105th Meeting of ASA

The American Sociological Association will meet in Atlanta, GA for the 105th Annual Meeting on August 14-17, 2010.

Guest Commentary

The Facts About New York City's Crime Drop

Richard Rosenfeld and Janet Lauritsen

Allegations this week that New York City police officers manipulated crime statistics to avoid the appearance of crime increases inevitably raise questions about New York's widely touted crime decline.

No one doubts that murders, robberies, burglaries, and other serious crimes in New York have fallen since the early 1990s. The question is whether the official crime figures can be trusted to tell us just how much safer the city has become.

That question cannot be answered fully by interviewing retired police officers or reopening closed cases. Even the most scrupulous audits of police records cannot recover unrecorded crimes. And there is no way to count, much less reinvestigate, all the serious crimes that were improperly classified as lesser offenses five or ten years ago. It would be useful if we had independent and reliable data on crime trends not subject to police manipulation. Fortunately, we do.

Since the early 1970s, the U. S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics has compiled crime data from national surveys of persons age 12 and over. The anonymous National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) asks respondents if they were victims of certain types of crime over the past six months and, if so, whether they reported the crime to the police. The surveys are valuable not only for revealing crimes that are not reported to the police but also for validating trends in police-recorded crimes.

Representative NCVS data for residents of the New York metropolitan area, the vast majority of whom live in the five boroughs of New York City, show crime drops since the early 1990s just as large as those derived from the police statistics. For example, the accompanying figure shows New York's burglary trends based on police statistics and NCVS data between 1980 and 2003. (The survey data are not available for New York for more recent years and have been expressed as three-year moving averages to smooth out year-to-year fluctuations.)

Both the police and the survey data exhibit the same pattern of change over time, including sizable burglary declines since the early 1990s. Moreover, the burglaries that victims say they
reported to the police correspond very closely to the number of police-recorded burglaries throughout the 24 year period. We find a similar pattern of results when comparing trends in robberies and aggravated assaults from the victim surveys and police statistics.

The victim surveys cannot settle debates over the reasons behind the crime drop, nor do they relieve the NYPD of the responsibility to thoroughly investigate charges that some officers may have doctored the official crime statistics. Crime victims and the general public must be convinced that the police faithfully record all crimes reported to them.

But the victim surveys provide reassuring evidence that New York's crime drop is real and not an artifact of police manipulation. And they can offer the same kind of independent evaluation when the crime rates of other large cities are called into question.

Richard Rosenfeld is professor of criminology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and President of the American Society of Criminology. Janet Lauritsen is professor of criminology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Important Announcements


27 years ago, the National Academy of Science’s Panel on Research on Sentencing brought together an impressive group of scholars from multiple disciplines whose collected works motivated research over the next 2 decades. Professor Shawn Bushway, University at Albany, has received support from the National Science Foundation to organize a high-level symposium with a mandate to once again step back and thoroughly consider the past and future of research in sentencing. The commissioned papers by scholars from multiple disciplines are designed to both review the existing literature and lay out the future directions. We encourage all researchers (and policymakers interested in research) to attend and participate in the discussion.

The Symposium will be based around four main papers: The Role of Race in Sentencing Outcomes (Eric Baumer, Florida State University); Risk Assessment in Sentencing (Kelly Hannah-Moffat, University of Toronto); Discretion and Decision Making in the Sentencing Process (Shawn Bushway, University at Albany and Brian Forst, American University) and Managing the Criminal Justice Population (Bill Sabol, Bureau of Justice Statistics).

A distinguished panel of scholars and policymakers will discuss each paper. The papers and the discussant reactions will be published in a special issue of Criminology and Public Policy, the premier journal of crime policy published by the American Society of Criminology.

Students and Young Scholars may be particularly interested in the Young Scholar Paper Competition, as well as the Research Poster Session. In addition, a limited number of scholarships will be available for qualified students.

For additional information, visit www.albany.edu/scj/sentencingsymposium.htm
Send questions to D. Mancini cjsymp@albany.edu.
The Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!): George Mason University

Director: Faye S. Taxman
Deputy Director: Danielle S. Rudes

1 in 31 adults in the United States is under correctional control. This fact illustrates differences between the U.S. and other countries that do not use the criminal justice system as the primary tool of social control. A fairly stable 70% recidivism rate demonstrates the failure of the current correctional system. The new Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) at George Mason University is grappling with these problems.

ACE! seeks to revisit policies that focus on using corrections as a response to social problems. ACE! conducts research and assists policy makers and correctional practitioners with evidence-based practices and crafting new policies focused on preventing criminal behavior instead of simply responding to it.

ACE!’s mission is threefold: Advancing the understanding of how to improve outcomes from the correctional system and advancing scientific knowledge about effective interventions; improving methodologies for conducting studies in justice settings and translating evidence into practice; designing and conducting research that addresses correctional policy questions; contributing to the support and academic development of graduate and undergraduate students and early career faculty at George Mason University.

