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Source: *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 395-418

Published by: Annual Reviews

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223510>

Accessed: 10/10/2009 10:37

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CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY

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KEY WORDS: crime, culture, media, subculture, meaning

ABSTRACT

As an emergent orientation in sociology, criminology, and criminal justice, cultural criminology explores the convergence of cultural and criminal processes in contemporary social life. Drawing on perspectives from cultural studies, postmodern theory, critical theory, and interactionist sociology, and on ethnographic methodologies and media/textual analysis, this orientation highlights issues of image, meaning, and representation in the interplay of crime and crime control. Specifically, cultural criminology investigates the stylized frameworks and experiential dynamics of illicit subcultures; the symbolic criminalization of popular culture forms; and the mediated construction of crime and crime control issues. In addition, emerging areas of inquiry within cultural criminology include the development of situated media and situated audiences for crime; the media and culture of policing; the links between crime, crime control, and cultural space; and the collectively embodied emotions that shape the meaning of crime.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of “cultural criminology” denotes both specific perspectives and broader orientations that have emerged in criminology, sociology, and criminal justice over the past few years. Most specifically, “cultural criminology” represents a perspective developed by Ferrell & Sanders (1995), and likewise employed by Redhead (1995) and others (Kane 1998a), that interweaves particular intellectual threads to explore the convergence of cultural and criminal processes in contemporary social life. More broadly, the notion of cultural criminology references the increasing analytic attention that many criminologists now give to popular culture constructions, and especially mass media

constructions, of crime and crime control. It in turn highlights the emergence of this general area of media and cultural inquiry as a relatively distinct domain within criminology, as evidenced, for example, by the number of recently published collections undertaking explorations of media, culture, and crime (Anderson & Howard 1998, Bailey & Hale 1998, Barak 1994a, Ferrell & Sanders 1995, Ferrell & Websdale 1999, Kidd-Hewitt & Osborne 1995, Potter & Kappeler 1998). Most broadly, the existence of a concept such as cultural criminology underscores the steady seepage in recent years of cultural and media analysis into the traditional domains of criminological inquiry, such that criminological conferences and journals increasingly provide room and legitimacy for such analysis under any number of conventional headings, from juvenile delinquency and corporate crime to policing and domestic violence.

Given this range, across tightly focused theoretical statements and particular case studies to wider analytic and substantive (re)orientations, this essay incorporates the work of the growing number of scholars who consciously identify their work as cultural criminology but also includes the work of those who more generally explore the various intersections of cultural and criminal dynamics. Further, while it considers existing works that might now be retroactively gathered under the heading of cultural criminology, it focuses on recent scholarship, and especially on work now developing in and around the fields of criminology and criminal justice. Thus, cultural criminology at this point can be seen to denote less a definitive paradigm than an emergent array of perspectives linked by sensitivities to image, meaning, and representation in the study of crime and crime control. Within this broad and fluid framework, a number of theoretical, methodological, and substantive orientations can be seen to provide a degree of commonality as well.

FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY

Historical and Theoretical Frameworks

At its most basic, cultural criminology attempts to integrate the fields of criminology and cultural studies or, put differently, to import the insights of cultural studies into contemporary criminology. Given this, much scholarship in cultural criminology takes as its foundation perspectives that emerged out of the British/Birmingham School of cultural studies, and the British “new criminology” (Taylor et al 1973), of the 1970s. The work of Hebdige (1979, 1988), Hall & Jefferson (1976), Clarke (1976), McRobbie (1980), Willis (1977, 1990), and others has attuned cultural criminologists to the subtle, situated dynamics of deviant and criminal subcultures, and to the importance of symbolism and style in shaping subcultural meaning and identity. Similarly, the work of Cohen (1972/1980), Cohen & Young (1973), Hall et al (1978), and others has influenced contemporary understandings of the mass media’s role in constructing

the reality of crime and deviance, and in generating new forms of social and legal control. At times, contemporary scholarship in cultural criminology simply assumes this intellectual foundation or utilizes it only partially. At other times, though, cultural criminology's lineage in British cultural studies and the British new criminology is made explicit (Cohen 1996, Redhead 1995:33–46). In the introduction to a recent volume on crime and the media, for example, Kidd-Hewitt (1995) outlines five key works that set the agenda for subsequent research into crime, representation, and social control: Young (1971), Cohen (1972/1980), Cohen & Young (1973), Chibnall (1977), and Hall et al (1978).

As a hybrid orientation, though, cultural criminology has been built from more than a simple integration of 1970s British cultural studies into contemporary American criminology. Certainly, cultural criminologists continue to draw on the insights of cultural studies as a developing field and on current cultural studies explorations of identity, sexuality, and social space (During 1993, Grossberg et al 1992). Moreover, with its focus on representation, image, and style, cultural criminology incorporates not only the insights of cultural studies, but the intellectual reorientation afforded by postmodernism. In place of the modernist duality of form and content, and the modernist hierarchy that proposes that form must be stripped away to get at the meaningful core of content, cultural criminology operates from the postmodern proposition that form is content, that style is substance, that meaning thus resides in presentation and re-presentation. From this view, the study of crime necessitates not simply the examination of individual criminals and criminal events, not even the straightforward examination of media "coverage" of criminals and criminal events, but rather a journey into the spectacle and carnival of crime, a walk down an infinite hall of mirrors where images created and consumed by criminals, criminal subcultures, control agents, media institutions, and audiences bounce endlessly one off the other. Increasingly, then, cultural criminologists explore the "networks...of connections, contact, contiguity, feedback and generalized interface" (Baudrillard 1985:127; see Pfohl 1993) out of which crime and crime control are constructed, the intertextual "media loops" (Manning 1998) through which these constructions circulate, and the discursive interconnections that emerge between media institutions, crime control agents, and criminal subcultures (Kane 1998b). As part of this exploration, they in turn investigate criminal and deviant subcultures as sites of criminalization, criminal activity, and legal control, but also as "subaltern counterpublic[s]," as "parallel discursive arena[s] where members...invent and circulate counterdiscourses" and "expand discursive space" (Fraser 1995:291).

