jenn Tostlebe 01:21

Dr. Jennifer Ortiz is an Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Indiana University Southeast. She received her PhD in criminology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Her research centers on structural violence within the criminal justice system with a focus on reentry post incarceration. She has been an active member of convict criminology for three years and currently serves as an Executive Counselor of the Division of Convict Criminology.

J Jose Sanchez 01:49

Dr. Grant Tietjen is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at St. Ambrose University. He received his PhD from the Department of Sociology at University of Nebraska Lincoln. He has been involved with convict criminology since 2005, mentoring new convict criminology members, publishing scholarship, and serving as the group's co-chair from 2017 to 2019. In 2020, he was appointed the inaugural Chair of the newly formed American Society of Criminology Division of Convict Criminology. Thank you so much, Jennifer, and Grant for joining us today. We're really happy to have you on the podcast.

G Grant Tietjen 02:26

Thank you for having us.



J Jenn Tostlebe 02:29

All right. So before we get started, just a quick overview of what we're going to be talking about today, we're going to start with some very broad questions on convict criminology, from there move into a paper that is authored by our two guests on kind of the language debate in convict criminology. And last but not least, talk about the past and the future of convict criminology. So Jose, I will let you get started.

J Jose Sanchez 02:53

Okay, so I think, let us begin with the broad question. What is convict criminology?

G Grant Tietjen 03:03

Well, I can speak to that if you like. It's essentially the three major pillars of convict criminology are mentorship, advocacy and scholarship. And it's been framed in a lot of past, you know, scholarship, convict criminology scholarship, as bringing the voice of system impacted people to academia to the policy table, to criminology, for example. Right. Jennifer, anything you'd like to add to that?

J Jennifer Ortiz 03:42

Yeah, I think, um, you know, convict criminology really is allowing the voices of people who have been spoken about to actually be heard. So, if you look at the history of criminology as a field, it was a lot of people who had never had direct impact with the criminal justice system, talking about the criminal justice system, and so convict criminology gives voice to the people who have both been directly impacted. They've been arrested incarcerated, but also individuals

whose family members have been arrested and incarcerated and the impact that it has on them, and really trying to bring those voices into a field that has been historically pretty conservative in its way of thinking.

J Jose Sanchez 04:22

So, and then more specifically, when we talk about convict criminology in Bhutan, but like you said, given the voices to people that have been involved in the criminal justice system, what other types of issues or topics are, is convict criminology specifically trying to address that maybe come up with or that you see come up through mainstream criminology we can say?

J Jennifer Ortiz 04:49

Well, I think for me a big part of why I'm a part of combat criminology is to try to counter some of these long held beliefs within criminology about people who are convicts whether they choose to, you know, I identify with that term or not. But combating these kind of more positivist conservative viewpoints that tend to have dominated the field of criminology for decades, if not almost a century, and so that includes looking at the role of society, in the creation of quote unquote criminals looking at the role of society in the oppression of individuals, who, who are disproportionately put into the criminal justice system. So, really giving these more critical perspectives into a field that does not, I don't say appreciate, but that's, that might be the right term, but that doesn't appreciate or value kind of critical perspectives.

G Grant Tietjen 05:44

Absolutely, um, you know, I think, you know, we bring a lot of nuance a lot of the insider perspective and into criminology. Whereas the field has been, you know, dominated by is very empirical, very statistically focused, quant, quantitatively focused analyses which do have a place they can be useful in certain contexts. But bringing our perspective and our voice from the perspective of lived experience brings a different sort of picture, it brings new insights into the discussion, which presents and creates a more comprehensive picture of the, the, you know, legal system experience, and we've, we think that that should be part of the criminal, you know, the criminological discussion within criminological research and with within criminological policy.



J Jenn Tostlebe 06:43

Absolutely, that's doing some research in the Oregon prison system right now. And that is one of our core things that we tell everyone that's incarcerated there that we're speaking to is, you know, you've never really had that much of a voice. So, this is your opportunity. And we're doing qualitative and quantitative data, and they really appreciate it. It's cool to do.

G Grant Tietjen 07:04

Absolutely,

Absolutely.



Jenn Tostlebe 07:06

So, as both of you have pointed out, you know, this area of research is relatively new, considering how long criminology has been around. And so when and how was this subset, so to speak, of criminology established?



Grant Tietjen 07:22

Yeah, I can speak to that, if you like. It was formed, essentially, from discussions that happened at the 1997 American Society of Criminology conference in San Francisco, I only know this from reading articles, because I wasn't there. I hadn't even been introduced to the criminal justice system yet. At that point, um, I full, full disclosure, I have similar, criminal justice system contact, right? And I'm open about that I discuss that with with colleagues and you know, and so on, but I got introduced to it later on in about 2005. Nonetheless, it formed at that point in time, and then as they a group of scholars, you know, for many of them system impacted, but many of them them also just concerned scholars that wanted to continue the convict criminology mission got together, they started writing scholarship on the issue, and by about 2003 of the book, *Convict Criminology* was published, an anthology of, of writings from various convict criminology or scholars that affiliated with convict criminology. Another point I'd like to make is not everybody, that's a convict criminology calls themselves a convict criminologist or that, you know, studies it and we don't go a walk around calling each other convict criminologist, either. That's a very personal decision. Also, you know, along with the decision to discuss a background of criminal justice contact, right? That's very, very much a personal decision on that part, but, you know, on the part of the individual, and we don't expect others to do that, or we don't expect anyone to out themselves, that's only if they feel that that's they're in a place where they are comfortable doing it. But just to give you some perspective on that, but so we were formed in that era. And, you know, that tough on crime era, right? When they were openly you know, in the media, and even criminologist, conventional criminologists, we're calling people that, you know, had system contact, you know, super predators and criminals and thugs and worse te, you know, terminology to and we formed as at least partially as a response to that, you know, and I guess I'll kind of stop it at that and ask Jen, if you have anything to add to that.



