Assistant Professor of Sociology Jana Arsovska will be taking her research into Albanian organized crime from southeastern Europe to John Jay’s home turf, thanks to a prestigious W.E.B. DuBois Fellowship from the National Institute of Justice. The two-year, $100,000 award will fund her investigation of “Culture, Migration and Transnational Crime: Ethnic Albanian Organized Crime in New York.”

Arsovska, who teaches criminology and international criminal justice, will focus on two New York City neighborhoods that are home to large Albanian immigrant populations – the Belmont section of the Bronx, and Ridgewood, Queens.

“The research project seeks to answer how organized crime groups operate across territories,” she explained. “Ethnic Albanian organized crime in New York City is identified as a serious problem by law enforcement agencies, and this is a highly understudied topic.”

Albanian organized-crime groups dominate some criminal markets on five continents, Arsovska noted, and Sicilians mobsters will often hire ethnic Albanians as hitmen because of their penchant for extreme violence.

Through her research, Arsovska hopes to provide criminal justice officials with knowledge that can be used to develop balanced, effective and human rights-centered policies for fighting organized crime.

Arsovska is a native of Macedonia who earned her PhD in Criminology from the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium in 2009 and joined the sociology department at John Jay that same year. She is a member of the Executive Committee of the Standing Group on Organised Crime and co-editor of the SGOC Newsletter.

The DuBois Fellowship provides talented researchers early in their professional careers with the opportunity to elevate independently generated research and ideas to the level of national discussion, according to the NIJ. The Fellowship program, created when John Jay President Jeremy Travis was Director of NIJ, places particular emphasis on crime, violence and the administration of justice in diverse social and cultural contexts.

The award marks the second time a John Jay faculty member has won a DuBois Fellowship. Professor Hung-en Sung of the Department of Criminal Justice won the award in 2010.
Assistant Professor Shu-Yuan (Demi) Cheng is pursuing two groundbreaking studies into the antiviral properties of the pokeweed plant, research that is funded by the National Science Foundation. Cheng took over this research after Diana Friedland, an associate professor of biochemistry, passed away unexpectedly in 2011. and she has assured its continuation and success.

“I know Diana was a hard working woman,” said Cheng. “She was very knowledgeable, a very kind woman.”

Both projects investigate the pokeweed antiviral protein (PAP) found in leaves, roots and seeds in this common North American weed. This type-I ribosome-inactivating protein is the plant’s natural defense against viruses, fungi and bacteria.

The first project, “Pokeweed Antiviral Protein: Seasonal and Compartmental Variants and Effects of Pathogens on Variant Production,” seeks to identify the pattern of the antiviral protein expression under normal and stressful conditions. Cheng and her students ventured to Central Park to harvest leaves, roots and berries. After studying the reactions of PAPs over two summers, they concluded that plants that encountered increased contact with pathogens in a given year would produce stronger antiviral proteins in their own defense.

Cheng’s students found that when exposed to a human pathogen and a plant pathogen, pokeweed’s expression of antiviral protein increased with the plant pathogen but did not when exposed to the human pathogen.

Understanding plants’ mechanisms for defense is critical, Cheng says, when attempting to predict the degree to which plants, particularly large crops, would survive a bioterrorist attack. An advanced understanding of a plant’s defense mechanisms contributes to prevention and management of plant diseases, and the development of antiviral and other therapeutic agents.

The second project, “Pokeweed Antiviral Protein selection of mRNA; Effects of mRNA structure and initiation factors” focuses on the antiviral protein’s mechanism and on how it binds to the RNA so it has antiviral activity.

“We can kill viruses by stopping the protein translation by the depurinatory RNA, so they cannot further produce a protein for survival. This way the cell dies. By elucidating the regulatory mechanism of PAP antiviral activity, we can manipulate the plant’s defense system,” said Cheng.

Cheng said of her late colleague: “Dr. Friedland was an active research mentor for minority and female students, with extensive experience training students in research. This activity will help considerably to increase the likelihood that these underrepresented individuals will pursue postgraduate degrees and continue in science as independent investigators.”

Savvier risk assessment for juvenile parole decisions

Continued from Page 1

administration?” Barnes-Ceeney thought it was.

“Are risk-assessment instruments imprisoning people in these risk labyrinths?” he asked. “Do we create labyrinths of risk around people, or do these labyrinths help people move out of the system and return to society?”

As explained: “The labyrinth is a symbol, a circular path leading to the center and then back out again. Think of the juvenile justice in terms of a labyrinth...you have to navigate through to get to the center to kill the Minotaur. But the Minotaur is actually your old offending self. My research explored all these dimensions of risk and the labyrinth.”