Grounded as it is in the frameworks of cultural studies and postmodernism, cultural criminology is at the same time firmly rooted in sociological perspectives. Perhaps because of its emergence out of sociological criminology,

though, cultural criminology has to this point drawn less on the sociology of culture than it has on various other sociological orientations more closely aligned, historically, with criminology. Central among these is the interactionist tradition in the sociology of deviance and criminology (Becker 1963, Pfuhl 1986). In examining the mediated networks and discursive connections noted above, cultural criminologists also trace the manifold interactions through which criminals, control agents, media producers, and others collectively construct the meaning of crime. In so doing, cultural criminologists attempt to elaborate on the “symbolic” in “symbolic interaction” by highlighting the popular prevalence of mediated crime imagery, the interpersonal negotiation of style within criminal and deviant subcultures, and the emergence of larger symbolic universes within which crime takes on political meaning. These understandings of crime and crime control as social and political constructions, and this endeavor to unravel the mediated processes through which these constructions occur, also build on more recent constructionist perspectives in sociology (Best 1995). Yet while cultural criminology certainly draws on constructionist sociology, it also contributes to constructionist orientations a sensitivity to mediated circuits of meaning other than those of the “mass” media, and it offers a spiraling postmodern sensibility that moves beyond dualisms of crime event and media coverage, factual truth and distortion, which at times frame constructionist analysis (Ferrell & Websdale 1999).

Finally, cultural criminology emerges in many ways out of critical traditions in sociology, criminology, and cultural studies, incorporating as it does a variety of critical perspectives on crime and crime control. Utilizing these perspectives, cultural criminologists attempt to unravel the politics of crime as played out through mediated anti-crime campaigns; through evocative cultural constructions of deviance, crime, and marginality; and through criminalized subcultures and their resistance to legal control. To the extent that it integrates interactionist, constructionist, and critical sociologies, cultural criminology thus undertakes to develop what Cohen (1988:68) has called “a structurally and politically informed version of labeling theory,” or what Melossi (1985) has similarly described as a “grounded labeling theory”—that is, an analysis that accounts for the complex circuitry of mediated interaction through which the meaning of crime and deviance is constructed and enforced. Put more simply, cultural criminology heeds Becker’s (1963:183, 199) classic injunction—that we “look at all the people involved in any episode of alleged deviance...all the parties to a situation, and their relationships”—and includes in this collective examination those cultural relationships, those webs of meaning and perception in which all parties are entangled.

In its mix of historical and theoretical foundations, cultural criminology can thus be seen to incorporate both more traditional sociological perspectives and more recently ascendant cultural studies and postmodern approaches. As such,

cultural criminology likewise embodies the creative tension in which sociology and cultural studies/postmodernism often exist (Becker & McCall 1990, Denzin 1992, Pfohl 1992), a tension which at its best produces attentiveness to structures of power and nuances of meaning, to fixed symbolic universes and emergent codes of marginality, to the mediated expansion of legal control and the stylized undermining of legal authority—and to the inevitable confounding of these very categories in everyday criminality.

Methodological Frameworks

Cultural criminology's melange of intellectual and disciplinary influences also surfaces in the methodologies that cultural criminologists employ. In exploring the interconnections of culture and crime, researchers utilize ethnographic models rooted in sociology, criminology, cultural studies, and anthropology; modifications of these models suggested by recent developments in feminist, postmodern, and existentialist thought; and a range of methods geared toward media and textual analysis. Further, as will be seen, researchers at times combine or overlay these methods in the course of particular projects. Nonetheless, there remains within the broad framework of cultural criminology a significant split between methodologies oriented toward ethnography and field work practice, and those oriented toward media and textual analysis.

Ethnographic research in cultural criminology reflects the long-standing attentiveness of cultural studies researchers to precise nuances of meaning within particular cultural milieus. Willis (1977:3), for example, notes that his use of ethnographic techniques was “dictated by the nature of my interest in ‘the cultural.’ These techniques are suited to record this level and have a sensitivity to meanings and values....” At the same time, ethnographic research in cultural criminology reflects the sociological and criminological tradition of deep inquiry into the situated dynamics of criminal and deviant subcultures (Adler 1985, Becker 1963, Humphreys 1975); especially influential here are Polsky's (1969) manifesto on the necessary politics and practice of field research among deviant and criminal populations, and Hagedorn's (1990) more recent echoing of these themes. In addition, the practice of field research within cultural criminology incorporates recent reconsiderations of field method among sociologists, criminologists, and anthropologists (Burawoy et al 1991, Ferrell & Hamm 1998, Van Maanen 1995a), and among feminists, postmodernists, and existentialists (Fonow & Cook 1991, Clough 1992, Denzin 1997, Sanders 1995, Adler & Adler 1987) inside and outside these disciplines. Together, these works suggest that field research operates as an inherently personal and political endeavor, profoundly engaging researchers with situations and subjects of study. These works thus call for reflexive reporting on the research process, for an “ethnography of ethnography” (Van Maanen

1995b), which accounts for the researcher's own role in the construction of meaning.

