



insights

New knowledge in the sciences and the humanities

Street Smarts

STUDENTS TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME

Although the students in her "Public Space and Crime" class could regurgitate their lessons and readings, Gisela Bichler-Robertson had a niggling feeling that they weren't really "getting it." It seemed to her that they weren't obtaining a meaningful

comprehension of the interactions between people, public areas, and crime patterns. "One day I gathered them together, and I was shocked to find that most had never set foot off campus," says Bichler-Robertson, a graduate student and instructor in the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers-Newark. "The extent of their involvement with the city was going from the parking lot to the classroom and back." She had a simple solution to their naïveté about urban life: "Let's take a walk."

Working in small groups, the students ventured into Newark with notebooks in hand. They examined the areas around Penn Station, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), the Gateway I complex, and other downtown settings, looking for dark corners, obstructed views, and isolated staircases. They watched people as they moved through the areas, recording their body language and behavior. At the end of the semester, the teams applied crime-prevention theory to their observations and recommended improvements that would make the areas safer. The experiment was so successful that fieldwork has become a permanent part of the course.

This past semester's class conducted general surveys and individual interviews in Military Park, which is across from NJPAC, and then developed a

strategy for making the park safer and more appealing to residents. Officials at NJPAC, NJ Transit, and the Rutgers-Newark police department have expressed interest in hearing their suggestions, which include reclaiming legitimate use of the park by having nearby preschoolers plant a garden and bringing in vendors to sell food, drinks, and other items. Students also recommended tighter security in the newly renovated parking garage beneath the park, where, too often, emergency exits were left open and unmonitored.

"Overall, the students concluded that the level of fear associated with downtown Newark is far greater than it ought to be," says Bichler-Robertson. "From a personal perspective, I feel really positive that my students are now a lot more comfortable walking around the city."

Body Work

WOMEN SPEAK OUT ON BREAST IMPLANTS

After nursing three children, Jenna was unhappy with her body. A plastic surgeon convinced her to get breast implants, telling her that they were practically risk free. A month after the surgery, one of Jenna's implants had to be replaced when it migrated from her chest to her armpit. Within 18 months, Jenna was so racked with pain that she could not even walk to the end of her block. A stream of doctors told her there was no explanation for her symptoms; some suggested she see a psychiatrist. But Jenna persisted, and, finally, X-rays revealed that the implants had ruptured and leached silicone into her body, triggering her pain, fatigue, fever, hair loss, rashes, and nausea.

Jenna is one of 40 women who were interviewed by Susan M. Zimmerman for her book *Silicone Survivors: Women's Experiences with Breast Implants* (Temple University Press, 1998). Zimmerman, a postdoctoral fellow at Rutgers' Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research, found a wealth of material on the medical, legal, and social ramifications of implants, but testimony from women who had actually gone through the surgery was rare.

"One thing common to these 40 women was that they were all told by their surgeons or read in the scientific literature that implants are safe and last



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