

Crime, Law, and Deviance

A Section of the American Sociological Association

Newsletter

Summer 2010

CRIME, LAW, AND DEVIANCE 2009-2010 SECTION OFFICERS

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From the Incoming Section Chair, Rob Parker

I am very pleased to be your incoming CLD Section Chair with responsibilities for the CLD section program at the 2011 ASA Meeting in Chicago. At the 2010 business meeting in Atlanta, I will ask those in attendance for ideas about the content and style of the section's program for 2011. Anyone unable to attend may send me your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, or proposals dealing with session content or style. You may also send me a full-blown proposal for a session you want to organize. Proposals can involve open-topic submission sessions or invited sessions with presenter and topic restrictions. I wish to have as much feedback from the CLD members as possible to make the Chicago 2011 CLD section meetings the best ever. Please send your suggestions to:
Robnp@aol.com

See you in Atlanta!

Robert Nash Parker, PhD
Professor of Sociology
Co Director of the Presley Center
for Crime and Justice Studies
University of California
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105th ASA Meeting Info. August 13-17, 2010 Atlanta

Friday, August 13

1 PM – A Celebration of Life
Course Studies: Honoring Glen
Elder's Contributions to Sociology
Atlanta Marriot Marquis

Plan to arrive early in Atlanta this summer and attend an exciting afternoon of sessions examining the way in which the life course perspective has influenced scholarship in a wide range of areas within sociology.

Introductions: Robert Crosnoe
(University of Texas at Austin)
and Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson
(Washington State University)

Session 1: Sociological Perspectives on the Life Course

1. Population – Dennis
Hogan (Brown University)
2. Social Psychology – Linda
George (Duke University)
3. Medical Sociology and
Mental Health – Blair
Wheaton (University of
Toronto)
4. Criminology – Robert
Sampson (Harvard University)
Discussant: Eliza Pavalko
(Indiana University)

Session 2: Life Course Stages and Contexts of the Life Course

1. Children and Youth –
Jeylan Mortimer
(University of Minnesota)

2. Aging – Angela O’Rand
(Duke University)
 3. Schools and Education –
Barbara Schneider
(Michigan State University)
 4. Family – Arland Thornton
(University of Michigan)
- Discussant: Richard
Settersten (Oregon State)

Closing: Michael Shanahan
(North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Reception immediately following.

Sunday, August 15

8:30 - 10:10 AM

Task Force on Sociology and
Criminology Programs
Atlanta Hilton

Members of the ASA Task Force on Sociology and Criminology Programs will hold a workshop on the recommendations of the final task force report at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Atlanta. “Building Effective Sociology and Criminology Programs: Insights and Recommendations from the ASA Task Force.”

Monday, August 16

8:30 AM – CLD Council Meeting
Hilton Atlanta

9:30 AM – CLD Business Meeting
Hilton Atlanta

10:30 AM – CLD Refereed
Roundtable Session
Hilton Atlanta

2:30 PM – CLD Invited Session
Immigration, Crime, and Justice in
the Global Context
Hilton Atlanta

4:30 PM – CLD Paper Session
International and Cross-National
Studies of Crime and
Deviance
Hilton Atlanta

6:30 PM – CLD joint Reception
with Law and Society Section
Location: Point of View
Restaurant(29th floor)
Hilton Atlanta

Tuesday, August 17

8:30 AM – CLD Paper Session
Victimization
Hilton Atlanta

10:30 AM – CLD Paper Session
Social Psychology of Crime and
Deviance
Atlanta Marriott Marquis

Commentary on Crime and the Economy Eric Baumer

Will Crime Rates Increase in Response to the Current Economic Recession?

