



*Compass Interdisciplinary  
Virtual Conference*

*-19-30 Oct 2009-*

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**Commentary on:**

**A Hybrid Model of Moral Panics:  
Synthesizing the Theory and Practice of Moral Panic Research**

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Muschert and Klocke's paper promises a theoretical and practical synthesis of moral panic research and an explanation of the social conditions that give rise to, sustain, and facilitate the subversion of moral panic episodes. The paper fails to deliver.

The most positive feature of the paper is an updated literature review of moral panic theory and research. The authors correctly identify the multidisciplinary nature of moral panic research and some of the conceptual, methodological, and theoretical confusion it produces. What they fail to do is analytically discriminate among new and progressive developments and reiterative ones.

According to Critcher (2009), a clear analytical mandate has emerged: to widen the focus of moral panic by synthesizing insights from the fields of moral panic and moral regulation. Critcher draws on a set of established and recognized contributions to develop his argument. Muschert and Klocke seem to be aware of Critcher's argument, but they avoid addressing Critcher's

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analytical call to action (and hence commit some of the very errors they problematize), alternatively selectively summarizing existing panic theory and research. Not only do they gloss over the complexity of moral panic literature, but their synthesizing recommendations—panics involve a clash of “moral universes”, they hinge on perceived crises, marginalized populations are targets of moralization, media attention matters, amplification of deviance occurs, a control culture is mobilized--are neither new nor inspiring.

The most insightful observation in the paper is that panic scholars need to develop a shared or common conceptual and methodological understanding. These observations, however, were made years ago. Moreover, I agree with their observation that multiple methods would benefit panic scholars, but this is hardly new. In my study of the moral panic pertaining to raves in the City of Toronto, Canada, for instance, I drew on council proceedings, news coverage, and local resistance-activism to measure moral panic as a form of blame avoidance (Hier 2002). The rave study in Toronto is not cited by Muschert and Klocke; Tepper's (2009) investigation of conflicts about raves in Chicago (a paper that draws on my study), however, is cited.

In short, I agree that a synthesizing project is long overdue, but this is not the paper to rescue us from analytical confusion. The paper is a good idea but it does not deliver.

#### References

- Critcher, C. 2009 “Widening the Focus: Moral Panics as Moral Regulation,” *British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 1: 17-34.
- Hier, S. 2002 “Raves, Risks and the Ecstasy Panic: A Case Study in the Subversive Nature of Moral Regulation.” *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 27, 1: 33-57.
- Tepper, S. 2009 “Stop the Beat: Quiet Regulation and Cultural Conflict.” *Sociological Forum*, 24, 2: 276-306.