Jennifer Ortiz 09:58

No, I was I was probably in kindergarten, when convict criminology was founded as division of a well, when it was founded as an informal working group of scholars in order to provide, you know, mentorship and help and guidance throughout this, the academic journey. But I will say that convict criminology has evolved over time, because when I was an undergrad, what my my undergrad mentor was a formerly incarcerated man of color, and he was a member of convict criminology before it was a formal division. And he told me that I couldn't fit in convict criminology because I, I hadn't served time in prison, right? Which was kind of a standard, right, you had to be a prison convict to be in convict 0criminology, we evolved dramatically over time, where now someone like me, who has been arrested and served a short amount of time in jail is still allowed to be a part of the group. And we've evolved to the point where we encourage the family members of the incarcerated who are scholars to come and be a part of

our organization, because the realization is that convictions affect people beyond the prison walls. So it's not just the person who's serving time, their family members or serving time with them. They are serving time beyond beyond the bars, but they're still serving time. And so we have expanded to really encompass all of all individuals who have been directly or or indirectly impacted by the criminal justice system.



Jenn Tostlebe 11:28

And we've mentioned the formal division a few times now, can both of you or each one of you describe kind of the creation of this division as far as why and kind of how it was created?



Jennifer Ortiz 11:40

So convict criminology was originally kind of a subdivision of critical criminology, the existing division of critical criminology, which is now division of critical criminology and social justice, I believe, is their full title. But in so being a part of that, we didn't have our own funds, we couldn't set up our own kind of scholarships. We couldn't do the things that we envisioned for our group. And so we really wanted to stand on our own. Because while I, I consider myself a critical criminologist, we just really needed to be our own entity. And so I wasn't there when they were originally drafting up the constitution. Our amazing power parliamentarian, Daniel Tavish. He's at Oklahoma. Yeah, yeah. And so Daniel was able to work with people and, you know, create our constitution, and really move us towards becoming a division. And so we had, we went through the normal ASC processes of becoming a division we went in was 2018, or 2019, ASC, we went around gathering signatures.



Grant Tietjen 12:52

19



Jennifer Ortiz 12:53

2018, and then established a board and, you know, submitted the paperwork. And in 2020, the ASC board voted to allow us to become the, the division of common criminology.



Jose Sanchez 13:06

So, you mentioned that, at first, it was sort of tucked in with critical criminology. Could you tell us a little bit more of like, how exactly it fit in with critical criminology? And then so maybe, where what point did you start deciding that maybe it's better, or we're better off kind of branching out and becoming our own division?



Grant Tietjen 13:30

I can speak to that, how we, we fit under the division of critical criminology, because a lot of

the, you know, original convict, early, early comment, criminologists were involved in that, you know, in that division of, of the ASC and they had very critical perspectives on criminology. Right, I just think they began to see at the tough on crime era in the late 90s, early 2000s, you know, that, their, their issues weren't being addressed, that they felt like kind of, they were a little bit left out of the equation, you know, or the discussions. So, they, they formed their own subdivision or area to, you know, to address that, you know, and bring their, bring their concerns to the table, you know, now, later on, though, as, as the years went by, society, you know, continued to evolve and call you know, a cultural norms continue to change and evolve and the cultural norms of criminal justice continued to change and evolve over time, right? As I think we've seen now, you know, there's the societal norms and values continue to shift and change even more quickly all the time. And perhaps, you know, some of the ideas and concepts of convict criminology hadn't kept up with those those cultural shifts and norms that evolution, right? And, and some of us begin discussing, hey, look, you know, it looks like we're, I don't know, our development, our thinking is slowed. down, maybe, maybe stagnated a little bit. And, and maybe we need to think about whether is it time to move forward or and evolve? Or is it, you know, time to, to kind of start to realize we're kind of dying on the vine here a little bit, you know? And so from that discussion, you know, that we started having in regards to that, and looking around and saying, you know, you know, perhaps we need to focus more on and looking at issues of diversity of inclusion within our group too, because we started out focusing so much just on fighting against, you know, being labeled initially. And then, and then, you know, we're looking around and saying, Well, I'm not sure where, or even in alignment with current criminal justice thinking. So, we need to think about moving forward with that. So, that's when the big discussions in regards that had been sort of simmering for years, the real serious discussions about forming a division began to kick in. So, we started having business meetings in like 2016, 17, 18. And that's where we began to sort of organize a little bit further before we became a formal division. And then we said, well, maybe we need to really take this step really take this jump, the initial organizers were against it back in the 90s, becoming a division because they thought it would be assimilating with the systems of power, right? But then we realized, then the discussions moved over towards maybe we need some institutional support here to bring us further legitimacy. Now, there's still discussions back and forth on this, you know, whether we should assimilate and what have we assimilated too much, and so on. Before I go off into the weeds too far, I'll let Jen speak to anything she might have thought she might have on this, too.

J

Jennifer Ortiz 16:49

No, I think that you've covered it. Really well, I also, I understand, at least my understanding of the intent of not wanting to be a division or not wanting to assimilate is, and the, you know, early issues with with diversity was not wanting other people to take over, right. So, not wanting someone else to come in and take over this thing, they had created this kind of safe space for individuals who had, you know, criminal convictions. And so it was nice to be part of the division of critical criminology, they are a large division. But it made more sense for us to have our own thing that is just us, right? That is controlled by us that is not beholden to everybody else's opinions and perspectives.

G

Grant Tietjen 17:39

I might add, that they've continued to be very supportive of us to and we still have strong relationships with the Division of Critical Criminology and collaborate with many of their, their

members. So just as to give some further perspective on that.

J Jennifer Ortiz 17:54

I think many of our members are also members of the division of Critical Criminology.

G Grant Tietjen 17:58

That's also true, myself included, right, yeah.

J Jose Sanchez 18:02

So, building a little bit more of like, sort of this development of convict criminology grant, we saw that. So, you have this working paper titled "Building a Formal Theory of Convict Criminology" and this also described in your paper "Convict Criminology: Learning from the Past, Taking on the Present, and Expanding to Meet the Future". So, would you say that this means that convict criminology doesn't quite fit in with our more traditional theories of crime? You know, like the three core ones control, learning, strain?

