



# Criminal Justice Research Center News



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***Featured Article: An Interview with Randy Roth***

## From the Director's Desk



**Hi, everyone.** Welcome to 2012! Here at CJRC, we have hit the ground running. There are new opportunities and activities we are very excited to tell you about.

First, we are introducing the inaugural **CJRC Graduate Student Travel Grant Awards**. This competition is open to any OSU graduate student who is presenting at the 2012 American Society of Criminology Meetings in Chicago. We will provide awards of \$500 to each winner to be used to cover travel-related expenses. Our goal in this endeavor is to give bright, new scholars important opportunities for intellectual and professional growth.

Second, we are launching the **CJRC Undergraduate Internship Program** this quarter. By establishing connections with various community offices and professors, we offer valuable research opportunities to our talented juniors and seniors at OSU. Students who participate in the program will have the chance to build marketable skills, as well as potentially earn academic credit. I give sincere thanks to Helene Cweren of the OSU Undergraduate Research Office, Andrew Martin and Lindsey Chamberlain of Sociology, and our own Amanda Kennedy in helping forge this program.

**To find guidelines and deadlines for our grant and internship programs, please see the first two items in our "Opportunities" section of this newsletter.** In addition, I encourage you to keep abreast of opportunities at CJRC and other places by checking out our regularly updated ["Calls for..." page](#) on the CJRC website.

Aside from these new offerings, we've been busy with our traditional CJRC activities. Our first Speakers' Series talk of 2012 was given by Anup Gampa (M.S. in Agricultural, Development and Environmental Economics, OSU).

[Anup's talk](#), titled "Altruism, Generosity, Trust, Risk and Time Preferences: The Results of Five Economic Games Played with Prisoners", was based on his thesis and work with several scholars, including CJRC affiliate Dr. Keith Warren. Anup's lecture reflected on inmates' decision-making in various hypothetical economic scenarios. Stay tuned for our next issue which will include an article by CJRC undergraduate intern, Matt Hays, about Anup Gampa's talk.

We look forward to our upcoming speakers as well. In February, [Dr. André Christie Mizell](#) will discuss [his work](#) on the repercussions of paternal involvement on child and adolescent antisocial behavior. [Dr. David Kirk](#) visits us in March for our IEJ Lecture Series, where he will [discuss the impact](#) of residential change on recidivism as evidenced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Please see the columns below for further details on these events.

*(Continued on next page)*

### ***In This Issue:***

#### *Upcoming Events:*

André Christie Mizell and David Kirk.....2

#### *Speakers' Articles*

Heather Washington.....3  
Alexes Harris.....4

#### *What Center Participants*

Are Doing.....5

#### *Opportunities, Calls for Papers,*

*and Conferences*.....6

#### *Featured Article: An Interview*

*with Randy Roth*.....8

We encourage you to read on. In his two Speakers' Articles, Matt Hays informs us about the stimulating lectures given in November and December by Heather Washington and Alexes Harris, respectively. Also, our feature article by Amanda Kennedy details the work and perspectives of History Professor and CJRC affiliate Randy Roth.

In this last Winter quarter at Ohio State before semester conversion, we wish you a safe and productive new year!

----- Dana

**“Child and Adolescent Antisocial Behavior, Race-ethnicity, and Gender: The Consequences of Father’s Involvement”**

*A talk by André Christie-Mizell, Associate Professor of Sociology, Vanderbilt University (Co-sponsored with the OSU Department of Sociology)*



*Dr. André Christie-Mizell*

**Friday, February 10, 2012, 9:00 am – 10:20 am in 248 Townshend Hall**

**Abstract:** Utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth – Mother and Child Samples, Dr. Christie-Mizell explores how father’s involvement shapes antisocial behavior during childhood and adolescence. Net of the amount of time spent together and the child’s perception of the adequacy of that time, father’s involvement reduces baseline levels of antisocial behavior as well as growth trajectories over a six year period. Nevertheless, whether the time spent with fathers is perceived as adequate by the child is a more robust predictor of antisocial behavior problems than is father’s involvement. Some interesting race and gender

findings also emerge in the study. For example, father’s involvement is more advantageous for African American youth, compared to Hispanics and whites. Moreover, father’s involvement is beneficial for both daughters and sons. However, daughters reap a greater benefit from father’s involvement, especially as they age.

