

Crime, Law & Deviance News

Newsletter for the Crime, Law & Deviance section of the American Sociological Association

Smartphone Research in Crime, Law and Deviance

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In early 2009, Mika Raento and colleagues published a *Sociological Methods and Research* article entitled, "Smartphones: An Emerging Tool for Social Scientists." Six years later, even as smartphones have become so fundamental to our everyday lives, the Raento et al. article remains one of the few (if not the only) sociological pieces on smartphones, and surprisingly few sociology studies use cell phones and smartphones. The lag in uptake is not seen in other disciplines, where smartphones are ubiquitous in public health, social psychology, and public opinion research, among other areas. Yet, smartphones are in many ways especially well suited for research in sociology and in particular, in crime, law, and deviance.

As CLD researchers, we often try to study people who are missed by conventional surveys, lost for follow-up interviews, and whose experiences are not captured in administrative records.

Because our participants frequently move residences, are marginally attached to households, and routinely change contact information, they are often excluded from key surveys (Pettit 2012) and difficult to follow in longitudinal studies. Not only are people challenging to find, but their everyday experiences shift so quickly that retrospective recall bias, which is common to all interview studies, is a particular concern. Cell phones and smartphones can help researchers retain those most at risk of attrition, collect real-time self-report information on experiences and events that may be difficult to remember, and even obtain behavioral data on locations, social contacts, social media use, and biohealth markers that are difficult, if not impossible, for respondents to estimate. At the same time, the newness of cell phone research methods and the rapidly changing environment of use, regarding both technological capabilities and user experiences, leave many questions and ...

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challenges unresolved. This essay briefly describes my own smartphone study with men on parole in Newark, New Jersey, sharing lessons I've learned from this project and from others engaged in smartphone studies.

The Newark Smartphone Reentry Project (NSRP). The primary aim of the NSRP was to learn about people's day-to-day job search and employment experiences in the immediate months after they are released from prison. In designing the study, I conducted focus groups with individuals recently released from prison, partnered with computer science students to develop a smartphone application to collect data, and piloted the application with a dozen people for one month. For the full phase of the project, I distributed smartphones to 135 men on parole in Newark and I followed their experiences through the phone application for three months. The application sent automated surveys to participants at least twice a day and passively collected GPS locations and limited information about phone call and text logs. In addition to the smartphone participants, I followed a small group of 21 individuals using frequent interviews, as a way to tentatively compare the type and quality of information collected from phones and interviews (see Sugie 2014 for more details on the NSRP).

The NSRP is just one of many approaches to smartphone research. If you are thinking about developing your own phone project, there are some initial questions to think about, involving cost, reliability of measures, and privacy issues. As in other research, it is often good practice to prioritize a clean, elegant design in smartphone studies, keeping the technology as simple and as standardized as possible, given the

research aims.

Cell phone and smartphone studies come in all shapes and sizes. First, not all phone-based projects need to rely on smartphone technology. Although 64 percent of adults now own smartphones, this pales in comparison to the 90 percent who own cell phones (Mobile Technology Fact Sheet 2014). Smartphones are mobile phones that enable the installation of data collection applications to administer surveys, sense physical movements and health, and store phone usage data; yet more basic cell phones with text messaging functions can often give researchers similar real-time communication that fulfills project aims. Websites that enable various levels of text messaging automation can facilitate such research, particularly if a project is on a tight budget and cannot provide phones to participants. Second, researchers do not necessarily need to develop their own smartphone application to collect data. If the primary aim is automating real-time surveys, as opposed to collecting GPS locations or other phone usage data, researchers can adopt an off-the-shelf smartphone survey application. Another alternative is to use a web-based survey that is compatible with smartphone platforms, where the survey questions are formatted specifically for phone screens. Apart from being readily available, these options have the added benefits of working well across different smartphone operating systems and phone models. Third, studies do not necessarily need to provide phones to participants. In the NSRP, many of the people released from prison did not own a smartphone or were temporarily borrowing one from a family member or friend; in this case, providing a phone was both an incentive to participate and a necessity for data collection. It also helped ...

our computer programmers, when they were developing the smartphone application, to know the exact phone model that participants would use. However, when individuals already own a cell phone or smartphone, asking them to carry multiple devices might lead to missed surveys accidental misplacement, and other forms of unintentional noncompliance.

