

29

Cultural criminology

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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.

[...]

CONTEMPORARY AREAS OF INQUIRY

[...] 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 sub-culture 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 sub-cultural 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 subcultural 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 cyber-spaces 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 (Pettway 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, alternative 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 subcultural 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 police 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). [...]

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Part Four

Criminal justice and crime prevention

INTRODUCTION

In 1974 Robert Martinson declared that 'with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effect on recidivism' ('What works? Questions and answers about penal reform' [*The Public Interest*, no. 35, p. 25]). This 'nothing works' statement heralded the final death knell for those who believed that modern post-war Western societies had the capacity to rehabilitate and/or treat offenders and reduce recidivism. As the readings in this section indicate, it also sparked off a wide-ranging, high profile post-rehabilitation debate about whether and how crime could be controlled/prevented effectively.

James Q. Wilson argues that we need to forget theorizing about the causes of crime and concentrate on the realities and pragmatics of crime and criminality. He stresses that a significant and meaningful reduction can be achieved by recognizing that crime is a quasi-economic endeavour whose occurrence can be made to vary with the costs imposed upon it. By imposing prison sentences swiftly and without exception, society can remove from circulation the most frequently convicted and most active criminals for a significant portion of their criminal careers. The knowledge of swift processing and near certain incarceration, he argues, could, in addition to incapacitating convicted criminals, also intimidate potential offenders. Thus society could, if it chose to, control crime to some degree by recognizing that punishment is a worthy objective of the criminal justice system and by raising the stakes considerably. In the course of the 1990s this perspective coined the populist soundbite 'prison works'.

Andrew von Hirsch proposes what he and the members of the Committee for the Study of Incarceration view as a politically feasible alternative to the populist 'lock 'em up' approach of Wilson. 'Just and commensurate deserts' stressed that punishment rather than rehabilitation or treatment is important because it implies blame and the severity of the punishment symbolizes the degree of blame. Once we have acknowledged that certain forms of action and behaviour are wrong and ought to be punished, we can set reasonable limits on the extent of the punishment and retribution. The severity of the punishment should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence. Stringent punishments should be limited to crimes that inflict serious harm and indicate considerable culpability on the part of the offender. As the magnitude of the crime