***An Institute for Excellence in Justice Seminar: “How Residential Change Might Help Ex-Offenders Stay out of Prison: Findings from a Natural Experiment”***

*A talk by David Kirk, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Texas-Austin*

*Accompanied by expert panelists Dr. Paul Bellair (Sociology, OSU) and Dr. Ed Rhine (Deputy Director, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction)*



*Dr. David Kirk*

**Friday, March 9, 2012, 9:00 am – 10:20 am Frank H. Hale Black Cultural Center**

**Abstract:** Many former prisoners return home to the same neighborhood with the same criminal opportunities and criminal peers they had before they went to prison. Yet, if the path to a crime-free life largely requires knifing off from past situations and establishing new routines, then separating returning offenders from their past criminal contexts may be one way to reduce recidivism and foster desistance.

Professor David Kirk explores the idea of residential change by examining how Hurricane Katrina affected ex-prisoners originally from New Orleans and their likelihood of returning to prison. Kirk discusses potential strategies for fostering residential change among ex-prisoners, focusing specifically on parole residency policies and greater access to housing.

*Speakers' Article:*  
**Heather Washington: "Parental Incarceration and Children's Behavior Problems: Uncovering the Not-So-Universal Effects of Fathers' Imprisonment"**

By Matthew Hays, CJRC Undergraduate Intern

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On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the CJRC hosted a lecture from one of its own, Sociology Ph.D. candidate Heather Washington. Based on her dissertation research, Washington provided us with some insightful knowledge on how our prison system impacts the families of those incarcerated. Being a parent is a common but often overlooked role for inmates. A majority of state and federal (52% and 63% respectively) inmates are parents, and many of these individuals have three or more children. Ms. Washington told the audience the disturbing figure that there are approximately 10 million children in this country who have or have had an incarcerated parent.



*L to R: Heather Washington, Dana Haynie, and Meghan Myers after the presentation*

Parental incarceration brings a number of negative consequences, including school failures, poor health and sleep, and even greater internalization of mental health issues. From a criminological perspective, the most important consequence of this imprisonment is probably the intergenerational transmission of crime. Children who have one or both parents incarcerated are more likely to become offenders (for a variety of reasons) and subsequently incarcerated themselves.

According to Ms. Washington, children with incarcerated fathers externalized behavioral problems at much higher levels when their mothers had little social support. She commented in her lecture on how her research could be expanded to include a greater focus on expressive support, as well as looking for variations in support access across race. In terms of policy implications, Washington argues in favor of programs that provide prisoner-family awareness,

so that all parties can know exactly what to expect from an extended incarceration. She also argues that the state needs to provide both types of support for families and not just the monetary support that some states provide. These changes as well as de-stigmatizing efforts can ultimately help fathers successfully re-integrate into parenthood and society in general.

I was fortunate to interview Ms. Washington after her lecture. She claimed during the presentation that all races receive the same benefits from support, but during our interview she stated that black and Latino mothers seem to have less access to this type of support, rendering different outcomes. The children are also affected by this, as Washington claims that children of poverty or of color are more likely to externalize negative behaviors: in addition to being socioeconomically disadvantaged, parental imprisonment acts as a "double whammy" in terms of perpetuating further inequality.

We also discussed the potential effect female parental incarceration has on child development. When I talked to Ms. Washington about this she commented that she originally wanted her research to include discussion of incarcerated women, but couldn't because the number of cases in her data weren't high enough. This could change in the near future, however, as women are now the fastest growing prison population. Washington hopes in the future to look at how the severity and even the effects themselves vary when discussing which parent is incarcerated. She claims that having a mother incarcerated does seem to have severe negative effects on child socialization, but we cannot fully understand this effect until more comprehensive research is completed. By paying greater attention to women and families in general, we can ultimately hope to mitigate a lot of the negative effects incarceration has on the families of the incarcerated. These individuals are innocent but are punished by circumstance, making them the true victims of the criminal justice system.