G Grant Tietjen 18:39

Yeah, you know, there's been a lot of discussion in regards to that as to whether over the years and that's a great question in regards to, you know, whether we have a unique brand, or whether we just fit in with with the other, you know, majors, brands of criminology. And I talk about it in, in several, you know, several different papers and talking about in a book I'm working on right now, and I'm talking about it in a, in a I've talked about in previous papers that I've published, um, and, you know, in, I talked about three different concepts in a previous paper, you know, in that, you know, for that we what's unique to us, I talk about is that we emphasize in an insider perspective and the potential for you know, it has for challenging conventional criminological knowledge, you know, but, you know, we expose new developments at the organic level with you know, within the dynamics that are being examined in the academy and we feel that adds a lot to to our, you know, to the value of convict criminology. Secondly, and this is three parts I explained, you know, how like mentoring and collaborative actions that we exist within our group are, you know, they connect and the odd, you know, disjointed, fragmented pockets of individual convict criminology experience and knowledge, you know, and these allow new ideas and concepts to form, you know, and to congeal into, you know, production of new understandings of criminological phenomena. You know, and also correctional and, you know, formerly incarcerated cultures. And in the third concept of, you know, I talk about the rigors of, you know, a total institutional structures of prisons, you know, coupled with a stigma, that's it's been placed on system impacted people, after release, this can function to provide, you know, scholars that, that have these experiences with improved capabilities of reflexivity, you know, you know, that can challenge the notion that, you know, there is subjective experiences that they have might somehow nullify the findings of our, you know, that's been a critique of us that you're too subjective, that nullifies your findings, we argue, no, this subjectivity adds to our findings, right? That it improves that, and I see a further theoretical development coming from those concepts, right? They're still in

development, by the way to this is not fully developed theoretical paradigms, but it's just my concepts that I was discussing in a paper. And then I talk about, I'm writing a book on, you know, system impacted groups, you know, that similar to convict criminology, but including all a lot of other groups like Underground Scholars, or, you know, it for in California, for example, or Rising Scholars in California too, for example, or formerly incarcerated college graduates network, but I talked about how, on the other side, we also incorporate, I think, incorporate other theoretical components that are already established, and one of the bigger ones that we talked about quite a bit is feminist standpoint theory. That standpoint component is an important part of our of our perspective, as convict criminologists, and many other theorists and criminologist when discussing, talking with convict criminologists have suggested that, you know, can you incorporate the standpoint theory into your discussions, but I also, and I'll just try to wrap this up for sake of time, but other concepts, I think, that have been, you know, have been discussed as being utilized in comment, criminology or peacemaking criminology, cultural criminology, and new the new criminology that was, you know, brought about from scholarship in the United Kingdom, insider perspectives on overuse of mass incarceration, which was some of the scholarship of John Irwin. And then once again, the feminist standpoint theory. So, I just want to bring that response to a close for sake of time, but those are some of my thoughts on the theory of convict criminology.



Jenn Tostlebe 22:46

One thing that I do want to point out, and this is something that I myself fell into this trap before realizing more about who all is included in academia, but I feel like a lot of people, general public speaking, and then also those in the academy often are not fully aware that individuals who have been to jail or prison are able to obtain doctoral degrees and become professors and so on and so forth. And so just one example that I want to point out that's kind of a cool story that you mentioned in your papers, is Frank Tannenbaum who those people in criminology are probably very familiar with this name. Best known for his work on the "dramatization of evil" kind of this early perspective on labeling theory. But as I found out by going through the Division of Convict Criminology's website, and then also in some of the writings that I was reading, preparing for this episode. He's also kind of unofficially considered by many scholars to be the first convict criminologist in the United States. So, kind of his backstory is in 1914, he served a year on Blackwells Island in New York City for labor disturbances involving a group of 200 unemployed and hungry men on the lower west side of Manhattan. He did go on to write a book called Wall shadows, a study in American prisons, and then taught criminology at Cornell University. And so my question for both of you is whether or not you can share maybe some stories about other formerly incarcerated individuals who became professors and are open about it kind of maybe their background where they are now what they're doing so on.



Jennifer Ortiz 24:26

I will say that I think people's misconceptions about us not existing is because we haven't, we have to live in the shadows. It's just a reality of our life. So, Grant is able to be more open now because he has the protection of tenure. I've got the protection of tenure coming up in a few months. And so like I wrote my first autoethnographic chapter, knowing that it would not be published till after the day, my tenure started, because I did not want to be denied tenure or fired simply because of my past experience, which is a very common struggle. One of the

things that that we try to do in combat criminology is mentor these new scholars who are in PhD programs about how to get into the job market or even how to get into a PhD program. Because checking the box that says yes, they can just deny you outright based on that, or you can be admitted, but you can be denied funding or, I mean, I have seen people denied faculty positions for non-violent felonies in which they serve not a day inside prison. Like that's the extent of discrimination against people with criminal records in academia. And so I, I don't want to out anyone who isn't already out. But I will say that I can speak about my mentor, Dr. Douglas Tompkins, he served 11 years here in Indiana, ironically, although I did not meet him here. In prison, he went on to earn his bachelor's degree from Ball State while incarcerated. And then he he eventually earned his PhD, really from from the University of Chicago, but he was hired on at John Jay College of Criminal Justice where I was an undergrad was when he was ABD. So before he had actually finished his PhD, in part because he brought that insider convict perspective to his sociology department. He is not in academia anymore for a whole host of reasons. But he does consulting work. So he'll consult on legal cases, he will work on research projects with nonprofit organizations. But that's kind of where he's at. He's still in New York City is just not actively in academia, because as the formerly incarcerated person, academia can be very exhausting. And the way you're treated throughout your academic career can just be very exhausting. And it can it can take a severe mental toll on people. Yeah, but so like, so example, every time Doug would would give a talk, he would be introduced as, this is Douglas Tompkins, he served 11 years in prison, not, there's this brilliant sociologist who wrote this amazing dissertation and publishes these papers. You know, it was always, it always started with that, you know, and we had long conversations about just how problematic that is. Now, imagine if I remind you of the worst time in your life, every single time that I see you, that's what happens when you're a combat criminologist who is out and open.