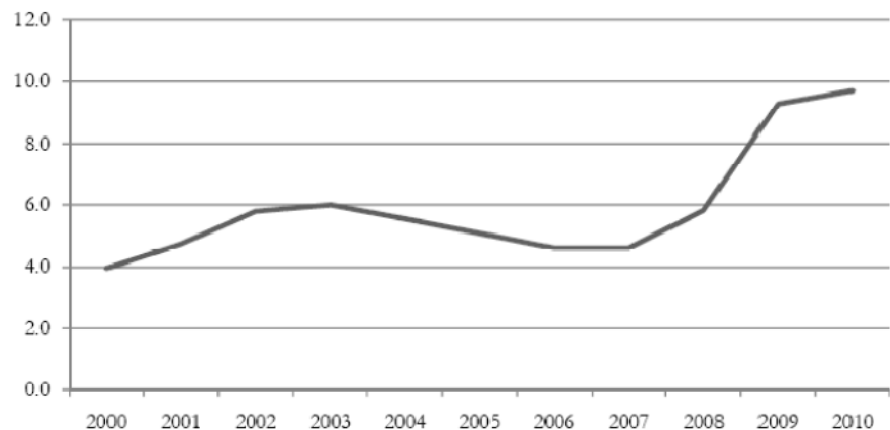
The significant economic downturn in which we find ourselves seems to have renewed interest in, and speculation about, a possible link between economic conditions and crime rates. Even a cursory glance at U.S. media reports back in 2008 during the early months of the recession revealed numerous stories linking the foreclosure crisis, rising unemployment, mass layoffs,

depressed wages, and the like to a rise in crime, or more often speculation about how it is probably just a matter of time before those adverse conditions yield a significant crime wave. More recently, stories in the popular press have expressed surprise at the reality that crime rates do not appear to have increased significantly, at least not yet, despite several months of woeful economic reports. These stories often highlight the recent spike in unemployment observed in many U.S. communities, and contrast such patterns with reports that crime rates appear to have remained surprisingly stable in most of those places. Figure 1 illustrates the unemployment trends just noted, updated through June 2010 (BLS, 2010). Unfortunately, we do not have this type of timely data on crime levels in the U.S. – believe it or not, full data on crimes known to the police for 2009 for the nation will not be released until September, 2010. But preliminary reports are that both property and violent crime rates in the U.S. showed significant declines, not increases during the heart of the current economic downturn (FBI, 2010). As illustrated in Figure 2, homicide data gathered by colleagues and me directly from a large sample of cities also point to the conclusion that crime rates are not on the rise during this period, at least with respect to lethal violence (Baumer, Rosenfeld, and Wolff, 2010). Based on patterns like these, an increasing number of reports have begun to question the idea that there is a meaningful connection between economic conditions and crime.

So, what is the deal? Should we expect crime rates to rise when economic conditions sour? What are we to make of the apparent fact that crime rates do not appear to be increasing right now even as the economy has more or less tanked? As it turns out, the theoretical literature reveals a high degree of ambiguity on these matters. This ambiguity is a little frustrating, but it is useful for framing the way we think about a possible link between the economy and crime. In short, as disappointing as it may be, there are no simple answers to the seemingly simple question posed in the title of the essay.

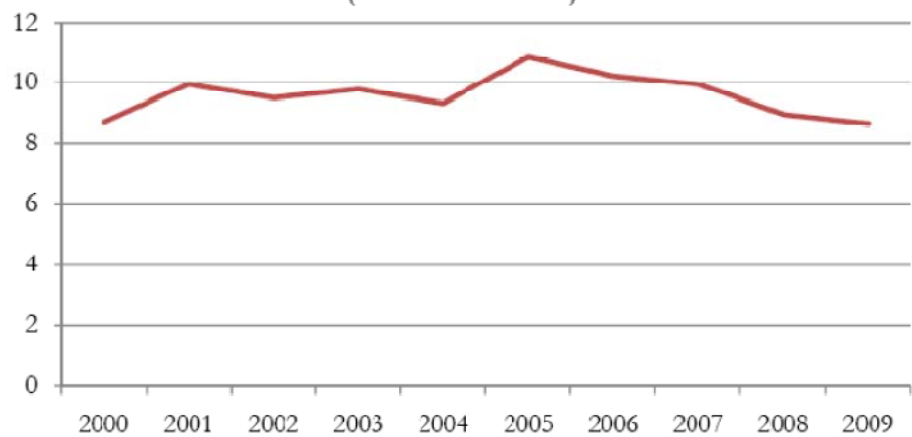
Classic sociological theoretical contributions alert us to the possibility that crime rates may not respond automatically, quickly, or in a simple way to a significant economic downturn. Social disorganization perspectives highlight longer term disruptions to social control and consequent increases in crime that can be stimulated by economic decline. Anomie/strain theories emphasize the highly contingent and contextualized nature of behavioral responses to adverse economic conditions, which include the possibility that illegitimate activities may increase in the presence of such conditions, but also the possibility that they may not (e.g., if cultural messages negate against it, if illegitimate opportunities are not available, if considerations of non-economic costs, such as punishment risk, are judged to be too high). There are also a variety of other classic perspectives that are sometimes referenced in considering a

Figure 1. U.S. Unemployment Rate, 2000-2010*



*Data obtained from Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); 2010 Estimate Reflects Six Month Average from Jan. - June.