*Speakers' Article:*

## **Alexes Harris: "Justice by Context: How Organizational and Political Factors Influence the Assessment and Enforcement of Monetary Sanctions"**

By Matthew Hays, CJRC Undergraduate Intern

The CJRC was pleased to host Dr. Alexes Harris from the University of Washington on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. During her lecture, Dr. Harris talked about her recent research on court-imposed monetary sanctions. This research specifically looked at the effect legal financial obligations (LFOs) have on the poor and on people of color. Dr. Harris' research included numerous interviews from lawyers, clerks and judges throughout various counties in Washington. She found notable differences across these counties, which she claims is primarily due to differences in the organizational and political cultures of the respective counties. Some of the discrepancies Dr. Harris observed included differing surcharges, varying interest rates, and most importantly, the distinction between willful and non-willful lack of payment of these fees.



*Alexes Harris and Ruth Peterson before the presentation*

Dr. Harris describes a major dilemma regarding this distinction. At the state-level there is no definition for what is and is not a willful lack of payment on the part of the defendant. The penalties associated with willful non-payment also vary from county to county; in some counties incarceration for non-payment is commonplace. Since only willful non-payment is punishable under the law, the arbitrary distinction is especially problematic. In one of Dr. Harris' interviews, a county prosecutor argued that a defendant willfully neglected legal fees by not collecting cans off the side of the highway to raise money. When I discussed potential remedies to this situation, Dr. Harris was quick to point out that we cannot completely get rid of this distinction, because it could allow for any offenders to not pay, even those with financial means. Harris believes that the best remedy we have for this problem is to establish clear state statutes defining willful non-payment, and standardizing penalties for those who won't pay.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Dr. Alexes Harris's research is where the power is held in determining LFOs. Court payments, charges, and determinations of non-payments are ultimately left to the discretion of the court clerks. This can be quite problematic with some clerks, especially where the legal culture remains biased against offenders, particularly poor offenders of color. Harris claims that she was surprised by the "meanness" in which some clerks enacted charges on those truly unable to pay. Harris purports that the level of discretion afforded to clerks is necessary, to a degree. We should, however, change state policy to require realistic assessments over LFOs so that only those that can pay should be forced to.



*L to R: Aubrey Jackson, Dana Haynie, and Dr. Harris during her presentation*

Overbearing LFOs are just one of the issues defendants face when trying to successfully re-integrate into society. However, the biggest obstacle ex-offenders face has to be the stigma attached to incarceration. Dr. Harris explained in her lecture various methods in which we can mitigate the effect of this stigma, but she does see this as being an inevitable result of incarceration in our society. Harris argues in favor of programs that seek to "make certain offenders whole again," by offering programming which addresses both psychological and material needs. The corrections system's aim should be full rehabilitation, offering offenders financial assistance as opposed to obligations. She also emphasizes the value of education both during and after incarceration. Through education, Dr. Harris argues we can transform the identity of the individual from offender to student, thus enabling the person to reintegrate as a productive and informed member of society. During my conversation with Dr. Harris, we discussed that there does seem to be some stigma surrounding education received during incarceration, but it is preferable to no education at all. With education comes not just the means to overcome daunting legal financial obligations, but also improved life chances in general.

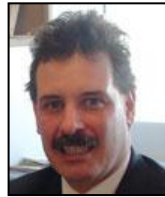
## What Center Participants are Doing



**Sharon Davies (Professor of Law, Moritz College of Law – OSU)** is the new Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at OSU as of this month. Dr. Davies plans to continue to current work of the Kirwan Institute, while expanding its

scope of research in the areas of criminal justice, immigration, and health care. For further information, please click [here](#) to see the article on the Moritz webpage regarding Dr. Davies' appointment.

**Walter DeKeseredy (Professor of Criminology, Justice and Policy Studies – University of Ontario Institute of Technology)** has had a bevy of scholarly activity as of late. The following are Dr. DeKeseredy's recent publications:



Rennison, C.M., DeKeseredy, W.S., & Dragiewicz, M. (in press). "Intimate Relationship Status Variations in Violence against Women: Urban, Suburban, and Rural Differences." *Violence Against Women*.

"Critical Theory" (with Martin D. Schwartz) (in press). In *Encyclopedia of Criminology & Criminal Justice*, edited by Jay Albanese. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

DeKeseredy, W.S., & Donnermeyer, J.F. (in press). "Thinking Critically About Rural Crime: Toward the Development of a New Left Realist Perspective." In S. Winlow & R. Atkinson (Eds.), *New Directions in Crime and Deviance: Papers From the York Deviancy Conference*. London: Routledge.