An extreme version of this ethnographic perspective within cultural criminology, yet one rooted in sociological paradigms, is the notion of "criminological *verstehen*" (Ferrell & Hamm 1998). Drawing on Weber's (1978:4-5) formulation of *verstehen* in terms of "interpretive understanding" and "sympathetic participation," and on later refinements within qualitative methodology (Adler & Adler 1987), the concept of criminological *verstehen* denotes a field researcher's subjective appreciation and empathic understanding of crime's situated meanings, symbolism, and emotions, in part through the sorts of directly participatory research that can foster a methodology of attentiveness. From this view, the researcher's own experiences and emotions emerge as windows into criminal events and criminal subcultures, and into the collective experiences and understandings of those involved in them. While certainly fraught with personal and professional danger, and limited by issues of individual and collective identity, this approach seeks to move deep inside the cultures of crime and crime control by dismantling dualistic epistemic hierarchies that position the researcher over and apart from research subjects, abstract analysis over and beyond situated knowledge, and sanitary intellect over and outside human experience and emotion. The concept of criminological *verstehen* thus includes the researcher, and the researcher's own situated experiences, in the collective construction of crime's reality.

Alternatively, other bodies of research in cultural criminology are based not in researchers' deep participatory immersion in criminal worlds, but in their scholarly reading of the various mediated texts that circulate images of crime and crime control. The range of substantive scholarship that has recently emerged is itself remarkable, exploring as it does both historical and contemporary texts, and investigating local and national newspaper coverage of crime and crime control (Brownstein 1995, Websdale & Alvarez 1998, Perrone & Chesney-Lind 1997, Howe 1997); filmic depictions of criminals, criminal violence, and criminal justice (Newman 1998, Cheatwood 1998, Niesel 1998); television portrayals of crime and criminals (Tunnell 1998, Fishman & Caverder 1998); images of crime in popular music (Tunnell 1995); comic books, crime, and juvenile delinquency (Nyberg 1998, Williams 1998); crime depictions in cyberspace (Greek 1996); and the broader presence of crime and crime control imagery throughout popular culture texts (Barak 1995, Marx 1995, Surette 1998, Kidd-Hewitt & Osborne 1995, Kooistra 1989). Many of these studies utilize conventional content analysis techniques to measure the degree of crime coverage, the distribution of source material, or the relative presence of crime imagery. Others incorporate less formal, descriptive accounts of prominent media constructions (Barak 1996), or illustrative case-by-case comparisons among media texts. Still others, often influenced by feminist

methodology and epistemology, develop imaginative readings, counter-readings, and “sociological deconstructions” (Pfohl & Gordon 1986, see Young 1996, Clough 1992) of crime texts and criminal justice formations.

While this divergence between ethnography and textual analysis does characterize much of the scholarship in cultural criminology, a number of scholars have in fact begun to produce works that usefully integrate these two methodological orientations. Chermak (1995, 1997, 1998), for example, has combined content analysis with ethnographic observation and interviewing to produce multilayered studies that explore not only the sources and symbolic characteristics of mediated crime accounts, but the organizational dynamics underlying them. Situating her work in “the overlapping fields of ethnography and cultural studies,” Kane (1998b:8, 1998a) has engaged in extensive, cross-cultural field research in order to analyze and place herself within, “contrasting public discourses of public health and law” around AIDS and HIV. By integrating ethnographic research among neo-Nazi skinheads with detailed analysis of popular music’s historical and thematic structures, Hamm (1993, 1995) has succeeded in explicating the broad symbolic underpinnings of the skinhead subculture and the specific place of musical idioms within it. Ferrell (1996) has likewise interwoven extended participant observation among urban graffiti writers with an analysis of media and criminal justice campaigns against them to reveal the ongoing, reflexive process by which each party to the conflict has reappropriated and reconstructed the meanings of the other.

These and other emerging works suggest that any sharp disjunction between ethnographic research and textual/media analysis in cultural criminology not only makes little sense methodologically, but to some degree actually undermines the very mandate of cultural criminology itself. At first glance, this methodological disjunction would seem to be justified by a parallel disjunction in subject matter, with ethnography best suited for exploring criminal subcultures and situations, and textual analysis best suited for investigating media constructions of crime and crime control. Yet, as contemporary research begins to show, these subjects are never as distinct as they first seem. The mass media and associated culture industries certainly produce an ongoing flood of crime images and crime texts; but media audiences, deviant and criminal subcultures, control agencies, and others subsequently appropriate these texts and images, and in part reconstruct their meaning as they utilize them in particular social situations. Similarly, the many subcultures concerned with crime and crime control—from gang members and graffiti writers to police associations and political interest groups—themselves produce complex circuits of communication, and within this circuitry all manner of images and symbols. These situated media in turn circulate within and between social worlds, generate competing symbolic references and public perceptions of crime, and regularly reappear as caricature within the realm of mass media entertainment and re-

porting on crime. Thus, as before, it is not criminal subcultures and situations that merit the attention of cultural criminologists, nor mediated constructions of crime, but rather the confounding and confluence of these categories in everyday life. And in this hall of mirrors, in this world of spiraling symbolism and fluid meaning, neither traditional ethnography nor textual analysis suffices—but instead some mix of method that can begin to situate the researcher inside the complex swirl of culture and crime.