Figure 2. Average Homicide Rate per 100,000 (N=125 U.S. Cities*)



*Data for 2000-2008 obtained from Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR); 2009 data gathered directly from police agencies in sample of cities with 50,000 or more persons.

possible link between economic conditions and crime (e.g., conflict theory, social learning theory), but their predictions tend to focus on highly nuanced and longer-term effects.

The contemporary literature also highlights an ambiguous set of possible causal linkages between economic conditions and crime. This literature identifies several reasons why crime could go up in the midst of or the aftermath of an economic downturn. These reasons encompass the classic economic theoretical arguments

about assessments of opportunity costs associated with legitimate vs. illegitimate "economic pursuits"; in essence, the former are less numerous and profitable, which may lead some to choose the latter. But there are other mechanisms that may link economic conditions to crime in the short-term as well (though not my focus here, there are also longer term effects emphasized in the literature, such as through reduced spending on criminal justice functions, deinvestment in schools, etc.), and not all of them are in the direction - economic

downturns increase crime – often assumed when “economy” and “crime” occupy the same sentence. For instance, adverse economic conditions might increase stress and frustration, which could increase some forms of crime (e.g., violence) either directly by shaping how people respond to conflict situations, or indirectly by increasing drug and especially alcohol use, both of which have been linked to crime. As it turns out, though, alcohol consumption tends to go down, not up, during periods of economic adversity (Freeman, 1999). And something else also tends to go down in such periods: criminal opportunities. The potential for crime is constrained during economic downturns as a result of shifts in routine activities (e.g., people spend more time at home and less time out and about; and, they tend to carry less cash or have fewer valuables). Thus, based on the contemporary theoretical literature there are good reasons to anticipate that crime rates would increase in response to a significant economic downturn, but there are also logical reasons to anticipate that crime rates might go down or be unchanged (see Cantor and Land, 1985).

Based on the extant theoretical literature, we should not expect a simple or straightforward answer to the complex question of whether a significant economic downturn will yield significant increases in crime. Theory would tell us that it depends on shifts in routine activities, the availability of illegitimate opportunities or vibrancy of illegal markets, and the presence of a variety of other

potential moderating conditions, including levels of formal and informal social control. The empirical evidence is, perhaps not surprisingly, fairly mixed on the matter of whether adverse economic conditions are linked to higher crime rates. Simple but powerful comparisons of crime rates during periods in which the economy has expanded and contracted yield persuasive evidence that economic downturns may yield increases in some property crimes (burglary and robbery), though there are exceptions to that pattern that are perplexing (e.g., Cook and Zarkin, 1985). A good deal of the pertinent literature has focused on specific objective economic indicators (e.g., unemployment rates, wages, GDP). This literature is mixed – plenty of it shows support for a positive association between adverse economic conditions, plenty of it shows no such association, and some of it even reveals negative associations. More recent scholarship suggests that the ambiguity in this research may be a function of reliance on objective economic indicators, which may or may not capture well how people are feeling or responding to adverse economic conditions. Research findings that focus on perceptual indicators of recent and future economic performance suggest that when the public is bullish on the economy, crime rates tend to be on the rise and to increase in subsequent periods (e.g., Rosenfeld and Fornango, 2007). The studies that are supportive of a significant link between adverse economic conditions and crime are challenged by the present