G

Grant Tietjen 27:04

You know, I can speak to when I, when I was introduced to force it, first and foremost, into convictcriminology, and I'll only talk about people that are very open and have already outed themselves in their work and in their scholarship. And, you know, is, you know, like, a Steve Richards, for example, you know, one of the early members of combat criminology, and if you study that discipline, you'll know, that name, generally speaking, is heavily cited and, you know, as some of the classical literature. And, you know, he he's retired now, he's emeritus now, you know, but he had a, he had a full career in, in criminology, you know, at University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, I believe, right? But, you know, and, you know, so and he, you know, introduced and mentored a lot, a lot of people along the way, right? Myself included, you know, and just, for example, of, you know, there's other people, though, that have been formerly incarcerated, though, your question was broad, you know, for people that have been, you know, system impacted, formerly incarcerated or convicted, you know, of illegal offense at some point, that have become scholars, um, you know, um, for example, or, you know, like, Angela Davis, for example, was not convicted, she did have, you know, legal system contact, she was exonerated, but she was, she was incarcerated for a certain amount of time. While she was facing trial, back in the early 70s, for example, she doesn't identify as a convict criminologist and we don't claim her as one, you know, uh, but, but and she's, you know, a prolific scholar and a, you know, a, you know, very high profile, human rights activist, right? And so on, standing up for racial justice. And so, and much more, just to give you some examples of scholars out there that that have, you know, interacted with the system and what they've done since that point. So, there is, you know, there is hope the door is open, I talked about that in some of my own research to to, you know, those you know, who have the how do I say this the privilege, the fortune to get make it through the educational system, but as as

Jennifer so accurately said, even if you do it, this is, the process is still not easy, and it's very difficult, it's often often obstacle ridden. And in a paper me and Daniel Kavish wrote for the future of convict criminology book was recently published in 2021. A chapter that we talked about status fragility, how system impacted you know, people system contacted scholars have this added, you know, fragility of status that they have to grapple with throughout their entire careers and it impacts him it already did a very nice job of explaining that process and you know, and what it looks like for a lot of scholars, they're carrying this invisible knapsack over their, you know, or backpack and full of stones over their backs. In many cases, they're dealing with all these other issues because of that, you know, those that that background of collateral consequences that many system impacted people deal with for the rest of their lives. So just to add that to the discussion.

 Jose Sanchez 30:15

And I think another one of the one pack, just hearing Jenn's question, one of the names that came to mind and it only came to mind because I'm currently reading his book is Christian Bolden. And his book, I think his book "Out of the Red" does a really nice job. It was a great example of sort of bringing in his lived experience and tying it in with the academic part, like, you know, the, the research. So, I would recommend out of the read by Christian Bolden,

 Jennifer Ortiz 30:45

Yeah. So, that book actually won the 2020 Frank E. Tanenbaum Book of the Year Award from the Division of Convict Criminology. So, we are 100% on board with recommending Christians book.

 Grant Tietjen 31:00

Absolutely.



Jenn Tostlebe 31:01

All right, shall we move into the paper then that we're discussing? So the manuscript we're going to be talking about is authored by our guests, Jennifer and Grant as well as their colleagues, Daniel Kavish and Alison Cox. It's called "Let the Convict Speak: A Critical Conversation of the Ongoing Language Debate and Convict Criminology." That's currently under review. Just a quick summary of it and feel free to add anything to this if I'm missing anything. The paper addresses criticisms faced by the Division of Convict Criminology regarding its name and the push to move to person first language, which avoids terms such as convict, inmate, and felon, more specifically, it explores the power of language by summarizing the ongoing language debate, reviewing convict criminology research and addressing structural violence in the academy. Do you want to add anything to that summary? Or is that?

 Jennifer Ortiz 31:52

Oh, I think it was perfect. Yeah.

Oh, I think it was perfect. Yeah.



Jenn Tostlebe 31:54

All right. Jose, I'll let you take it away.



Jose Sanchez 31:57

Okay. So, based on the summary, our first question is, can we get a little more background on sort of the criticisms that have been levied against the Division of Convict Criminology because of the way that you decided to name yourselves and therefore, the motivation behind this paper?



Jennifer Ortiz 32:19

So I will say that there is a push within the field of criminology to change language and, and how we refer to people, especially in the vigils who have been processed through the criminal justice system, right wording, avoiding words like, you know, criminal, you know, prisoner, inmate, you know, ex-convict and those types of words. So there's, there's a general push in our bill to change language, which I think is a general push across a lot of fields, right. So even the American Psychological Association put out a guide, you know, on language and stuff. So, there's a push, I think, overall in society to kind of change how we talk about people. And so when this when we decided to become the Division of Convict Criminology, we filled out the paperwork, there was debate and and a vote amongst the existing members before we became a formal division as to whether we should change our name or not. The vote was the majority wanted to keep the name convict criminology for a whole host of reasons. When, when the official announcement came out in April 2020, that we were officially a division and the ASC board had, you know, voted in favor of our proposal, we got a backlash. On Twitter, I am very active on Twitter, Grant's not as active as me, but also active on Twitter, we started getting tweets like, oh, that's wonderful, now you should change your name. Or why would you name yourself that? Or, you know, why are you dehumanizing yourself, and it was just all this, like, we were so happy that we had gone through the mountains of paperwork and steps to become a division, then it's like they just came and rained on our parade. And so Grant, I and, me, Grant, Allison and Dan decided, we want to write about the long history of us discussing, us being the Division of Convict Criminology. We've had long debates about this word. We've had long debates, and not all members agree. I will say that just because we are the Division of Convict Criminology, that doesn't mean everyone's on board. In fact, at this last year's ASC, we had a whole nother debate about about the word convict, right? And so we just wanted to inform the public and largely academics about how much we had put into really thinking about this word, what's the history? This is not a new conversation for us. It's a new conversation for everyone else, but convict criminologists have been having this language conversation for 25 years now, right? And so it seems like everyone got on board the language train, and we were already like out of the station. We had already been discussing this for two decades at that point. And so we want to say okay, we hear you but also, we don't need to be told why the word is problematic, because we know why it's problematic. We've had these conversations. But when the majority of members vote to keep the word, we go like a democracy should with the majority. Alright. And so our motivation was just hey, this is our debate, this is what's

happening within convict criminology. And we want you all to know that we hear your criticisms, they have been raised by our very own members. But at the end of the day, the consensus of the majority has been to keep the word.



