

Riad Azar

The University of Texas at Austin, Sociology

*Drive: A Moral Economy of Car Theft - Abstract*

This project begins with an empirical puzzle: the rising rate of carjacking – a form of vehicle theft defined by a violent interaction between offender and victim – amidst a historical decline of car theft in my field site of New Jersey. By describing and analyzing the historical emergence and spatial distribution of carjacking, I examine carjacking as a case of a practice embedded in an illicit economic and organizational field. I seek to understand the social production and construction of this illicit market by examining how the emergence and distribution of carjacking may (or may not) be explained by theories of criminal behavior in the perspective of an expanding transnational illicit market. This research enters a theoretical debate at the intersection of criminology, transnational organized crime, and planetary urbanization by seeking to understand how spaces and places enable or constrain illicit market activity.