Costs can fit different budgets. A smartphone study may initially sound expensive, but researchers have many options to stay within their budgets. On the tight end, text messaging and off-the-shelf survey applications are less expensive compared to creating an original application. Even in the most potentially resource-intensive design, where researchers develop their own application, provide smartphones to

participants, and pay for data plans, costs can be minimized. In both my graduate and faculty institutions, the computer science departments offer classes that take on clients to develop projects. The framework for the NSRP application was created

in one of these undergraduate classes. The phones themselves were outdated models, provided at no-cost by the mobile phone company, and the plans were reasonable (about \$50/month for phone service and data). The most costly, and important, investment does not concern the devices or the plans; rather, it is the administrator or faculty (or in my case, graduate student) time that is the most resource-intensive during the data collection period – e.g., managing the technology, trouble-shooting when devices break or participants run into issues, and reviewing the data in real time to ensure quality and internal consistency. People, rather than technology, remain the most costly and critical components of cell phone and smartphone projects.

Ensuring validity and reliability. For all of their

potential advantages, the newness of smartphone studies has meant that questions of validity and reliability are fertile ground for future research. In areas such as public opinion research, knowledge is increasing rapidly about the administration, design, and format of smartphone survey questions (Schober et al. 2014). Yet, there are few studies that examine how standardized tools can be translated to smartphone platforms and how smartphone measures align with answers provided in more traditional interview or survey settings. We know little about the changes participants experience when they are first provided with a smartphone and how long it takes for participants to “normalize” their behavior around the new device (although see estimates in Raento et al. 2009). We know even less about how long

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participants are willing to answer smartphone questions before experiencing fatigue, and how this timeframe changes depending on the frequency of surveys. While there are ways to check for fatigue and noncompliance – such as the internal

consistency of answers, periodic “check-up” phone calls from researchers, and debriefing at the project’s end – these issues remain at the forefront of smartphone projects. The NSRP followed participants for three months, but could a smartphone study reliably track individual experiences over several years? Notwithstanding the challenges of implementing such a project, we simply do not know how willing individuals are to participate in long-term smartphone studies.

Protecting privacy. The privacy issues around smartphone studies are multifaceted. Even with encryption and security protections, data are more vulnerable to disclosure when they are stored on phones and transmitted to researcher websites before being transferred to a server. There are also concerns that the information can be subpoenaed, perhaps to confirm ...

an individual's location or social interactions in court. Apart from these issues, which are often common to other projects with sensitive data or multiple transfer points, a key distinguishing factor of smartphone data for privacy issues is the data format itself. Smartphone data is often considered "intensive" because researchers collect vast amounts of detailed information on each participant (Walls and Schafer 2005). The frequent and fine-grained information could leave individuals vulnerable to deanonymization, where identifiable markers such as residential address, place of work, and even names, can be inferred from patterns in the data, often in combination with publicly available records (Ohm 2009). To protect participants' privacy, researchers should not only rely on their IRB's regulations, as members may be unfamiliar with the unique risks of smartphone research.

Rather, researchers must also consult smartphone-specific discussions about privacy. While sociology and criminology forums have yet to take up these issues, they receive robust consideration in other fields (see Schober et al. 2014).

New frontiers ahead. At their heart, smartphones are social devices, and as such, it is all the more surprising that sociologists have been relatively slow to adopt them in their research. Yet, the promises of smartphones for revealing new insights about the social and behavioral world cannot be overstated. Yes, they can improve the accuracy of our measurements. But they can also provide systematic observation and documentation of events, experiences, attitudes, and feelings that we are simply unable to capture with traditional data collection methods.

References

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- Ohm, Paul. 2009. "Broken Promises of Privacy: Responding to the Surprising Failure of Anonymization." *SSRN eLibrary*.
- Pettit, Becky. 2012. *Invisible Men: Mass Incarceration and the Myth of Black Progress*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Schober, Michael F. et al. 2014. "Mobile Technologies for Conducting, Augmenting and Potentially Replacing Surveys: Report of the AAPOR Task Force on Emerging Technologies in Public Opinion Research." *American Association for Public Opinion Research*.
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Member News

Annika Anderson accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at California State University, San Bernardino, beginning in Fall 2015.

Sarah Brayne accepted a position as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Microsoft Research New England. Afterwards, she will begin as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas, Austin.

Trevor Hoppe accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Albany, SUNY, starting in Fall 2015.

William Alex Pridemore will begin as Dean of the School of Criminal Justice at the University of Albany, SUNY, beginning in Fall 2015.