Jenn Tostlebe 35:30

And so from here, the manuscript, manuscript kind of starts off by discussing more in depth, this idea of person first, as well as identity first language. And this was actually the first time that I'd heard of identity first language. And so what do these terms refer to? And how are they unique from each other?



Jennifer Ortiz 35:51

So person first, I don't want to use the word to actually define the word but it's when you mentioned the individual first before their actual, you know, disability is how it's most often used, right? Or their status or their identity. So it's the difference between person with a conviction, and then convict, right or person with a disability and disabled person. Alright, so person with a disability, his person, first disabled person is identity first, right. And so that's kind of how those what those two words mean. And I will admit that Daniel Kavish, wrote that amazing analysis of person first identity first, I was confused at first, but, uh, that's my understanding of those two terms.



Grant Tietjen 36:34

Yeah, that's it. That's my understanding of of those of that discussion. Also. Yeah, kudos to Dan, once again, on the on the in-depth analysis of that. He was a, you know, scholar, he focuses a lot on labeling theory. So, he had a lot to say on that discussion. But, you know, the environment of criminology, we talk about shifted over time to, you know, and we use the term convict, we claimed it, you know, a lot of discussion talks about that initially, and it's discussed in this paper, as, you know, as part of language reclamation, right? That concept, could you go moving clear back to the early night, the late 90s, and so on, you know, this term is being used weapon used against us, you know, weaponized against us, we're going to reclaim it and take it back and use it as our own term, for example, right? And now there's, you know, discussion of, you know, humanizing language and which we're on board with him, which we completely agree with, and we support that for ourselves and our own members. Many of us do. And, you know, there was also discussion of the term convict, you know, in early convict criminology literature as being a humanizing term. Because it was, the definition of convict is a person who has been convicted of a crime. And it was compared, they were comparing it in early CC (convict criminology) literature to other terms, like, you know, super predator or criminal or something like that, where they were dehumanizing turn labeling, you know, pejorative terms, and then making the argument that, you know, this is referring to people's, you know, personhood, you know, and thus humanizing them. Now, there's those that argue that that's not accurate, or that that that definition has shifted culturally over the last 20 years. And that's a discussion that we've had also, you know, but but that's just to give you some perspective on why they picked up the term, convict, and versus how we perceive it now.



Jenn Tostlebe 38:47

And that's discussed in the paper too, in pretty good detail. It was interesting to read.



Jose Sanchez 38:53

Thank you that. So getting a little bit more. And then we've or you have both mentioned this a few times where there was this internal debate over this word, convict. And, you know, Grant us kind of started touching on it a little bit. But can you use some more details on so what this internal debate look like, for, against, where some people like I don't really care? And then maybe how you both feel about this, and sort of like the debate in general.



Jennifer Ortiz 39:28

I can take it. Sure. So I'm people who are against the word view as a slur. And that was that that's an exact quote that I'm recalling from from our business meeting at ASC. They view it as offensive, right? They just don't want that term. They don't want to be labeled as that term and they won't and they don't want that term associated with them. They believe that it is in fact dehumanizing. And some have argue that we are we are adopting the language of the state right? So we are we we are taking the word convict which was created by the state To put a label on us, and therefore we should reject that that entire concept. Some people say, Listen, I don't care, right? Because if you call me a convict, or you call me a person convicted of a crime, you're still treating me exactly the same way. So, what does it matter, right? But only matters that you change what you're doing to us, not what you call us. Some people, you know, take, take the position, like, listen, we're just, we're just splitting hairs at this point, you know, like, what's the point of this? What is our end goal? And then the people who are for keeping it, there's, there's different perspectives, why people want to keep it some people, in fact, want to reclaim it, like what Grant said, like, we are taking the power back, right? So we see the same thing in queer criminology, right, kind of reclaiming the word queer and making it not be not have the same stigma, right? We can call each other that, but you can't call us that right is kind of that position. Other people are for other people, like myself, I am for keeping the name. Because I feel like people want us to change convicts to make them feel better. They want to feel better about what it is they are doing to us, I want to keep it because I want it in their face, I want them to always have to, I want them always have to grapple with their own role in the oppression of people who have criminal records, right? I want the word there, we can change it to justice impacted, and it'll make everybody feel warm and fuzzy inside. But at the end of the day, we still can't get jobs, we still can't get into PhD programs, we're still harassed, we've still got to deal with parole, we still have housing restrictions, you know, we're still dealing with all of this, and I want them especially the American Society of Criminology, to grapple with its role in our oppression. And so I don't want to change the name to satisfy people who are not convicts themselves who are not actually directly impacted by this word, or rather by this criminal justice system, rather.



Jenn Tostlebe 42:03

Grant do you have anything to add to that? Or?



Grant Tietjen 42:05

No, I think that sums it up very nicely. Yeah. Anything to add to that? Great.



Jose Sanchez 42:11

Yeah. Real quick, sorry. Just when I saw the official announcement, on Twitter, that the we have the division of Conrad criminology. I do feel like it packs a bit of a punch, you know, like a, like a bit, sort of. I must admit, I was a little surprised that it got through ASE. Given you know, that I, I would have guessed that there would have been enough backlash from like, the executive board or something. Like, oh, you can't do that that's not culturally sensitive, or whatever. But, so I was a little surprised. Once I know, you know, I'm, I'm glad that you guys got to keep the name the way you wanted it.



Jennifer Ortiz 42:57

I will also say that Daniel Kavishh has a really interesting take. He says that he wants to he wants it pronounced as convict criminology, like we need to convict the field of criminology, right for the horrible atrocities that they've committed against society.



Jenn Tostlebe 43:13

All right, so Oh, great. Go ahead.



Grant Tietjen 43:16

I was gonna say, interestingly, grateful, gratefully, we got we received a lot of support from a lot of divisions of, of the American Society of Criminology too and from the executive, you know, so we're very grateful for that. We received a lot of support from queer criminology from the Division of Women and Crime, from the Division of People of Color and Crime. So, we had a we had broad spectrums support, and with people that, you know, shared a lot of the same sentiments that we did in regards to, you know, our mission. So, I just wanted to kind of give give you a little a little background on on how we were perceived when we were attempting to petition to become a division.