DeKeseredy, W.S. (in press). "The Myth that 'Criminals' are Fundamentally Different From 'Noncriminals.'" In R.M. Bohm and J. T. Walker (Eds.), *Demystifying Crime and Criminal Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

DeKeseredy, W.S. (in press). "Understanding Woman Abuse in Canada: Past, Present and Future." In C. Karrington (Ed.), *Crime, Justice and Social Justice Conference Proceedings*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

DeKeseredy, W.S. (in press). "The Current Condition of Criminological Theory in North America." In S. Hall & S. Winlow (Eds.), *New Directions in Criminological Theory*. London: Routledge.

Dr. DeKeseredy also gave the following keynote address: "Latest Research on Violence Against Women in Canada," The Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee of Windsor/Essex County's conference titled Shattered Relationships: Families Torn Apart by Violence, Windsor, ON (November 2011).

Lastly, the following are papers presented by Dr. DeKeseredy towards the end of last year:

"Pornography and Woman Abuse: Research, Theory, and Policy," Gender-Based Violence Conference, Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH (November 2011).

"Male Peer Support theory" (with Martin D. Schwartz), Gender-Based Violence Conference, Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH (November 2011).

"Situational Contexts and Reporting Violence Against Women to the Police" (with Molly Dragiewicz and Callie Rennison), American Society of Criminology annual meetings, Washington, D.C. (November 2011).

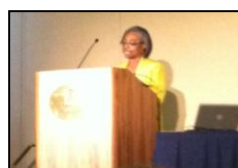
"Racial/Ethnic Variations in Violence Against Women: Urban, Suburban and Rural Differences" (with Molly Dragiewicz and Callie Rennison), American Society of Criminology annual meetings, Washington, D.C. (November 2011).



**Joseph Donnermeyer (Professor of Environmental and Natural Resources – OSU)** is the editor of a new journal entitled *International Journal of Rural Criminology* (IJRC). The first issue was released in early December 2011. It is an electronically-based journal published

through the Knowledge Bank of The Ohio State Universities Libraries and is accessible [here](#). IJRC provides a place for publication of both theoretical and empirical articles about rural crime. The next issue will be released in early June, 2012.

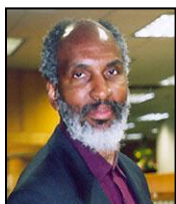
**Nathan Doogan (Ph.D. candidate in Social Work – OSU)** successfully passed his doctoral candidacy exams in Social Work in November 2011.



**Ruth Peterson (Professor Emerita of Sociology and Former Director of CJRC – OSU)**, 2011 recipient of the Edwin H. Sutherland Award, presented the Edwin H. Sutherland address in

November 2011 at the American Society of Criminology Meetings in Washington, DC.

(She is pictured above giving the address). Her talk was titled "The Central Place of Race in Crime and Justice." During her talk, Dr. Peterson spoke largely about her work with Laurie Krivo and others on crime, race and residential segregation. She stated that "race and ethnicity are very much at the core of the study of crime, crime control, and criminal justice, even for those not interested in race and ethnic variation." Dr. Peterson also acknowledged the contributions of her family, friends and colleagues in influencing her distinguished career. A version of her lecture will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Criminology*.



**John Powell (Former Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity - OSU)** begins a new position this month as the Haas Diversity Research Center Director at the University of California, Berkeley.

**Townsend Price-Spratlen (Associate Professor of Sociology - OSU)** has a forthcoming publication in the June 2012 issue of the interdisciplinary journal, *Spectrum*. The article, co-authored with William L. Goldsby, is entitled "Reconstruction Has Stopped the Nonsense: A Visual Ethnography of Grassroots Post-Prison Reentry."



**Randolph Roth (Professor of History - OSU)** was named a fellow of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. He also delivered a paper, "Measuring Feelings and Beliefs that May Facilitate (or Deter) Homicide," at the American Society of Criminology meeting in Washington, D.C., November 16, 2011, and at the Social Science History Association meeting in Boston, November 20, 2011. The paper will be published in *Homicide Studies* this year.