In this sense ethnography and media/textual analysis, whether utilized individually or in combination, produce at their best interpretive case studies—case studies that expose the dynamic cultural situations out of which crime and crime control are constructed. In fact, Ferrell & Sanders (1995:304–8) argue that the subtlety and complexity of these dynamics are such that cultural criminology is best served by an accumulation of in-depth case studies, rather than by more shallow survey research or more abstract statistical analysis. Yet while this reliance on case study method (Geis 1991, Ragin & Becker 1992) may enhance the analytic sophistication of cultural criminology, it may also function to marginalize it from the criminological and sociological mainstream. Feagin et al (1991:270), for example, contend that case study sociology has now been overtaken, and to some degree delegitimated, by a form of “mainstream journal-article sociology” which “accents quantitative-statistical data interpreted in a hypothetico-deductive positivistic framework.”

The long sweep of scholarly history reminds us that, for cultural criminology as for other emergent perspectives, such marginalization may or may not develop, and may or may not endure. Should marginalization result from cultural criminology’s reliance on case study method and interpretive analysis, though, it would dovetail doubly with the larger project of cultural criminology. First, this sort of methodological marginalization would perhaps suit an approach developed out of cultural studies, postmodernism, critical and feminist theory, and other perspectives long suspect within certain quarters of mainstream social science. Second, as will be seen, the contemporary practice of cultural criminology embodies not only theoretical and methodological frameworks exterior to the positivist mainstream, but an intellectual politics foreign to traditional notions of objectivity and detachment as well.

CONTEMPORARY AREAS OF INQUIRY

Framed by these theoretical and methodological orientations, cultural criminological research and analysis have emerged in the past few years within a number of overlapping substantive areas. The first two of these can be characterized by an overly simple but perhaps informative dichotomy between “crime as culture” and “culture as crime.” The third broad area incorporates the variety of ways in which media dynamics construct the reality of crime and

crime control; the fourth explores the social politics of crime and culture and the intellectual politics of cultural criminology.

Crime as Culture

To speak of crime as culture is to acknowledge at a minimum that much of what we label criminal behavior is at the same time subcultural behavior, collectively organized around networks of symbol, ritual, and shared meaning. Put simply, it is to adopt the subculture as a basic unit of criminological analysis. While this general insight is hardly a new one, cultural criminology develops it in a number of directions. Bringing a postmodern sensibility to their understanding of deviant and criminal subcultures, cultural criminologists argue that such subcultures incorporate—indeed, are defined by—elaborate conventions of argot, appearance, aesthetics, and stylized presentation of self and thus operate as repositories of collective meaning and representation for their members. Within these subcultures as in other arenas of crime, form shapes content, image frames identity. Taken into a mediated world of increasingly dislocated communication and dispersed meaning, this insight further implies that deviant and criminal subcultures may now be exploding into universes of symbolic communication that in many ways transcend time and space. For computer hackers, graffiti writers, drug runners, and others, a mix of widespread spatial dislocation and precise normative organization implies subcultures defined less by face-to-face interaction than by shared, if second-hand, symbolic codes (Gelder & Thornton 1997:473–550).

Understandably, then, much research in this area of cultural criminology has focused on the dispersed dynamics of subcultural style. Following from Hebdige's (1979) classic exploration of "subculture: the meaning of style," cultural criminologists have investigated style as defining both the internal characteristics of deviant and criminal subcultures and external constructions of them. Miller (1995), for example, has documented the many ways in which gang symbolism and style exist as the medium of meaning for both street gang members and the probation officers who attempt to control them. Reading gang styles as emblematic of gang immersion and gang defiance, enforcing court orders prohibiting gang clothing, confiscating gang paraphernalia, and displaying their confiscated collections on their own office walls, the probation officers in Miller's study construct the meanings of gang style as surely as do the gang members themselves. Likewise, Ferrell (1996) has shown how contemporary hip hop graffiti exists essentially as a "crime of style" for graffiti writers, who operate and evaluate one another within complex stylistic and symbolic conventions, but also for media institutions and legal and political authorities who perceive graffiti as violating the "aesthetics of authority" essential to their ongoing control of urban environments. More broadly, Ferrell (in Ferrell & Sanders 1995:169–89) has explored style as the tissue connecting

cultural and criminal practices and has examined the ways in which subcultural style shapes not only aesthetic communities, but official and unofficial reactions to subcultural identity. Finally, Lyng & Bracey (1995) have documented the multiply ironic process by which the style of the outlaw biker subculture came first to signify class-based cultural resistance, next to elicit the sorts of media reactions and legal controls that in fact amplified and confirmed its meaning, and finally to be appropriated and commodified in such a way as to void its political potential. Significantly, these and other studies (Cosgrove 1984) echo and confirm the integrative methodological framework outlined above by demonstrating that the importance of style resides not within the dynamics of criminal subcultures, nor in media and political constructions of its meaning, but in the contested interplay of the two.

If subcultures of crime and deviance are defined by their aesthetic and symbolic organization, cultural criminology has also begun to show that they are defined by intensities of collective experience and emotion as well. Building on Katz's (1988) wide-ranging exploration of the sensually seductive "foreground" of criminality, cultural criminologists like Lyng (1990, 1998) and Ferrell (1996) have utilized *verstehen*-oriented methodologies to document the experiences of "edgework" and "the adrenalin rush"—immediate, incandescent integrations of risk, danger, and skill—that shape participation and membership in deviant and criminal subcultures. Discovered across a range of illicit subcultures (Presdee 1994, O'Malley & Mugford 1994, Tunnell 1992: 45, Wright & Decker 1994:117), these intense and often ritualized moments of pleasure and excitement define the experience of subcultural membership and, by members' own accounts, seduce them into continued subcultural participation. Significantly for a sociology of these subcultural practices, research (Lyng & Snow 1986) shows that experiences of edgework and adrenalin exist as collectively constructed endeavors, encased in shared vocabularies of motive and meaning (Mills 1940, Cressey 1954). Thus, while these experiences certainly suggest a sociology of the body and the emotions, and further *verstehen*-oriented explorations of deviant and criminal subcultures as "affectually determined" (Weber 1978:9) domains, they also reveal the ways in which collective intensities of experience, like collective conventions of style, construct shared subcultural meaning.