Jenn Tostlebe 44:06

On that note, one topic that I personally and I think Jose too thought that we needed to discuss in this podcast, and you I'm going to use pull quote directly from the manuscript that we read is that "the convict criminology discipline has been criticized for its lack of diversity and inclusion across race and ethnicity, nationality, and gender." And so can you guys describe this criticism in more detail? And then how does bringing in a more diverse and inclusive perspective enhance convict criminology?

J

Jennifer Ortiz 44:42

I go, I wasn't. So, convict criminology originally was largely comprised of older white men, right. And so over time, they were criticized for not having more more women and more people of color, specifically because people of color are disproportionately impacted disproportionately incarcerated. However, I think while the criticisms were, were valid, I think that the criticisms should have been lodged at criminology as opposed to just convict criminology. Right. So if we look at the field of criminology, it is very much dominated by old white men to this day, it's dominated by old white men, that's a fact. And so, academia did not allow convict scholars in until really modern times, and then when they did allow convicts, and they only allowed the convicts they were comfortable with in which were almost by default, old white men, right, those were the ones perceived as being not not a threat or danger to the to the university in college systems. So academia served as this gatekeeper that kept people of color and women out of its space. And then when convict criminology was created, the people who were actually admitted to academia and allowed to be part of it, were the only ones that were in convict criminology, because that's the people that that existed. And so the criticism was valid. But I also think that it needed to be a broader or criticism, if you go to any ASC conference and look around, it is a very white space, it is a very male dominated space, it is a very conservative space. So, I think originally combat criminology reflected the field of criminology. And I think one thing that that we've been really good at is, is increasing diversity. So, if you look at our current current board, we are a female dominated board. Grant's and Dan are the only men on our board, we have four women of color on our board, right we are, if you look at the rest of the boards across ASC, we have one of the most diverse boards that have any division within ASC, including even the you know, you know, Division of People of Color and Crime, for example. Alright, we are very, very diverse board. And I think that we have worked really hard to intentionally make make our board diverse and inclusive. And we have and we are working to bring in more scholars, especially scholars of color, who just don't know, we exist, they just don't know there's a space. But at the same time, it becomes really difficult when those very same scholars are excluded from the academy in the first place. All right, I can't find undergraduate convict scholars, if colleges systematically exclude them, right, I can't find, you know, convict professors, if, if the academy systematically excludes them. So, we are working on it, we have diversity initiatives, we have created a bunch of initiatives to begin in 2022, to try to increase diversity and inclusion. But I think historically, our division reflected academia, and it reflected the actual demographic makeup of the academy. And now as the academy is shifting, and trying to reinvent itself and increase diversity, increase inclusion, we're, you know, we are doing the same and as, as they begin to admit more people of color and more women and people who have criminal records, we will be able to increase our diversity inclusion too.

G

Grant Tietjen 48:09

And, you know, early on, you know, in the earlier days of convictcriminology too, there was, you know, there was mentorship, and there was an inclusion of, you know, people of color, or people from marginalized backgrounds, people from, you know, intersectionally oppressed populations, and, you know, many did make it through, but a, that a large number were unable to, because of the structural obstacles that they kept encountering, right, that would somehow block their progress, for example, or slow their progress, for example. And, and thus, you know, as, I don't want to add too much, you know, Jen already explained very, you know, very concisely in regards to how that process works, but, you know, that, that did then facilitate that the people who did were able to make it through reflected the rest of the American, you know, criminology in regards to being older white men, often of middle class or upper middle class

backgrounds and so on. So, just give some perspective on that. Right. But yeah, you know, yeah, and we are working very, you know, diligently to focus on, you know, the new initiatives, you know, but also not not just about talking about it, but about being about it, right. So if we're gonna do these initiatives, we're gonna not just, you know, you know, give lip service, we're going to, you know, get engaged with rate fundraising with taking, you know, direct action for scholarships to get marginalized students or, you know, groups, you know, involved in combat criminology and get them to the conferences, get them get their publishing their scholarship out there and get it published, you know, the being very mindful of those those concepts, too. So, there's, there's a lot of work going on in regards to that. You know, it's ongoing Even at the current time.

J Jose Sanchez 50:02

So it's been mentioned a couple of times in the broader podcast, and then in your manuscript, you talk about this is the developing inclusive and supportive groups for scholars with criminal records. But I wanted to ask if you could provide us and our listeners with some examples on how we can go about doing this? How can we be more inclusive and supportive?

G Grant Tietjen 50:29

Yeah, me, what I all refer back in my previous comments, just before this question, you know, getting, you know, putting our money where our mouth is funding, you know, initiatives to get, you know, diverse scholars to conferences, to get them involved in scholarship. That's it, that's one thing that we can do. Another thing is collaborating with others, you know, who might not have an opportunity to have engaged with with, you know, higher level scholarship or, you know, with peer reviewed scholarship, you get given these opportunities, right, as a new scholar, I was mentored in that capacity. And now, a lot of us, you know, that have progressed in common criminology are working with other with other scholars, but being mindful of those who might have limited somewhat more limited opportunities, bring them in on projects, work with them, give them that mentorship, give them the time have the phone conversations have brought, you know, during the pandemic, whose phone conversations instead of meeting in person, but hadn't spend the spend the time working with with more, you know, diverse groups. That, for me, is a couple, you know, perspective, you know, I guess, strategies that I've that I've been, you know, mindful of and have tried to engage with. Jen, do you have any further thoughts on other strategies?