**Hui Zheng (Assistant Professor of Sociology - OSU)**'s article (co-authored with Yang Yang and Kenneth Land) in the December 2011 issue of *American Sociological Review*, "Variance Function Regression in Hierarchical Age-Period-Cohort Models: Applications to the Study of Self-Reported Health," has been garnering media attention due to its methodological innovation and its significant implications. The findings show that "the gap between the least healthy and most healthy people has increased substantially among young American adults," as quoted in an [article showcasing Dr. Zheng's work in USA Today](#).



## Opportunities, Calls for Papers, and Conferences

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### **The Criminal Justice Research Center announces its 2012 Graduate Student ASC Travel Grants Awards.**

This competition is open to any OSU graduate student who intends to submit an abstract and present at the 2012 American Society of Criminology's Annual Meeting, to be held in Chicago in November. **Selected applicants will receive 500 dollars each for conference and travel-related costs. The deadline for submission is February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012.** To be considered for the award, please submit the title and abstract of your conference paper, as well as a one-paragraph statement detailing how the grant will assist you in furthering your graduate work. Email submissions to Amanda Kennedy at [kennedy.312@sociology.osu.edu](mailto:kennedy.312@sociology.osu.edu).

### **The Criminal Justice Research Center announces its Undergraduate Internship Program.**

CJRC coordinates with area agencies and local faculty to offer students various qualitative and quantitative research opportunities and the potential to earn academic units. Talented junior and senior-level students with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and the ability to make a minimum two-quarter or one-semester commitment are invited to apply. For more information, contact Amanda Kennedy at [kennedy.312@sociology.osu.edu](mailto:kennedy.312@sociology.osu.edu).

### **Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services has published a report**

on the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC)'s Victim Awareness Program. This study assesses whether offenders gain knowledge and insight into the impact of crime on victims and the community. The acquisition of knowledge and insight is central to changing criminal mindsets (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). It has been the experience of professionals at ODRC that this program effectively demonstrates to offenders the true impact of crime. Program facilitators have provided accounts of observable behavior and attitude changes relative to crime. However, the positive experience of practitioners should be tested by empirical evidence. This study was completed in order to conduct an exploratory assessment of the claims of increased knowledge as a result of the Victim Awareness Program. ODRC is committed to the model of practitioners and researchers working in partnership to assess the validity of theories of intervention and improve their practical application. The 13-week program is offered in all state institutions, and in some Adult Parole Authority Offices, Community Based Correctional Facilities (CBCF), and halfway houses in Ohio. The curriculum is intended for high-risk offenders who will be released back into the community. Program participants are selected according to risk-level and date of release unless court-ordered to complete programming.

The overall goal of the program is to increase offenders' awareness of how crime negatively affects victims and the community. **To view the report, please click [here](#).** To learn more about the Victim Awareness Program, please click [here](#).

***The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) invites submissions for their 2012 Research Paper Competition*** from undergraduates and master's students at member institutions (*Note: OSU is a member*). The purpose of the competitions is to highlight exemplary research papers based on quantitative analysis. They are holding three contests this year: 1) The ICPSR Research Paper Competition, for analyses on any topic using data from the ICPSR General Archive or Thematic Collections; 2) The IFSS Research Paper Competition, for analyses on any topic using data from the Integrated Fertility Survey Series, and 3) The RCMD Research Paper Competition, for analyses on issues relating to minorities in the United States, including immigrants, using data from the Resource Center for Minority Data. All competitions are open to students currently pursuing or who recently received undergraduate or master's degrees. The awards are \$1,000 for first place and \$750 for second place in each category. All undergraduates and master's students or those who have graduated after April 1, 2011 are eligible. The competition is open to both U.S. and non-U.S. students. Students who graduated before April 1, 2011 are not eligible. **The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2012.** Please go to [the ICPSR website](#) for more details on guidelines on submissions.

***The 2nd Annual OSU Women's Summit will take place on February 17, 2012*** from 10 am to 3 pm at The Ohio Union Performance Hall (1739 N. High Street, Columbus OH 43210). Student and community members are encouraged to attend. The theme of the summit will be "Dating in the Digital Age," which focuses on the role of technology in relationship development, maintenance and dissolution among America's teens and young adults. In addition to a very exciting program, participants will receive free lunch and a gift bag full of goodies. For more information and to register, please [click here](#).