Barnes-Ceeney conducted his mixed-methods research by circulating within juvenile facilities, where he spoke with people in the prison cantina, talking to cooks in the kitchen who advocated for better nutrition for the inmates. He interviewed juveniles up for parole, observed parole hearings, and interviewed the entire parole board team through the process to determine how SA VRY influenced their concepts of risk.

Barnes-Ceeney then compared the files of 260 juvenile offenders who underwent the risk-assessment instrument with 250 files of juveniles who did not. He found that incarcerated juveniles assessed as a low or medium risk who did undergo the SA VRY assessment have a higher likelihood of being released early on parole compared to those who did not. So, offenders who did not have the risk assessment incorporated into their parole hearing are more likely to be trapped in the labyrinth.

“SA VRY is actually a means for navigating low- and medium-risk juveniles out of the system,” Barnes-Ceeney concluded. “SA VRY leads the risk assessor down a clearly marked path of risk factors to consider, taking them on that journey, actually structuring their conclusions. Along with appropriate and timely services, risk assessment instruments can help parole board members make defensible risk decisions.”

Visit the Office for Advancement of Research’s Web site at www.jjay.cuny.edu/academics/960.php
Creating a ‘paradigm shift’:

Brotherton eyes holistic policing in Europe

Professor David Brotherton, chair of the Department of Sociology, is expecting to secure a $4.5-million grant from the European Union to direct an initiative called the European Project for Development of Holistic Responses in Policing, which hopes to create a paradigm shift in how police forces interact with and understand gang crime and youth subculture groups across Europe.

The grant will fund six mini-projects to implement anti-gang crime programs based on the PANTHER model (Preventative Analysis about Network Targets for a Holistic Enforcement Response), which evolved from holistic policing strategies with gangs and organized crime in Sweden. The Swedish Ministry of Justice and Stockholm police selected Brotherton to lead this project after hearing him deliver a keynote speech at the Stockholm Intervention and Prevention Project in May 2012.

An internationally recognized authority on anti-gang best practices, Brotherton has worked on street gang culture since the early 1990s and is the author of four books on gang violence including *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang* (2004), co-written with Professor Luis Barrios of the Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies.

Brotherton explained that the PANTHER model differs from conventional gang-prevention approaches used by most police forces in that each strategy for intervention emerges from the history of youth and youth subcultures in a given country. This approach, he noted, regards policing as not simply a practice but a praxis, where theory informs practice and the practice in turn informs the theory. Police are educated in the complexity and history of youth subculture in their region, making this a “bottom-up” rather than a “top-down” approach, treating police involved in these complex subcultures as mini criminologists.

Brotherton said the project will recognize the experience and knowledge of police and involve them as innovative problem-solvers.

“Social control through empowerment and increased opportunities for youth is far more effective, democratic and less costly than the current emphasis on punishment and criminalization,” said Brotherton. “I argue for a form of policing that is humanistic and community-based, and achieves public safety without reinforcing divisions along race and class lines in society.”

The value of mentors in doctoral research

Andrea Cantora, who earned her PhD in Criminal Justice at John Jay in 2011, says that one of the most valuable experiences she had at John Jay was her work at the Research and Evaluation Center and “the practical experience with agencies under the guidance of faculty.”

“I worked a lot with Jeff Mellow and Valerie West in the Department of Criminal Justice, and Valli Rajah from the Department of Sociology,” said Cantora. “We went out to agencies and partnered with them, and helped them to improve their programs. There are so many opportunities to do this kind of work at John Jay.”

Cantora based her dissertation – “Perceptions of Community Corrections: Understanding How Women Offenders Respond to an Evidence-Based/ Gender-Responsive Halfway House” – on a comprehensive comparison of female offenders’ experiences in a halfway house and the ways the staff and programs supported their reentry into society with that of women who were released directly from prison into the community.

Cantora found that the programs and relationships with staff at the halfway house greatly enhanced the women’s abilities to navigate basic procedures such as writing resumes, finding housing and applying for a driver’s license. “Some of the most interesting aspects were the dynamics in the halfway house,” Cantora observed. “Women were very supported and they were able to connect with staff and build a sense of trust, which they did not experience in prison. They have a lot assistance with case managers and access to providers in the community. The halfway house was a totally different environment that addressed their needs.”

The potential benefit of halfway-house programs was shortchanged by distrust among the women – a product of their years of imprisonment, Cantora explained. Tension and anxiety were palpable as the women attempted to avoid all conflict with each other. Most research on reentry, especially for women, asserts that the mutual support and trust of the other women in the halfway house is a key to their success, Cantora noted.