J Jennifer Ortiz 51:52

Well, yeah, I also think that one of my biggest calls is to ban the box on these college applications, right? Because I can, I can pay for someone's way to get to this ASE conference. But if you're not letting them enroll in your school, you know, I can't really help them. And so I think that we owe it to, to system impacted individuals and formed the crusher to individuals to fight back against these, these institutional policies that keep them out of out of college in the first place. We all the research tells us education is one of the greatest ways to reduce recidivism, right education is one of the greatest ways to move up in class right to to be stable. And yet we are systematically excluding them, right. So I will use my university, I'm at Indiana University, they have the box, have you ever been convicted of a crime? And then if you check,

yes, your your application goes into a special file that goes into a different review committee, that includes our chief of police. So just imagine the mind frame. I love our Chief of Police on campus. He's a really great guy. But think about the mind frame that he's coming at looking at that application, it's not about can this person be a successful college student is? Do I view them as a threat based on something they did, however, many years ago, right. And so we need to fight to to ban these boxes, I would love to see the establishment of, you know, prison to college pipelines, we can we talk so much about, you know, the school to prison pipeline, let's create a prison to college pipeline right now, now that we have Pell Grants, every university should be inside of correctional facilities, offering college classes and real meaningful college classes, right? To these individuals, we should be working to offer them education, and then and then we should just grant them admission into our universities, they should not have to go through the process a second time, right, they've proved that they can handle the work. So that's one way. And I also think that banning the box just removes that stigma. I don't have to think about that when I'm applying for college, right? Most people just don't understand once you check the box, some universities make you write a whole essay in detail every single detail of your crime, your conviction, how much time you serve what happens, the most dehumanizing process. And I mean, I've had, I've had conversations with individuals who have criminal records, who just had mental breakdowns filling out like these essays, right? Because it's so traumatic to relive your worst days over and over again. And so getting rid of the box, and then once they're here, let's create spaces for them, like the underground scholars, right spaces where, where they can come together, and they can have community and then it's on us, individuals that are kind of, you know, later in their career or post tenure to then reach back and mentor those people, right, reach back and help them overcome all of these obstacles. Right? So I'm very much of the notion that if a junior scholar contacts me, my first thought is how do we get you tenure? Because I know tenure gives you protection. So what can I do to help get you to that 10 year process to that 10 year point. And that can be you know, applying for grants together. Doing research together writing papers together just any way that I can help them get across like that 10 year threshold so to speak.

J Jose Sanchez 55:10

Yeah. And Jen and I actually both renewed our FAFSAs today. And one of the things while we're, while we were filling it out, as you know, they ask you, have you ever been convicted of whatever it? Is that the ask and? Yeah, yeah. And then even if it doesn't cost you funding, but just the question might deter some people are like, Whoa, I think, yeah, maybe I got into college, but I can't afford it. Because they're obviously gonna deny me because I have to answer yes to this question. I always thought I was impacted

G Grant Tietjen 55:43

by that. 20 Some years ago, I had to delay college because I was it was I was served two years and, you know, federal prison for a drug offense. And I, you know, was unable to access federal aid because of that for a certain amount of time.

J Jennifer Ortiz 55:59

Yeah. And if you think about it, there's no real logic behind it. Because you can murder someone and get financial aid, just can't sell drugs and get financial aid just right.

J Jose Sanchez 56:09
You know, they don't want you getting those college students Hi.

J Jennifer Ortiz 56:13
Yeah, no, they don't. Like drug offenders are just gonna wait for their like, for their financial aid check and then go like to start selling drugs. Like, I'm convinced that that's what they think.

G Grant Tietjen 56:26
Probably, yeah. And all this effort to get to graduate school so that I couldn't wait to become an international.



Jenn Tostlebe 56:32
Better fun, yes. Alright, so the last thing that I kind of want to ask you about the paper, and it's a more broad question, really, is that in the manuscript, it's in Grant, you've mentioned this, too. And I think Jennifer's well, that identifying as a convict criminologist is this personal decision. It's a decision that the individual makes themselves and people should kind of honor this. And so I do have not direct experience, but second hand experience with the criminal justice system going in and visiting people in prison, and so on and so forth. But for those of us who haven't had this direct contact, is there kind of an agreed upon or preferable term for us to use for individuals who have been incarcerated or currently are incarcerated in some way?

G Grant Tietjen 57:29
I know, I argue it's very subjective or that it's, you know, it's a very personal decision in that capacity. And in how I view it is that it's, it's very much the decision and you know, the choice of the individual as to what they'd like to be referred to, as, you know, there's a lot of, you know, different opinions on how to be referred to even within combat criminology. I've, in my book I'm working on where I'm interviewing people from, like underground scholars and rising scholars, and formerly incarcerated college graduates network and combat criminology, there's a lot of different discussion in regards to that, you know, underground scholars, you know, came out with a web page of terminology to be used. But even that, in that they discuss, I think that these are just suggestions or guidelines, right. But they're also open to that, that, that discussion, you know, as to using different terminology Jandy. Me for more thoughts on that?

J Jennifer Ortiz 58:33
I mean, for me, I'm like, if you want to call yourself a convex conduct criminologists, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have been convicted of a crime right? Because you are impacted by this criminal justice system. I know that some of our members who have family

members were incarcerated, but they've never been incarcerated call themselves the non cons in our group. That's, that's a term that that they just made up the you know, that they use but I say, you know, call yourself whatever you want and then just make people call you that like, just made sure that they call you what you want to be called.



Jenn Tostlebe 59:09

Something like academic maybe. You know,



Jose Sanchez 59:16

okay, so, with the last 10 or so minutes that we have left, we want to talk about the future of convict criminology. And so well, I guess this question is not necessarily the future but so retrospective on what you believe that the biggest success of conduct criminology has been



Jennifer Ortiz 59:40

setting a lot of people with our name I think just creating a space for us to exist, right but even before we were a division, it was just a space for people to come and you know, talk about issues they were experiencing research they were doing, you know how How should a pro's Pro to academia? So I would say one of our biggest successes is just serving as a support group for people who have been marginalized by the criminal justice system.



Grant Tietjen 1:00:09

Absolutely, I mean, I could add to that further is how many times I've had people tell me at the American Society of Criminology and are in later discussions in confidence, you know, that I was so glad to find a group of people that I could talk to that could that were a supportive group, you know, or they would say that people group of people like me are, you know, that understood, or that got that got it, you know, they've used different ways of framing it, but, and, but how thankful they were that, you know, they said it until I got ran into this group, you know, I didn't feel like I fit in or I felt very isolated or alienated. So, you know, the that, interestingly, to add to that, you know, to that point even further, in my research, you know, I've been referring to other groups use that also talk about that, that there's their groups are, you know, the support group, I call them system affected academics, you know, these groups, and that they, they've acted as given these spaces for support within universities and the academic sphere, I guess you could say it right. So that, in and of itself, is is huge. You know, I think another accomplishment has been a growing, ever growing and ever more substantial body of scholarship that brings lived experience perspective, and, you know, the perspective of whether lived it, you know, I don't just mean auto ethnography is, you know, there's no, that's an important part of a criminology work, but, but all types of method know, criminological methodologies and research. But from the perspective of of people that have, you know, system contact that they've brought, they've created this body of scholarship, and it's substantial, and it's growing. And it's ever so important, you know, in this space of criminology, that doesn't always account for, for our voice that doesn't always account for our viewpoints.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:02:11

Men, looking forward to the future, where would you like to see convict criminology going?