Culture as Crime

The notion of "culture as crime" denotes the reconstruction of cultural enterprise as criminal endeavor—through, for example, the public labeling of popular culture products as criminogenic, or the criminalization of cultural producers through media or legal channels. In contemporary society, such reconstructions pervade popular culture and transcend traditional "high" and "low" cultural boundaries. Art photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Jock

Sturges, for example, have faced highly orchestrated campaigns accusing them of producing obscene or pornographic images; in addition, an art center exhibiting Mapplethorpe's photographs was indicted on charges of "pandering obscenity," and Sturges's studio was raided by local police and the FBI (Dubin 1992). Punk and heavy metal bands, and associated record companies, distributors, and retail outlets, have encountered obscenity rulings, civil and criminal suits, high-profile police raids, and police interference with concerts. Performers, producers, distributors, and retailers of rap and "gangsta rap" music have likewise faced arrest and conviction on obscenity charges, legal confiscation of albums, highly publicized protests, boycotts, hearings organized by political figures and police officials, and ongoing media campaigns and legal proceedings accusing them of promoting—indeed, directly causing—crime and delinquency (Hamm & Ferrell 1994). More broadly, a variety of television programs, films, and cartoons have been targeted by public campaigns alleging that they incite delinquency, spin off "copy-cat" crimes, and otherwise serve as criminogenic social forces (Ferrell 1998, Nyberg 1998).

These many cases certainly fall within the purview of cultural criminology because the targets of criminalization—photographers, musicians, television writers, and their products—are "cultural" in nature, but equally so because their criminalization itself unfolds as a cultural process. When contemporary culture personas and performances are criminalized, they are primarily criminalized through the mass media, through their presentation and re-presentation as criminal in the realm of sound bites, shock images, news conferences, and newspaper headlines. This mediated spiral, in which media-produced popular culture forms and figures are in turn criminalized by means of the media, leads once again into a complex hall of mirrors. It generates not only images, but images of images—that is, attempts by lawyers, police officials, religious leaders, media workers, and others to craft criminalized images of those images previously crafted by artists, musicians, and film makers. Thus, the criminalization of popular culture is itself a popular, and cultural, enterprise, standing in opposition to popular culture less than participating in it, and helping to construct the very meanings and effects to which it allegedly responds. Given this, cultural criminologists have begun to widen the notion of "criminalization" to include more than the simple creation and application of criminal law. Increasingly, they investigate the larger process of "cultural criminalization" (Ferrell 1998:80–82), the mediated reconstruction of meaning and perception around issues of culture and crime. In some cases, this cultural criminalization stands as an end in itself, successfully dehumanizing or delegitimizing those targeted, though no formal legal charges are brought against them. In other cases, cultural criminalization helps construct a perceptual context in which direct criminal charges can more easily follow. In either scenario, though, media dynamics drive and define the criminalization of popular culture.

The mediated context of criminalization is a political one as well. The contemporary criminalization of popular culture has emerged as part of larger “culture wars” (Bolton 1992) waged by political conservatives and cultural reactionaries. Controversies over the criminal or criminogenic characteristics of art photographers and rap musicians have resulted less from spontaneous public concern than from the sorts of well-funded and politically sophisticated campaigns that have similarly targeted the National Endowment for the Arts and its support of feminist/gay/lesbian performance artists and film festivals. In this light it is less than surprising that contemporary cultural criminalization is aimed time and again at marginal(ized) subcultures—radical punk musicians, politically militant black rap groups, lesbian and gay visual and performance artists—whose stylized celebration of and confrontation with their marginality threaten particular patterns of moral and legal control. Cultural criminalization in this sense exposes yet another set of linkages between sub-cultural styles and symbols and mediated constructions and reconstructions of these as criminal or criminogenic. In addition, as a process conducted largely in the public realm, cultural criminalization contributes to popular perceptions and panics, and thus to the further marginalization of those who are its focus. If successful, it constructs a degree of social discomfort that reflects off the face of popular culture and into the practice of everyday life.

Media Constructions of Crime and Crime Control

The mediated criminalization of popular culture exists, of course, as but one of many media processes that construct the meanings of crime and crime control. As noted in earlier discussions of textual methodologies, cultural criminology incorporates a wealth of research on mediated characterizations of crime and crime control, ranging across historical and contemporary texts and investigating images generated in newspaper reporting, popular film, television news and entertainment programming, popular music, comic books, and the cyberspaces of the Internet. Further, cultural criminologists have begun to explore the complex institutional interconnections between the criminal justice system and the mass media. Researchers like Chermak (1995, 1997, 1998) and Sanders & Lyon (1995) have documented not only the mass media’s heavy reliance on criminal justice sources for imagery and information on crime, but more importantly, the reciprocal relationship that undergirds this reliance. Working within organizational imperatives of efficiency and routinization, media institutions regularly rely on data selectively provided by policing and court agencies. In so doing, they highlight for the public issues chosen by criminal justice institutions and framed by criminal justice imperatives, and they in turn contribute to the political agendas of the criminal justice system and to the generation of public support for these agendas. In a relatively nonconspiratorial but

nonetheless powerful fashion, media and criminal justice organizations thus coordinate their day-to-day operations and cooperate in constructing circumscribed understandings of crime and crime control.