Cantora became interested in program evaluation and reentry while beginning her dissertation. She created a reentry program in the South Bronx, and worked on sentencing and correction programs at the Vera Institute of Justice, where she conducted data evaluation for Vera’s New Orleans office.

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Comments? Questions? Suggestions? Send them to Daniel Stageman, Manager of Research Operations, Office for Advancement of Research, Room 632 Haaren Hall. e-mail: dstageman@jjay.cuny.edu
SCHOLAR INCENTIVES

Majumdar explores literature of resistance

The humanities are thriving at John Jay, as exemplified by the Faculty Mid-Career Research Support Award presented recently to Professor Nivedita Majumdar of the Department of Criminal Justice.

“Professor Majumdar has an established record of successful scholarship, and so the review committee felt confident in both the high quality of the proposed work and its chances for success,” said interim Associate Provost for Research Anthony Carpi.

Majumdar’s book project, Exiled at Home: The Politics of Resistance in South Asian Literatures, explores social movements that developed in resistance to oppressive nationalist ideologies in South Asia. Although nationalism originated as an anti-colonial discourse that mobilized society against British rule, she noted, it evolved into an ideology that upholds the interests of the ruling class. In order to facilitate nation-building, according to Majumdar, nationalism must incorporate all popular interests while suppressing aspects of those interests that compromise bourgeois nation-building.

“Thus nation-building,” she contends, “culminates in the betrayal of the egalitarian ideals of the nation.”

The movements and ideologies represented in Majumdar’s work are based on people’s daily experiences of being marginalized, their resistance to oppression and their ideas for change. “I explore a diverse array of 20th-century South Asian texts and focus on the ways in which literary production illuminates the limitations of and the opposition to nationalist ideology,” she states. “Focusing on the literature by and about four groups that have been marginalized in the grand process of nation-building – women, oppressed castes, religious and regional minorities – I highlight their experiences of oppression, their ideologies of resistance, and their alternative visions of a just future.”

Majumdar began teaching at John Jay in 2006. She is the editor of Be Other Side of Terror (2009), published by Oxford University Press, which is based on literary representations of terrorism in South Asia.

She is also working on a comparative project involving South Asia, South Africa and parts of the Middle East to study how these regions have been affected by the ideology and practices of neoliberalism and the ways in which these effects are documented in their cultural output.

GRANTS UPDATE

John Jay faculty and staff in a variety of disciplines and departments continue to win major grants to support research, education, training programs and community initiatives. Recent awards include:


**JANA ARSOVSKA** (Sociology), $99,868 from the National Institute of Justice, for “Culture, Migration and Transnational Crime: Ethnic Albanian Organized Crime in New York City.”

**JEFFREY BUTTS** (Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation Center), $65,000 from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, for the New York’s Closer to Home Initiative. He also received $50,000 from the Rudin Foundation for the Rudin Partnership initiative.

**JOSHUA FREILICH** (Criminal Justice), $69,997 from the University of Maryland, to support the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Behavior.

**MARIA HARTWIG** (Psychology), $11,045 from the National Science Foundation, to support the dissertation research of PhD student **SARAH JORDAN** (co-PI) on “The Effect of Working Memory Capacity While Telling Lies Under Cognitive Load.”

**DAVID KENNEDY** (Center for Crime Prevention and Control), $301,870 from the National Development and Research Institute, for “Reducing Serious Violence in New Orleans.” He also received $325,000 from the Detroit Public Safety Foundation for a similar project there. As co-chair of the National Network for Safe Communities, Kennedy received $1 million from the Bureau of Justice Assistance for the Ceasefire University and Violence Reduction Strategies Initiative.

**JEFF MELLOW** (Criminal Justice) and **KEVIN BARNES-CLEENLEY** (Sociology), $80,000 from the Mayor’s Fund to Advancement New York City, for “The NeOn Initiative: Evaluating the Impact of NYC DOP’s New Model of Probation.”

**JESSICA GORDON NEMBHARD** (Africana Studies), $25,590 from the U.S. Department of Education, to support the Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program.

**STEVEN PENROD** (Psychology), $194,262 from the National Science Foundation, for the study “Issue-Specific Jury Instructions in Eyewitness Cases: Are They More Effective than Traditional Safeguards?”

**TRAVIS WENDEL** (Anthropology), $26,826 from the National Development and Research Institute, to study how structural interventions may affect HIV risks.

**DARYL WOUT** (Psychology), $93,657 from the National Science Foundation, for a study of the role of social identity threat in interracial interactions.