circumstances in which we find ourselves. By any reckoning, times are tough right now and have been for about 18-24 months. This is evident in most of the objective economic indicators as well as the primary perceptual gauge (i.e., the Index of Consumer Sentiment). Over the two years that encompass this stretch, crime rates in the U.S. appear to have remained steady or fallen slightly depending on the crime in question (at least through the end of 2009). What are we to make of this pattern? Who knows? Your guess is at least as good as mine. Perhaps the recession has produced a lot of stress and increased criminal inclinations, but also constrained routine activities that have limited the realization of those inclinations. Perhaps I am writing about a ticking bomb that merely has not yet detonated. By this time next year we could see the kinds of increases in crime rates one would expect on the assumption that economic adversity increases participation in criminal activities. But, the collected body of theoretical and empirical literature on economic conditions and crime suggests that we probably should not expect significantly higher crime rates in response to the current economic downturn unless illegitimate opportunities and illegal markets (e.g., drug markets) become highly viable and attractive alternatives to the legitimate economy. We do not have very good routine data capture systems that focus on tracking participation in illegal opportunities and illegal markets, aside from arrest statistics, which of course are not ideal for

predicting crime rates in this context. In any event, though, there does not appear to be much discussion amongst law enforcement officials, or anybody else as far as I can tell, about the emergence or proliferation of illegal markets right now that might be particularly conducive to significant increases in crime in the near term. In the aftermath of the economic downturn experienced in America during the early 1980s, crack markets began to emerge in many urban areas and they quickly became volatile and violent, producing extraordinarily high levels of youth violence. Fortunately, a similar pattern has not yet emerged in response to the current economic downturn.

This brief review should make clear that I do not know the answer to the question posed in the title, and that no simple answer in fact can be extracted from the collective body of existing theory and research. Ultimately, in my judgment the question posed in the title (one probably posed to many of us by reporters these days) is not the first one we ought to be asking if we want to advance our understanding of whether and how adverse economic conditions might shape crime rates. Instead, we would probably learn more by focusing on questions such as whether and how adverse economic conditions have altered routine daily activities of potential crime victims, whether adverse economic conditions have stimulated changes in alcohol consumption, and whether such conditions have yielded shifts,

growth, and volatility in illegal market activity – just to list a few.

References

BLS, 2010. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed on-line: <http://www.bls.gov/cps/lfcharacteristics.htm#unemp>.

Baumer, Eric P., Richard Rosenfeld, and Kevin T. Wolff. 2010. "The Contemporary Economic Crisis and Lethal Violence in U.S. Cities: An Analysis of Homicide Trends among Youth and Adults." Unpublished manuscript prepared for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Cantor, David and Kenneth C. Land. 1985. "Unemployment and Crime Rates in the Post-World War II United States: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 50: 317-32.

Cook, Philip J., and Gary A. Zarkin. 1985. "Crime and the Business Cycle." *Journal of Legal Studies* 14: 115-128.

FBI, 2010. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Accessed on-line: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/publicationschedule.htm>

Freeman, Donald G. 1999. "A Note on 'Economic Conditions and Alcohol Problems.'" *Journal of Health Economics* 18: 659-668.
Rosenfeld, Richard and Robert Fornango. 2007. "The impact of economic conditions on robbery

and property crime: The role of consumer sentiment." *Criminology* 45: 735-769.

New Section – Disability in Society

This is an urgent appeal to all social scientists interested in disability scholarship to join the newly formed Section-in-Formation of the American Sociological Association: Disability in Society. This Section intends to explore many issues that are relevant to the study of crime, law and deviance, including the ways in which certain populations are pathologized and labeled 'deviant', the intersections of psychiatric disabilities with homelessness and the criminal justice system, the rise of disability hate crimes and many other issues regarding social exclusion, vulnerability, and marginalization and labeling. In this Section in-Formation, approaches to these topics will occur within a broader framework that highlights the impact of a disabling society and the development of a social movement around disability rights.

This new Section-in-Formation is a great place to network, engage with other scholars, discuss recent events, and pursue avenues for grants, teaching, research and service.

The existence of the Disability and Society Section is dependent on our ability to attract at least 300 paying members by September 2010, or we have lost the

opportunity to become a section of ASA. If you would like to advance the continuation of disability scholarship in sociology, please join us today.

The Disability section is also pleased to be offering FREE membership to graduate students who are current members of ASA who would like to join the section.

Please contact Valerie Leiter at valerie.leiter@simmons.edu to make those arrangements. Please feel free to contact Liat Ibenmosh at lbenmosh@maxwell.syr.edu with any inquiries about the section and becoming a member.