Katie Young accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, starting in Fall 2016.

Announcements

Nicholas Branic released a new Stata ado file that remedies a potential issue when importing MPlus latent class analysis output into Stata. The file is available through the Irvine Laboratory for the Study of Space and Crime and may be downloaded here:

<http://faculty.sites.uci.edu/ilssc/applications/latent-class-analysis-fix/>

After conducting latent class analysis in MPlus, users can output a text file containing their LCA data and then import this file into Stata. The presence of missing data in the dataset, however, can cause the data to “shift” columns and distort the overall dataset. Running this ado file in Stata will automatically fix any column shifting and generate a corrected, usable file containing the LCA data. Instructions on how to use the ado file are located within the ado file as comments.

Awards

Jay Borchert, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the University of Michigan, has been awarded a Mellon American Council of Learned Sciences Dissertation Completion Fellowship for his dissertation, “Mass Incarceration, the Profession of Corrections, and the Ways Prison Workers Construct Meanings about their Participation in our Punishment State.” The fellowship provides a generous stipend and research expenses to advanced graduate students in the final year of dissertation writing as well as job market support.

Jay Borchert was awarded the Best Graduate Student Paper Award from the ASA Section on Sexualities as well as an honorable mention from the SSSP Division on Crime and Juvenile Delinquency for his paper, “A New Iron Closet: Failing to Extend the Spirit of *Lawrence v. Texas* to Prisons and Prisoners.” The paper is forthcoming in *The War on Sex* (Eds. D. Halperin and T. Hoppe, Duke University Press).

Charis E. Kubrin received the Cicero Speechwriting Award for her TEDx talk, “The Threatening Nature of...Rap Music?,” in the category of “Controversial or Highly Politicized Topic.”

William Alex Pridemore won the Gerhard Mueller Award for Distinguished Contributions to International Criminal Justice from the International Section of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.

Katie Young received this year’s Law & Society Article Prize for her article, “Everyone Knows the Game: Legal Consciousness in the Hawaiian Cockfight,” which addresses the relationship between police and cockfighting gangs in rural Hawaii.

Graduate Students on the Market



Name: Kaitlin Boyle

Degree: Sociology

Institution: University of Georgia

Research Description: Kait's research program involves the use of multiple theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to increase understanding of the prevalence, denial, and reporting of rape on college campuses. In her subcultural research, Kait explores how participation in rape prone environments influences perceptions of rape and identity-based motivations to engage in sexually violent behavior. She also examines structural, macro-level influences on the reporting of rape; she is currently investigating how feminist mobilization, gender stratification, and rape laws shape universities' rape reporting behaviors.

Kait also incorporates cultural, social psychological, and criminological approaches to understanding how women frame and process unwanted sexual experiences. Specifically, she has explored how sexual scripts, relational power dynamics, and identity processes shape cognitive and affective responses to sexual assault. She expands on this research in her dissertation in which she examines identity processes that influence psychological, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of sexual violence, paying particular attention to "victim" and "survivor" identities.

Kait has received numerous awards, including the 2013 American Society of Criminology (Division of Victimology) Graduate Student Paper Award, the 2014 American Sociological Association (Social Psychology Section) Graduate Student Investigator Award, and the 2013 Emory Center for Injury Control Summer Scholarship. She has recently published articles in *Social Psychology Quarterly* and *Sociology Compass*.

Research Description: Spencer Headworth is Graduate Research Coordinator at the American Bar Foundation and a Ph.D. Candidate in Northwestern University's Department of Sociology. His research interests include crime and social control, law, inequality, organizations, and professions. His dissertation, *Policing Welfare*, examines a novel intersection between the worlds of public benefits and law enforcement: dedicated welfare fraud control units. These state-level units are generally located within agencies that administer TANF and SNAP, and thus in the unique position of performing a law enforcement function from within a welfare agency. Over recent decades, they have grown rapidly and dedicated fraud personnel have taken over enforcement duties.

This project's first data collection comprised a national overview of state-level fraud control units. Then, interviews were conducted with fraud workers and administrators in five case study states providing regional, demographic, political, and economic variation. The major questions the dissertation addresses include: How do benefit agencies conceptualize, organize, and prioritize program integrity issues? How do fraud units navigate between the worlds of law enforcement and social work? What information do fraud units produce and consume and how is that information used? And, how do these units relate to the outside world and defend their legitimacy?