A large body of research in cultural criminology examines the nature of these understandings and the public dynamics of their production. Like cultural criminology generally, much of the research here (Adler & Adler 1994, Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994, Hollywood 1997, Jenkins 1992, Sparks 1995, Thornton 1994) builds on the classic analytic models of cultural studies and interactionist sociology, as embodied in concepts such as moral entrepreneurship and moral enterprise in the creation of crime and deviance (Becker 1963), and the invention of folk devils as a means of generating moral panic (Cohen 1972/1980) around issues of crime and deviance. Exploring the epistemic frameworks surrounding everyday understandings of crime controversies, this research (Fishman 1978, Best 1995, Acland 1995, Reinerman 1994, Reinerman & Duskin 1992, Websdale 1996) problematizes and unpacks taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the prevalence of criminality and the particular characteristics of criminals, and the research traces these assumptions to the interrelated workings of interest groups, media institutions, and criminal justice organizations.

Emerging scholarship in cultural criminology also offers useful reconceptualizations and refinements of these analytic models. McRobbie & Thornton (1995), for example, argue that the essential concepts of "moral panic" and "folk devils" must be reconsidered in multi-mediated societies; with the proliferation of media channels and the saturation of media markets, moral panics have become both dangerous endeavors and marketable commodities, and folk devils now find themselves both stigmatized and lionized in mainstream media and alternative media alike. Similarly, Jenkins's (1999) recent work has begun to refine understandings of crime and justice issues as social and cultural constructions. Building on his earlier, meticulous deconstructions of drug panics, serial homicide scares, and other constructed crime controversies, Jenkins (1994a,b) argues that attention must be paid to the media and political dynamics underlying "unconstructed" crime as well. Jenkins explores the failure to frame activities such as anti-abortion violence as criminal terrorism, situates this failure within active media and political processes, and thus questions the meaning of that for which no criminal meaning is provided.

Through all of this, cultural criminologists further emphasize that in the process of constructing crime and crime control as social concerns and political controversies, the media also construct them as entertainment. Revisiting the classic cultural studies/new criminology notion of "policing the crisis" (Hall et al 1978), Sparks (1995; see 1992), for example, characterizes the production and perception of crime and policing imagery in television crime dramas as a process of "entertaining the crisis." Intertwined with mediated moral

panic over crime and crime waves, amplified fear of street crime and stranger violence, and politically popular concern for the harm done to crime victims, then, is the pleasure found in consuming mediated crime imagery and crime drama. To the extent that the mass media constructs crime as entertainment, we are thus offered not only selective images and agendas, but the ironic mechanism for amusing ourselves to death (Postman 1986) by way of our own collective pain, misery, and fear. Given this, contemporary media scholarship in cultural criminology focuses as much on popular film, popular music, and television entertainment programming as on the mediated manufacture of news and information, and it investigates the collapsing boundaries between such categories. Recent work in this area targets especially the popularity of "reality" crime programs (Fishman & Cavender 1998). With their mix of street footage, theatrical staging, and patrol-car sermonizing, reality crime programs such as "C.O.P.S.," "L.A.P.D.," and "True Stories of the Highway Patrol" generate conventional, though at times contradictory, images of crime and policing. Along with talk shows devoted largely to crime and deviance topics, they in turn spin off secondary merchandising schemes, legal suits over videotaped police chases and televised invasions of privacy, and criminal activities allegedly induced by the programs themselves. Such dynamics demonstrate the entangled reality of crime, crime news, and crime entertainment, and suggest that as mediated crime constructions come to be defined as real, "they are real in their consequences" (Thomas 1966:301).

The Politics of Culture, Crime, and Cultural Criminology

Clearly, a common thread connects the many domains into which cultural criminology inquires: the presence of power relations, and the emergence of social control, at the intersections of culture and crime. The stylistic practices and symbolic codes of illicit subcultures are made the object of legal surveillance and control or, alternatively, are appropriated, commodified, and sanitized within a vast machinery of consumption. Sophisticated media and criminal justice "culture wars" are launched against alternative forms of art, music, and entertainment, thereby criminalizing the personalities and performances involved, marginalizing them from idealized notions of decency and community and, at the extreme, silencing the political critiques they present. Ongoing media constructions of crime and crime control emerge out of an alliance of convenience between media institutions and criminal justice agencies, serve to promote and legitimate broader political agendas regarding crime control, and in turn function to both trivialize and dramatize the meaning of crime. Increasingly, then, it is television crime shows and big budget detective movies, nightly newscasts and morning newspaper headlines, recurrent campaigns against the real and imagined crimes of the disenfranchised that constitute

Foucault's (in Cohen 1979:339) "hundreds of tiny theatres of punishment"—theatres in which young people, ethnic minorities, lesbians and gays, and others play villains deserving of penalty and public outrage.

At the same time, cultural criminologists emphasize and explore the various forms that resistance to this complex web of social control may take. As Sparks (1992, 1995) and others argue, the audiences for media constructions of crime are diverse in both their composition and their readings of these constructions; they recontextualize, remake, and even reverse mass media meanings as they incorporate them into their daily lives and interactions. Varieties of resistance also emerge among those groups more specifically targeted within the practice of mediated control. Artists and musicians caught up in contemporary "culture wars" have refused governmental awards, resigned high-profile positions, won legal judgments, organized alternative media outlets and performances, and otherwise produced public counterattacks (Ferrell 1998). Within other marginalized subcultures, personal and group style certainly exists as stigmata, inviting outside surveillance and control, but at the same time is valued as a badge of honor and resistance made all the more meaningful by its enduring defiance of outside authority (Hebdige 1988). Likewise, as Lyng (1990, 1998) and Ferrell (1996) emphasize, those immersed in moments of illicit edgework and adrenalin construct resistance doubly. First, by combining in such moments high levels of risk with precise skills and practiced artistry, those involved invent an identity, a sense of crafted self, that resists the usual degradations of subordinate status and deskilled, alienated labor. Second, as these moments become more dangerous because targeted by campaigns of criminalization and enforcement, participants in them find an enhancement and amplification of the edgy excitement they provide, and in so doing transform political pressure into personal and collective pleasure. In investigating the intersections of culture and crime for power relations and emerging forms of social control, then, cultural criminologists carry on the tradition of cultural studies (Hall & Jefferson 1976) by examining the many forms of resistance that emerge there as well.