Important Announcements

CLD Officer Election Results

- Chair Elect -

Patricia L. McCall
North Carolina State University

- Secretary-Treasurer -

Bill McCarthy
University of California - Davis

- Council -

Aaron Kupchik
University of Delaware

Jill McCorkel
Villanova University

Call for Papers

**Moral Panics in the
Contemporary World
Brunel University
10-12 December 2010
Call for Papers**

**Deadline for Abstracts: 2nd
August 2010**

www.moral-panic.co.uk
Email: moral-panic@brunel.ac.uk

Contributions are invited for an international conference which will explore the continuing relevance of the notion of moral panic to analyzing a range of contemporary phenomena. The conference will feature contributions from major scholars in the field and from eminent professional journalists.

Almost four decades have passed since the initial development of the moral panic concept by Stanley Cohen, Jock Young and others. Since its emergence in the early 1970s from radical criminology, the moral panic concept has both been taken up by a variety of academic disciplines and entered wider popular and journalistic discourse, being applied in both cases to a wide range of empirical examples. Recent attempts to develop the moral panic concept have made connections to theories of risk, discourse and moral regulation. The concept has also been applied to the analysis of a growing range of examples, including issues related to health, lifestyle and the environment.

It is clear that moral panic not only remains a topical concept, but also

is one that has become increasingly widely used both within academia and the wider culture. However, perhaps precisely because the term is now so widespread, questions have been raised about the scope of its applicability and indeed about the adequacy of the moral panic concept itself.

This conference seeks to build on these recent criticisms, debates and developments, to explore and evaluate how the concept has developed and continues to do so, and how relevant it is to the analysis and understanding of current fears, risks, social problems and controversies. The central aim of the conference is to further the development of moral panic research via theoretical analyses, methodological discussions and empirical studies.

Key thematic strands of the conference include:

- Environment & Risk
- War & Terror
- Lifestyle & Health
- Crime & Deviance
- Immigration & Security
- Economic Crisis & Political Scandal

We invite papers which investigate these and other areas of current concern, and which draw on the concept of moral panic with empirical and theoretical rigor. We welcome contributions that draw on a wide variety of disciplines, including: sociology, criminology, cultural studies, psychology, politics, media studies, journalism studies, and history.

Titles and abstract (no longer than 250 words) to be submitted no later than 2nd August 2010.

Confirmed speakers include:

- Professor Stanley Cohen (LSE)
- Professor Jock Young (University of Kent)
- Professor Chas Critcher (Swansea University)
- Professor Chris Jenks (Brunel University)
- Professor Catharine Lumby (University of New South Wales)
- Associate Professor Sean Hier (University of Victoria)
- James Oliver, Producer of BBC's Panorama Documentary Baby P – The Whole Truth

Intended research outputs of the conference include:

- Edited book
- Special edition of journal
- Conference Proceedings (to be published by Brunel University Press)

Location: Brunel University, Kingston Lane, Uxbridge UB8 3PH

Jobs of CLD Interest

*University of Toronto
St. George campus (downtown)
Deadline - September 20, 2010*

The Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto invites applications for a full-time tenure-stream appointment at the Assistant Professor level with primary interests in Crime, Deviance, and Socio-Legal Studies, starting July 1, 2011. A PhD in Sociology or primary graduate background in Sociology is required. Candidates must have

an excellent research and teaching record. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience. Applicants should either have a Ph.D. or expect to finish the Ph.D. at time of appointment.

We encourage applications from candidates with strong secondary interests in one of our other departmental areas of specialization (immigration and ethnicity, gender, work and stratification, crime and law, culture, political sociology, and networks).

The University of Toronto is a research-intensive institution offering faculty the opportunity to conduct research, teach and live in one of the most diverse cities in the world. The University includes programs and faculties in a number of cognate fields, including the Centre of Criminology and the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. Successful candidates will teach in both the undergraduate and graduate programs and they will be expected to develop an independently funded program of research. Evidence of excellence in teaching and research is required. Additional information on the Department can be obtained at www.utoronto.ca/sociology

The University of Toronto is strongly committed to diversity within its community and especially welcomes applications from visible minority group members, women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, members of sexual minority groups, and others who may contribute to the diversification of

ideas. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents of Canada will be given priority.