***The American Statistical Association (ASA) Committee on Law and Justice Statistics announces a small grant program*** for the analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and other justice-related data. This program is designed to encourage the creative and appropriate use of these data to inform substantive and/or methodological issues. Other than these criteria, there are no restrictions placed on the topic of a submission. Dissertation research may qualify for these funds and young investigators are encouraged to apply. Research is to be completed within a two-year period.

Awards are typically in the range of \$25,000 to \$30,000, although projects as high as \$40,000 will be considered if they are exceptional. **Proposals must be received by February 18, 2011.** For more information and instructions on how to submit please go to: <http://www.amstat.org/careers/bjs.cfm>.

***The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean) announces its first thesis contest*** on Public Security Victimization and Justice in Latin America. Candidates should send an unpublished undergraduate or postgraduate thesis, written in English or Spanish, which should be about public safety, victimization, justice and government. Participants need to send a 200-word abstract which sums up the analyzed problem, the research question and the results that were found. **The deadline for submissions is February 29, 2012.** For further information on submission guidelines, please go to [www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx](http://www.cdeunodc.inegi.org.mx), email [cde.estadistica@unodc.org](mailto:cde.estadistica@unodc.org), or call (52)(55)52781000x1723

***The editors of Law & Social Inquiry announce their annual competition*** for the best journal-length paper in the field of sociolegal studies written by a graduate or law student. *Law & Social Inquiry* publishes empirical and theoretical studies of sociolegal processes from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. **Entries will be accepted starting January 1, 2012 and must be received by March 1, 2012.** *LSI* invites direct submissions from graduate and law students and nominations of student work from faculty. The author must be a graduate student or law student at the time the paper was written and when submitted. Faculty nominations should include a short description along with the paper, and contact details for the student. The winning paper will be published in *Law & Social Inquiry* and the author(s) will receive a total cash prize of \$500 (US). Submissions will be judged by the editors. The winning submission will be sent to selected scholars for advisory reviews to aid with revisions prior to publication. For additional information on submission guidelines, please go to the [Blackwell Publishing website](#). To contact their office directly, email them at [lsi-abf@abfn.org](mailto:lsi-abf@abfn.org) or call (312) 988-6517.

***The American Society of Criminology invites applications for the position of Editor*** of *Criminology & Public Policy*, one of its official journals. The new Editor will be responsible for three volumes, beginning with the February 2014 issue. It is anticipated that new manuscript submissions will transfer to the new Editor around November 2012. The Editor is responsible for the timely and substantive output of the journal, including the solicitation of manuscripts, supervision of the peer review process and the final selection of articles for publication. The American Society of Criminology pays for copy-editing and final proof-reading, typesetting,

providing PDF files, and up to \$35,000 per year toward full-time equivalent Managing Editor/graduate student assistance. The Editor's supporting institution might propose to provide office space, file storage, equipment, and funds to cover office expenses such as postage, phone, copying, additional graduate student assistance, and release time for the Editor. ASC will provide a \$5,000 honorarium to the Editor each year. Supporting institutions may propose to assume some of the expenses now provided by the ASC. Interested applicants may contact the current Editor, Thomas Blomberg ([tblomberg@fsu.edu](mailto:tblomberg@fsu.edu) or 850-644-7365), for additional information regarding the logistics or operational details of editing and producing the journal. Applicants are also encouraged to call Ross Matsueda, Chair, ASC Publications Committee (206-616-2432 [matsueda@u.washington.edu](mailto:matsueda@u.washington.edu)), to discuss their applications before submissions. Application materials should include (1) a statement of editorial philosophy, (2) resumes of all proposed personnel, including the Editor and Associate Editors, and (3) assurances and details of institutional support. Application materials are due **March 1, 2012** and should be sent to: Ross Matsueda - Department of Sociology, University of Washington, 202 Savery Hall, Box 353340, Seattle, WA 98195-3340, [matsueda@u.washington.edu](mailto:matsueda@u.washington.edu), 206-616-2432.

~Featured Article~  
**An Interview with Randy Roth**

By Amanda Kennedy

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Last month I caught up with Dr. Randy Roth. He's been a Professor of History at Ohio State since 1985 and an active CJRC affiliate for twelve years. Randy and I discussed his academic background, his recent, lauded book, his intellectual approaches to research and teaching, and his work with CJRC.