Jennifer Ortiz 1:02:18

Well, I have really lofty goals. And I'm sure these were granted before. But I will talk about some of the things that that that we have been able to accomplish some of the things I would love to see us do. So at our last business meeting in 2021, we voted to establish a scholarship fund for for formerly incarcerated individuals or individuals who have criminal records. We've been able to raise \$2,000, literally in the past 60 days. And our goal, my goal is to raise \$10,000 is what I would like to see me be able to raise to create. So we've established a scholarship and our goal is to fund at least five scholars a year giving them each \$500 scholarships to try to offset the cost of attending ASC. We recognize that that's not a huge amount, I hope in the future, it can be \$1,000 or \$2,000. But we understand that individuals who have criminal records and have been system impacted, they have lower wages, they it's harder for them to find employment, they're struggling, sometimes they're not even eligible for scholarships that that do exist on their campuses. So we were able to create this and a further ASE conference in November of 2022, we will have our first funded round of scholarships. Something else that we established at our meeting, which we are in the creating the foundation for right now is a formal mentorship program, where early career scholars will be paired with someone like myself or grant, who's already post tenure to kind of try to help them navigate academia. What I would love to see us do in the future is I would love to see us establish our own journal, our own academic journal, we have the you know, there's a journal of prisoners on prisons, which is very important. But I would like to see a complex criminology journal where it's our voices and only our voices, you know, existing in that space. I would love to see us create our own conference. There are there are convict criminology conferences in other parts of the world. I would like to see us have our own here in the United States and bring together scholars from from around the world to have these conversations about what they're experiencing in their countries, and what's going on because we have no idea what's happening in some other countries. But some what's happening in those countries is just so fascinating and so progressive and things I wish we could do here. And I would love to bring all of those voices together. I hope that I hope that we continue to grow, we're able to mentor more scholars and increase the rings of common criminology. And who knows maybe one day we'll have my real dream which is just to take over the the the American Society of Criminology. That's my goal.



Grant Tietjen 1:05:00

Absolutely. And Jen, I mean, yeah, that her those kinds of those ideas were include every future hope that I have for combat criminology too. And she was so comprehensive. She literally took all my ideas so




Jose Sanchez 1:05:18

great. Well, unfortunately, as always, with these episodes, we are out of time. And, you know, I think we had most of the key points with this conversation. We, you know, they're always so

interesting. We wish these episodes could be three, four hours long, but that's probably not, that's probably for the best that we keep them close to an hour. So thank you both for joining us today. Is there anything that you would like to plug anything we should be on the lookout for? I know, Grant, you've mentioned a book. Nada, when we could maybe expect that to hit the shelves?

 Grant Tietjen 1:05:55

Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm hoping by late, let's say by 23 is when I'm looking at, you know, at this book, and my books called justice lessons, the rise of system affected academics. And it looks at groups like comic criminology similar to us, all across the United States and internationally to right. That's my first plug. I have a second plug, which is, there's a special issue of the Journal of prisoners on prisons on the 25 years of conduct criminology that's coming out in, hopefully in July of this. This year, I'm one of the guest editors along with German a Trump, Dr. J. Renee Trombley. And Dr. Allison Cox two, so I'm just putting in a couple plugs for those two things.

 Jennifer Ortiz 1:06:43

I will also try to get I'm sorry,




Jenn Tostlebe 1:06:45

on that. Well, I'll try and remember around July, but if not always feel free to shoot us an email and we can add it to our website, too.

 Grant Tietjen 1:06:53

So absolutely. If I'm thank you for that. I will do.

 Jennifer Ortiz 1:06:55

Yeah. And I would just like to encourage anybody who is interested in joining combat criminology, to just, you know, join us, we have intentionally made student membership free. And that's because we understand we just didn't want to put more financial burden on students, but you don't have to be convicted of a crime to be part of converts criminology, we welcome you know, varying perspectives, and anybody who wants to, you know, work on the stuff that, that we have visions for the future, I encourage you to come now and join us as we as we build the foundation. And, you know, you can help direct us moving forward.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:07:39

And remember, everyone should join



Jose Sanchez 1:07:45

me? Yeah, I'll definitely join to where can people find you? I mean, you have you mentioned that you're both on on Twitter. So Twitter, email, Google Scholar, that sort of thing.



Grant Tietjen 1:07:58

All the above? Yeah. So



Jennifer Ortiz 1:08:00

my Twitter handle is at Ortiz underscore PhD. That's usually where you'll find me saying crazy things online that that people really like. So



Grant Tietjen 1:08:12

I think mine is something really, you know, complex, like Grant teaching, or I'm not really imaginative on on Twitter. But I'm really trying hard. But I'm also on Facebook, you can find common terminologies website on, or sorry, a paid page on Facebook, and you can find us on Twitter, too. And we also have a webpage that is now through the American Society of Criminology, but Khan krim.com. org on krim.org crib.org/dan. Daniel, Kevin would be very unhappy if I said the name wrong because he helped design our website and work very hard to do so.



Jose Sanchez 1:08:53

Perfect. And I'll also put all that stuff in the episode description so people won't have to try and send it out or anything. Well, thank you both. Again, it was like great talking to you both. We look forward to that our paths cross across again. Soon, hopefully in person. But we'll see. Yeah, we'll see how things go.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:09:19

Thanks so much for that review. Hey, thanks for listening.



Jose Sanchez 1:09:23

Don't forget to leave us a review on Apple podcasts or iTunes. Or let us know what you think of the episode by leaving us a comment on our website, criminology academy.com.



Jenn Tostlebe 1:09:33

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Jose Sanchez 1:09:45

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