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SIUE sociologist studies government crime

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In America, we are obsessed with crime. Its graphic consequences dominate the headlines of local news, oftentimes accompanied by statistics that are meant to terrify.

For example, it is widely reported that the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. But that fact means that we are doing a good job of con- trolling — and understanding — crime?

Many researchers have been looking at this issue for some time. One of them is Dave Kauzlarich, a professor of criminal justice at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. He has studied a type of crime that is very common despite being oftentimes accompanied by statistics that are meant to terrify. "State crimes are those committed by people in positions of power and authority," Kauzlarich explained. "Violations of human rights, lack of accountability and impunity are all examples of state crimes — actions that are carried out in a way that is feared by society.

A graduate student of mine and myself analyzed data from the prison system to find out what the government didn’t want us to see. We found that state crimes are more common than what we think because the public is not aware of them.

Dr. Almedaro Romero is a sociologist at SIUE who has studied government violations of human rights. He believes that politicians who follow what they think is right rather than what the public wants may be taking a risk.

"I believe that the government should be doing things that are for the good of the people, not just for the good of the voters. If the government is doing things that are for the good of the people, then the people will be more satisfied with the government than if the government is doing things that are for the good of the voters.

Kauzlarich was born and raised in Streator, Ill., a small town in central Illinois. He is the son of a police officer and a schoolteacher. Kauzlarich is married with two children.

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