Moreover, cultural criminology itself operates as a sort of intellectual resistance, as a diverse counter-reading and counter-discourse on, and critical "intervention" (Pfohl & Gordon 1986:94) into, conventional constructions of crime. In deconstructing moments of mediated panic over crime, cultural criminologists work to expose the political processes behind seemingly spontaneous social concerns and to dismantle the recurring and often essentialist metaphors of disease, invasion, and decay on which crime panics are built (Brownstein 1995, 1996, Reinerman 1994, Reinerman & Duskin 1992, Murji 1999). Beyond this, Barak (1988, 1994a) argues for an activist "newsmaking criminology" in which criminologists integrate themselves into the ongoing mediated construction of crime, develop as part of their role in this process

alternative images and understandings of crime issues, and in so doing produce what constitutive criminologists (Henry & Milovanovic 1991, Barak 1995) call a “replacement discourse” regarding crime and crime control. Much of cultural criminology’s ethnographic work in subcultural domains functions similarly, as a critical move away from the “official definitions of reality” (Hagedorn 1990:244) produced by the media and the criminal justice system and reproduced by a “courthouse criminology” (see Polsky 1969) that relies on these sources. By attentively documenting the lived realities of groups whom conventional crime constructions have marginalized, and in turn documenting the situated politics of this marginalization process, cultural criminologists attempt to deconstruct the official demonization of various “outsiders” (Becker 1963)—from rural domestic violence victims (Websdale 1998) to urban graffiti writers (Ferrell 1996, Sanchez-Tranquilino 1995), gay hustlers (Pettitway 1996), and homeless heroin addicts (Bourgois et al 1997)—and to produce alternative understandings of them. Approaching this task from the other direction, Hamm (1993) and others likewise venture inside the worlds of particularly violent criminals to document dangerous nuances of meaning and style often invisible in official reporting on such groups. In its politics as in its theory and method, then, cultural criminology integrates subcultural ethnography with media and institutional analysis to produce an alternative image of crime.

TRAJECTORIES OF CULTURAL CRIMINOLOGY

In describing an emergent orientation like cultural criminology, it is perhaps appropriate to close with a brief consideration of its unfinished edges. The following short discussions are therefore meant to be neither systematic nor exhaustive; they simply suggest some of what is emerging, and what might productively emerge, as cultural criminology continues to develop.

Situated Media, Situated Audiences

The dynamic integration of subcultural crime constructions and media crime constructions has surfaced time and again in this essay as one of cultural criminology’s essential insights. This insight further implies that the everyday notion of “media” must be expanded to include those media that take shape within and among the various subcultures of crime, deviance, and crime control. As noted in the above methodological discussions, various illicit subcultures certainly come into regular contact with the mass media, but in so doing appropriate and reinvent mass media channels, products, and meanings. Further, illicit subcultures regularly invent their own media of communication; as McRobbie & Thornton (1995:559) point out, even the interests of “folk devils” are increasingly “defended by their own niche and micro-media.” Thus, alter-

native and marginalized youth subcultures self-produce a wealth of zines (alternative magazines) and websites; street gang members construct elaborate edifices of communication out of particular clothing styles, colors, and hand signs; and graffiti writers develop a continent-wide network of freight train graffiti that mirrors existing hobo train graffiti in its ability to link distant sub-cultural members within a shared symbolic community. As also suggested in above discussions, multiple, fluid audiences likewise witness efflorescences of crime and crime control in their everyday existence, consume a multitude of crime images packaged as news and entertainment, and in turn remake the meaning of these encounters within the symbolic interaction of their own lives. Investigating the linkages between “media” and crime, then, means investigating the many situations in which these linkages emerge, and moreover the situated place of media, audience, and meaning within criminal worlds (see Vaughan 1998). Ultimately, perhaps, this investigation suggests blurring the analytic boundary between producer and audience—recognizing, in other words, that a variety of groups both produce and consume contested images of crime—and moving ahead to explore the many microcircuits of meaning that collectively construct the reality of crime.

The Media and Culture of Policing

Increasingly, the production and consumption of mediated meaning frames not only the reality of crime, but of crime control as well. Contemporary policing can in fact hardly be understood apart from its interpenetration with media at all levels. As “reality” crime and policing television programs shape public perceptions of policing, serve as controversial tools of officer recruitment and suspect apprehension, and engender legal suits over their effects on street-level policing, citizens shoot video footage of police conduct and misconduct—some of which finds its way, full-circle, onto news and “reality” programs. Meanwhile, within the police subculture itself, surveillance cameras and on-board patrol car cameras capture the practices of police officers and citizens alike and, as Websdale (1999) documents, police crime files themselves take shape as “situated media substrates” which, like surveillance and patrol car footage, regularly become building blocks for subsequent mass media images of policing. The policing of a postmodern world emerges as a complex set of visual and semiotic practices, an expanding spiral of mediated social control (Manning 1998, 1999a,b).