ACE! research is collaborative and creative. We bridge disciplines by integrating criminal justice, health services, psychological, and sociological research and practices with organizational theory when studying interventions and models designed for improving offender outcomes. We use qualitative techniques to get inside “the black box” and understand how culture and complex problems affect the everyday practices of criminal justice system actors. We use quantitative techniques to answer critical “what works” questions about different policies, procedures, and interventions. We also integrate geographical tools and simulation models into our work to help answer larger policy questions.

For more information on ACE!, contact the research team at (703) 993-9699; ebct@gmu.edu or http://gemini.gmu.edu/ebct.

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

Contributions are invited for an international conference exploring the continuing relevance of the notion of moral panic in analyzing a range of contemporary phenomena.

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 been taken up by a variety of academic disciplines and entered wider

The New Justice Research Group: University of Western Sydney
Sydney, Australia

The University of Western Sydney has recently established the Justice Research Group, a multidisciplinary research center that focuses on justice processes and environments. Our interests include the physical, symbolic, and social-psychological settings of courts and tribunals, as well as the rituals and social-emotional dynamics of justice. Our team publishes widely in sociology, criminology, psychology, architecture, and law. We also organize international workshops and conferences on justice research and practice.

Current projects investigate the social dynamics of jury decision-making, the roles of changing technology in courtroom interaction and design, restorative justice and other innovative justice processes, court safety and security, democratic practice in jury deliberation, and mental health tribunals. We use a diverse range of approaches, including experimental, observational, and survey methods, and frame questions within a comparative and historical framework.

For more information, visit our website www.uws.edu.au/justice/justice
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 one that has become increasingly used both within academia and the wider culture. Because the term is now so widespread, questions have been raised about the scope of its applicability and the adequacy of the moral panic concept itself.

The conference seeks to build on 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 is to further the development of moral panic research via theoretical analyses, methodological discussions and empirical studies.

The central thematic strands of the conference are:
- Environment & Risk
- War & Terror
- Lifestyle & Health
- Crime & Deviance
- Immigration & Security
- Economic Crisis & Political Scandal

We invite papers that investigate these concerns with empirical and theoretical rigor and originality and draw on a variety of disciplines, including: sociology, criminology, cultural studies, psychology, politics, media studies, journalism, and history.

Submit paper proposals (title, plus abstract of approx. 250 words) to Jason Hughes and Amanda Rohloff moral-panic@brunel.ac.uk Submission deadline: May 3.

Confirmed speakers include:
- Stanley Cohen (LSE)
- Jock Young (U. of Kent)
- Chas Critcher (Swansea University)
- Chris Jenks (Brunel University)
- Catharine Lumby (U. of Western Australia)
- Sean Hier (U. of Victoria)
- James Oliver, BBC Panorama producer of the Baby P programme

Intended research outputs of the conference include:
- Edited book
- Special journal edition
- Conference proceedings published by Brunel U. Press

For further information www.moral-panic.co.uk

### Jobs of CLD Interest

**Walsh University** seeks an Assistant Professor, Sociology – tenure track to begin August 2010. Duties include teaching courses in sociology core and criminal justice concentrations. Applicant is expected to have a strong commitment to teaching, scholarship, student advising, and University service. Position requires a Ph.D. in Sociology with teaching experience in criminal justice; ABDs close to degree completion by time of appointment may be considered. The overall teaching load is 12 semester hours.

Walsh University, a Catholic institution located in North Canton, OH, is distinguished by value based education. With an international perspective and Judeo-Christian traditions, Walsh dedicates itself to educating students to become leaders in service to others.

Apply on-line at: https://walshjobs.simplehire.com

## Member News

The Department of Sociology at Northern Illinois University is pleased to announce the addition of two new faculty in criminology: Michael Ezell (Ph.D., Duke University) whose research specialties include delinquency and criminal offending across the life-course, and Michael Campbell (Ph.D., University of California at Irvine), whose research focuses on punishment, including historical approaches to legal change and social control.

After completing his post doctoral work at Duke **John Eason** is taking an Assistant Professorship at Arizona State University in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice this coming fall.
### Books of CLD Interest


### Websites of CLD Interest

- **American Sociological Association**  
  [www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org)
- **Crime, Law, and Deviance Section**  
  [www2.asanet.org/sectioncld](http://www2.asanet.org/sectioncld)
- **The American Society of Criminology**  
  [www.acs41.com](http://www.acs41.com)
- **Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences**  
  [www.acjs.org](http://www.acjs.org)
- **Bureau of Justice Statistics**  
  [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs)
- **National Criminal Justice Reference Service**  
  [www.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ncjrs.gov)
- **National Archive of Criminal Justice Data**  
  [www.icpsr.umich.edu/nacjd](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/nacjd)
- **National Institute of Justice**  
  [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij)
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation**  
  [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)
- **ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research)**  
  [www.icpsr.umich.edu](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu)
- **U.S Census Bureau**  
  [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

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Please submit material for the next issue of CLD Newsletter to [cldnewsletter@jp.pair.com](mailto:cldnewsletter@jp.pair.com)