Spencer's other current projects include a study of early sociological careers (with Jeremy Freese) and a study of the specialized field of health care for incarcerated populations. He recently completed editing *Diversity in Practice: Race, Gender, and Class in Legal and Professional Careers*, forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.



Name:
Spencer Headworth

Degree: Sociology
Institution: Northwestern University

Research Description: I am a Chancellor's Fellow and PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology and Population Program, Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. My research lies at the intersection of criminology, medical sociology, and social demography to examine the health of inmates and other criminally-involved populations. The questions that guide my research include: How does mass incarceration influence population and community health? How do conditions of prison confinement influence health? How do the social worlds of criminally-involved persons (e.g., inmates, sex workers, gang members, drug users) shape health and health behaviors?

My dissertation takes an ecologically-driven approach combining insights from social ecological theories, theory on risk environments, and deprivation and importation theories of imprisonment to develop a social ecological framework of inmate health. This framework guides the analysis of health outcomes in different correctional contexts. I use multiple existing datasets and advanced statistical methods including nonlinear models, multilevel modeling, and propensity score matching. These methods allow me to estimate the causal effect of imprisonment on morbidity and identify contextual and inmate-level factors that contribute to mortality and healthcare utilization in prison.

My dissertation research is supported by a NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Fellowship (F31) funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and a NSF Sociology Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant. To date, my research has been disseminated in 13 peer-reviewed journal articles and 5 book chapters. I will be on the academic job market this fall for positions beginning fall 2016.



Name: Kathryn Nowotny

Degree: Ph.D. Candidate,
Sociology and Population

Institution: University of
Colorado, Boulder

<https://sites.google.com/site/nowotnykathrynm>



Name: Ana Villarreal

Degree: Sociology

Institution: University of
California, Berkeley

Research Description: Funded by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Social Science Research Council, my dissertation *Drug Violence, Fear of Crime and the Transformation of Everyday Life in the Mexican Metropolis* examines the impact of a gruesome wave of criminal violence on everyday life in Monterrey, Mexico. While most research on violence and everyday life focuses on the living conditions of the urban poor, this project began as an ethnographic examination of upper class responses to sudden, explosive, spectacular violence and collective outbursts of fear.

Drawing on two years of fieldwork conducted at both ends of the class spectrum in my hometown, I counter dominant assumptions of fear as a destroyer of the social fabric with evidence of how fear both tears and tightens the social fabric, both destroys and creates new forms of social life. With the exception of a few spaces of hope where the families of victims of forced disappearances came together to mourn, organize and demand justice from the state, this "tightening" of the social fabric did not cut across social classes.

My book project, *The Armored City: Upper Class Confinement in Mexico's "War on Drugs"* analyzes the fortification and reorganization of upper class living within Mexico's wealthiest municipality: San Pedro Garza García, one of the nine municipalities of the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. A state within a state, this is a case study of extreme violence and criminality accelerating urban inequality processes taking place elsewhere in the world, yet particularly in Latin America.

ASA Meeting Sessions

Monday August 24, 2015

2:30PM to 4:10PM

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance Paper Session : Classic and Emerging Perspectives



6:30PM to 8:30PM

RECEPTION:

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance

Location: Buddy Guy's Legends

Address: 700 South Wabash Avenue

Tuesday August 25, 2015

8:30AM to 10:10AM

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance Council and Business Meeting

10:30AM to 12:10PM

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance Council Paper Session: The End of the Beginning or the Beginning of the End? Race and Decarceration

12:30PM to 2:10PM

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance Invited Paper Session: Sex, Gender, & Crime, Law & Deviance

2:30AM to 4:10AM

Section on Crime, Law & Deviance Roundtable Session

Crime, Law, & Deviance Section Information

Chair: Christopher Uggen, University of Minnesota

Former Chair: Dana L. Haynie, Ohio State University

Chair Elect 2015-2016: Pamela Wilcox, University of Cincinnati

Secretary Treasurer: John R. Hipp, University of California, Irvine

Council Members:

2015: Ryan D. King, University at Albany, SUNY

2015: Sara Wakefield, Rutgers University

2016: Ramiro Martinez, Northeastern University

2016: Michelle Inderbitzen, Oregon State University

2017: Derek A. Kreager, Pennsylvania State University

2017: Victor M. Rios, University of California, Santa Barbara

Newsletter Editors: Michelle D. Mioduszewski and Nicholas Branich, University of California-Irvine