From the view of cultural criminology, policing must in turn be understood as a set of practices situated, like criminal practices, within subcultural conventions of meaning, symbolism, and style. In this regard, Kraska & Kappeler (1995:85) integrate perspectives from police studies, feminist literature, and critical theory to explore the subcultural ideologies, situated dynamics, and broader “cultural and structural context” within which police deviance and po-

lice sexual violence against women develop. Perhaps most interesting here, in light of the reflexive methodologies discussed above, is Kraska's (1998) grounded investigation of police paramilitary units. Immersing himself and his emotions in a situation of police paramilitary violence, Kraska details the stylized subcultural status afforded by particular forms of weaponry and clothing, and he documents the deep-seated ideological and affective states that define the collective meaning of such situations. With crime control as with crime, subcultural and media dynamics construct experience and perception.

Crime and Cultural Space

Many of the everyday situations in which crime and policing are played out, and in fact many of the most visible contemporary controversies surrounding crime and policing issues, involve the contestation of cultural space. Incorporating perspectives from cultural studies, cultural geography, and postmodern geography (Merrifield & Swyngedouw 1997, Scott & Soja 1996, Davis 1992), the notion of cultural space references the process by which meaning is constructed and contested in public domains (Ferrell 1997). This process intertwines with a variety of crime and crime control situations. Homeless populations declare by their public presence the scandal of inequality, and they are in turn hounded and herded by a host of loitering, vagrancy, trespass, public lodging, and public nuisance statutes. "Gutter punks" invest downtown street corners with disheveled style, "skate punks" and skateboarders convert walkways and parking garages into playgrounds, Latino/a street "cruisers" create mobile subcultures out of dropped frames and polished chrome—and face in response aggressive enforcement of laws regarding trespass, curfew, public sleeping, and even car stereo volume. Street gangs carve out collective cultural space from shared styles and public rituals; criminal justice officials prohibit and confiscate stylized clothing, enforce prohibitions against public gatherings by "known" gang members, and orchestrate public gang "round-ups." Graffiti writers remake the visual landscapes and symbolic codes of public life, but they do so in the face of increasing criminal sanctions, high-tech surveillance systems, and nationally coordinated legal campaigns designed to remove them and their markings from public life.

As with the mediated campaigns of cultural criminalization discussed above, these conflicts over crime and cultural space regularly emerge around the marginalized subcultures of young people, ethnic minorities, and other groups, and thus they raise essential issues of identity and authenticity (Sanchez-Tranquilino 1995). Such conflicts in turn incorporate a complex criminalization of these subcultures as part of a systematic effort to erase their self-constructed public images, to substitute in their place symbols of homogeneity and consensus, and thereby to restore and expand the "aesthetics of

authority” noted in above discussions. Ultimately, these disparate conflicts over crime and cultural space reveal the common thread of contested public meaning, and something of the work of control in the age of cultural reproduction.

Bodies, Emotions, and Cultural Criminology

Perhaps the most critical of situations, the most intimate of cultural spaces in which crime and crime control intersect are those in and around the physical and emotional self (Pfohl 1990). Throughout this essay such situations have been seen: the development of subcultural style as marker of identity and locus of criminalization; the fleeting experience of edgework and adrenalin rushes, heightened by risk of legal apprehension; the utilization of researchers’ own experiences and emotions in the study of crime and policing. These situations suggest that other moments merit the attention of cultural criminology as well, from gang girls’ construction of identity through hair, makeup, and discourse (Mendoza-Denton 1996) and phone fantasy workers’ invocation of sexuality and emotion (Mattley 1998), to the contested media and body politics of AIDS (Kane 1998b, Watney 1987, Young 1996:175-206). Together, these and other situations in turn suggest a criminology of the skin (see Kushner 1994)—a criminology that can account for crime and crime control in terms of pleasure, fear, and excitement and that can confront the deformities of sexuality and power, control and resistance that emerge in these inside spaces. They also demand the ongoing refinement of the reflexive, *verstehen*-oriented methodologies and epistemologies described above—of ways of investigating and knowing that are at the same time embodied and affective (Scheper-Hughes 1994), closer to the intimate meaning of crime and yet never close enough.

CONCLUSIONS

As an emerging perspective within criminology, sociology, and criminal justice, cultural criminology draws from a wide range of intellectual orientations. Revisiting and perhaps reinventing existing paradigms in cultural studies, the “new” criminology, interactionist sociology, and critical theory; integrating insights from postmodern, feminist, and constructionist thought; and incorporating aspects of newsmaking, constitutive, and other evolving criminologies, cultural criminology seek less to synthesize or subsume these various perspectives than to engage them in a critical, multifaceted exploration of culture and crime. Linking these diverse intellectual dimensions, and their attendant methodologies of ethnography and media/textual analysis, is cultural criminology’s overarching concern with the meaning of crime and crime control. Some three decades ago, Cohen (1988:68, 1971:19) wrote of “placing on the agenda” of a

culturally informed criminology issues of “subjective meaning,” and of deviance and crime as “meaningful action.” Cultural criminology embraces and expands this agenda by exploring the complex construction, attribution, and appropriation of meaning that occurs within and between media and political formations, illicit subcultures, and audiences around matters of crime and crime control. In so doing, cultural criminology likewise highlights the inevitability of the image. Inside the stylized rhythms of a criminal subculture, reading a newspaper crime report or perusing a police file, caught between the panic and pleasure of crime, “there is no escape from the politics of representation” (Hall 1993:111).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Neil Websdale for his generous contributions to this essay; Phoebe Stambaugh and Brian Smith for assistance with source material; and two anonymous *Annual Review of Sociology* reviewers for their insightful comments.

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