To hear him tell it, Randy knew at a young age that becoming a professor was a natural fit. "I've always been someone who asks, like most people in academia, 'Why is this happening? Could we do this better?'" However, choosing the field of history was a process of elimination. "I've always loved math, natural science, social science, the humanities, and the arts. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do." As an undergraduate at Stanford University, Randy found a mentor in renowned historian Carl Degler. Professor Degler helped Randy understand that history was an ideal field for someone with a diverse array of academic interests. "He told me, 'If you want to view the world from many different perspectives, incorporating multiple disciplines, history is the path.'" To this day, Randy relies on his broad range of intellectual curiosity to carry out his research and teaching. "I truly am a comparativist," he said.



*Dr. Randy Roth in his office*

Randy's "comparativist" approach is clearly demonstrated in his book, *American Homicide* (Harvard University Press, 2009), as he culls facets of history and the social sciences to assess the nature and number of murders in the United States from the colonial era to the present. Randy exhaustively analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to determine a correlation between homicide rates and various cultural, political, and socioeconomic aspects of American society. His work led him to the conclusion that the nature of murder in this nation is distinctly American. It's no wonder that we are the most homicidal developed nation in the world,



because murder in the United States is inextricably tied to our political ethos. Consequently, unrelated adults predominately kill each other over impersonal and abstract reasons, instead of deep-seated or long-term disputes. "It's about our feelings and beliefs. With political instability you face disaster. Throwing democratic aspirations into a class-bound society is like throwing a match on a can of gas," Randy explained. Homicide rates are hinged on whether or not American citizens have faith in the legitimacy of their government and a social hierarchy, as well as the feelings of fellowship which come from "racial, religious, or political solidarity" (Roth 18). For instance, during our historical periods of lawlessness, such as the Civil War or the conquest of the Southwest, homicides spiked, leaving a lasting legacy detectable in murder rates to this day.

Evidently, Randy's years of work on the book paid off. *American Homicide* has garnered a great deal of attention from the academic community and the media. *The New Yorker* characterized Randy's interpretation of vast amounts of data as being "rich, fascinating, and unrivalled." The book also won the 2011 Michael J. Hindelang Award from the American Society of Criminology, and the 2011 Allan Sharlin Memorial Award from the Social Science History Association.

In addition to his research, Randy has a strong commitment to the classroom, evidenced in his 2009 Ohio State University Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching. Randy said that teaching "is about empowering your students and accelerating the pace [of learning] so they can build confidence in their abilities." In his courses, Randy stresses the importance of examining all sides of a conflict or a debate. For instance, in his undergraduate American Environmental History course, Randy exposes students to arguments from historians, sociologists, geologists and atmospheric scientists to holistically assess the matter at hand. By doing so, Randy strives to help his students effectively hone their critical thinking skills and build a strong, well-informed case for their points of view.

Beyond his individual efforts, Randy has been intensively collaborative with other members of the social science and historical communities. He's doing research with CJRC Research Scientist Dr. Mike Maltz and Sociologist Douglas Eckberg (Winthrop University) on the homicidal nature of the American Old West. True to its portrayal in film and folklore, the Old West was indeed "a terribly violent place with high rates of homicide," Randy explained. Mike and Randy have presented this work at numerous conferences and have recently published an article in the *Western Historical Quarterly*.

Randy is also one of the co-directors of the [Historical Violence Database](#) (along with Douglas Eckberg), which CJRC hosts on the center website. He has worked with numerous academics to assemble the comprehensive collection. The database contains various archival resources and quantitative data on assault and violent death from four continents, ranging in time from the Medieval era to the modern day. As stated on the website, the objective of the database is to "help social scientists transcend the limits of contemporary data and historians the limits of irreproducible local studies" in understanding violent crime.

After our conversation, it was clear to me that Randy is an ardent academic whose interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research better the learning experiences of his students, and truly strengthens our comprehensive understanding of historical events.

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*Thanks to Drs. Alexis Harris and Randy Roth and Ms. Heather Washington for their valuable time and insights, and to all of you who sent suggestions and announcements. We encourage you to keep us informed about any events that might be of interest to CJRC participants as well as any suggestions that you have for activities or programs. To contact the newsletter editor, please email [Amanda Kennedy](#). If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please send Amanda your e-mail address.*