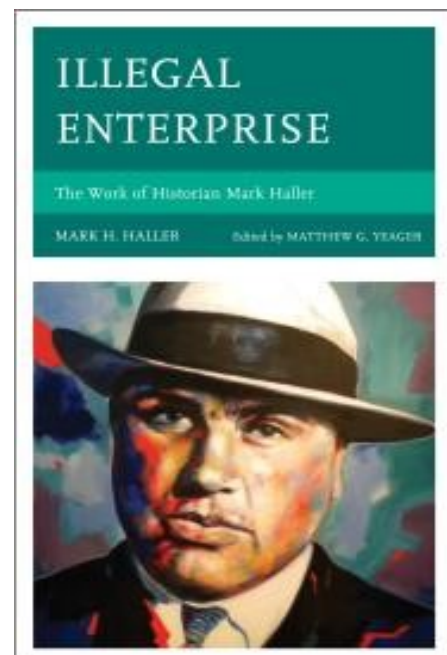
Webmaster: Mike Vuolo, Purdue University

Member Article Publications

- Chiarello, Elizabeth.** 2014. "Medical Versus Fiscal Gatekeeping: Navigating Professional Contingencies at the Pharmacy Counter." *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 42(4).
- Chiarello, Elizabeth.** 2014. "The War on Drugs Comes to the Pharmacy Counter: Frontline Work in the Shadow of Discrepant Institutional Logics." *Law & Social Inquiry* 40(1): 86-122.
- Oliverio, Annamarie and Pat Lauderdale.** 2015. "The World System According to Andre Gunder Frank: Hegemony and Domination." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 21(1): 184-192.
- Williams, Monica and Bill McCarthy.** 2014. "Assessing Stereotypes of Adolescent Rape." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 42(6): 557-567.

Member Book Publications

"Illegal Enterprise: The Work of Historian Mark Haller" by **Mark H. Haller** (Edited by **Matthew G. Yeager**; University Press of America, 2015).



Upcoming Positions

Pennsylvania State University:

Postdoctoral Fellowship/Research Scientist Position in Criminal Justice Research

The Justice Center for Research of The Pennsylvania State University (<http://justicecenter.psu.edu/>) announces the availability of an early career research position as postdoc in the area of criminal justice research. The position is a one-year appointment commencing in Fall 2015. We are seeking applicants interested in research in the areas of law enforcement, corrections, evaluation, juvenile delinquency, or other justice-related areas. Applicants will work closely with faculty and should note in their applications how their research interest corresponds with that of Penn State faculty. The Justice Center is designed to facilitate interactions between university faculty and local, state, national and international communities to promote research in criminology. The position will offer the opportunity for involvement in innovative research projects, experience in preparing grant applications and substantial opportunities for publication. The individual selected will be encouraged to work closely with a faculty member and also will be supported in developing or continuing an independent line of investigation. The Center offers many opportunities for collaboration with experts in a variety of fields. Previous Center Post Docs have a good history of advancing to teaching and research positions at other institutions, such as the University of Massachusetts, Hunter College and RTI, International.

Successful applicants must have completed all requirements for the Ph.D. before starting the position, and within the previous four academic years. Applicants should have relevant research experience and a capacity to work closely with others. **To apply, please submit a letter of interest and vita at <https://psu.jobs/job/55862>** . Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled.

CAMPUS SECURITY CRIME STATISTICS: For more about safety at Penn State, and to review the Annual Security Report which contains information about crime statistics and other safety and security matters, please go to <http://www.police.psu.edu/clery/> , which will also provide you with detail on how to request a hard copy of the Annual Security Report.

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to minorities, women, veterans, disabled individuals, and other protected groups.

For additional information on the following positions (including how to apply), visit the ASA Job Bank at <http://jobbank.asanet.org>.

Job ID: 11156

Institution: Anna Maria College

Department: Justice and Social Sciences

Title: Program Director for Criminal Justice

Position/Rank: Sociological Practice/ Applied/Other: Director

Areas/Special Programs: Criminal Justice

Job ID: 11080

Institution: Georgetown College

Department: Department of Sociology

Title: Assistant Professor of Sociology

Position/Rank: Academic Positions: Assistant Professor

Areas/Special Programs: Criminal Justice

Job ID: 11143

Institution: Texas Woman's University

Department: Dept of Sociology & Social Work

Title: Assistant Professor

Position/Rank: Academic Positions: Assistant Professor

Areas/Special Programs: Criminology/Delinquency

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