To be considered for this position, please apply online at the University of Toronto Academic Career Opportunities site www.jobs.utoronto.ca/faculty (job # 1000347) by clicking on the link below. If you are unable to apply online, please submit your application and other materials by to the following address: Chair, Search Committee in Crime and Sociology of Law
Department of Sociology
725 Spadina Avenue
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5S 2J4
tina.colomvakos@utoronto.ca

Applications should include a Curriculum Vitae, samples of publications and writing, and evidence of teaching ability and experience. We encourage applicants to combine PDF or MS WORD documents in one or two files. Applicants should also ask three referees to e-mail letters to the departmental address above. Faxes of letters of recommendation are accepted at 416-978-3963, but must be followed by hard copies.

Applications materials must be received by September 10, 2010.

Indiana University Bloomington

Bloomington's Department of Criminal Justice invites applications for one tenure-track

position at the assistant professor level. The successful candidate is expected to have developed an innovative research agenda, a dedication to excellence in undergraduate and graduate/professional education consistent with the expectations of a Research I university, and a multidisciplinary approach to the study of law, crime, and justice. IU Bloomington ranks nationally among top research institutions. Salary, fringe benefits, research and teaching opportunities are consistent with our peer Research I institutions. Send a letter of application, curriculum vitae, and three letters of reference to: Roger J.R. Levesque, J.D., Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Faculty Search Committee, Department of Criminal Justice, 1033 East 3rd Street, Sycamore Hall 302, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Send inquiries to rlevesqu@indiana.edu

Applications completed before October 10th, 2010 will be assured full consideration.

Member News

William Pridemore has been appointed by Vice Provost for Research, Sarita Soni as Associate Director of Indiana University's new Consortium for Education and Social Science Research.

Vanessa Barker received a National Science Foundation Law and Social Sciences Program award for her project on "Globalization, Immigration and Penal Order in Europe." The

project seeks to explain how immigrants have been caught up in European ambivalence about global integration and neo-nationalism, tensions that are managed differently through nation specific legal and political institutions, particularly the criminal justice system. Vanessa was also recently appointed Associated Professor of Sociology at Stockholm University, Sweden and her book *The Politics of Punishing: How the Democratic Process Shapes the Way America Punishes Offenders* (2009) received a 2009 PASS Award from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

Claire Renzetti is moving from the University of Dayton to the Center for Research on Violence Against Women (CRVAW) at the University of Kentucky where she will hold an Endowed Chair in Studies of Violence Against Women and a joint appointment as Professor of Sociology in the Sociology Department. Her new positions begin August 16th. The editorial office of the journal, *Violence Against Women*, will now be housed in the CRVAW.

The journal web site is <http://vaw.sagepub.com>

Books of CLD Interest

Aaron Kupchik. 2010. *Homeroom Security: School Discipline*. NYU Press
http://www.nyupress.org/books/Homeroom_Security-products_id-11247.html

Vanessa Barker. 2009. *The Politics of Punishing: How the Democratic Process Shapes the Way America Punishes Offenders*. Oxford University Press
<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/Sociology/CriminalJustice/Criminology/?view=usa&ci=9780195370027>

Joachim J. Savelsberg. 2010. *Crime and Human Rights: Criminology of Genocide and Atrocities*. Sage.
<http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book233187&>

Stacy Burns and Mark Peyrot. 2010. *New Approaches to Social Problems Treatment*. Volume 17. Research in Social Problems and Public Policy. Emerald Group Publishing.
<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/books.htm?issn=0196-1152&volume=17>

Websites of CLD Interest

American Sociological Association
www.asanet.org

Crime, Law, and Deviance Section
www2.asanet.org/sectioncld

**The American Society of
Criminology**
www.asc41.com

**Academy of Criminal Justice
Sciences**
www.acjs.org

Bureau of Justice Statistics
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

**National Criminal Justice Reference
Service**
www.ncjrs.gov

**National Archive of Criminal Justice
Data**
www.icpsr.umich.edu/nacjd

National Institute of Justice
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij

Federal Bureau of Investigation
www.fbi.gov

**ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium
for Political and Social Research)**
www.icpsr.umich.edu

U.S Census Bureau
www.census.gov

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Deviance Newsletter:**

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**Please submit material for the
next issue of CLD Newsletter
to cldnewsletter@jp.pair.com**