The Meaning of Cultural Criminology: A Theoretical and Methodological Lineage
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Abstract

The field of cultural criminology has faced much criticism concerning the perspective's perceived theoretical ambiguity and inadequate definition of its core concept: culture (O'Brien, 2005; Webber, 2007). One critique goes so far as to conclude by asking, "One has to wonder, what is cultural criminology?" (Spencer, 2010, p. 21) In the current paper, I endeavor to answer this question using the theoretical texts of cultural criminology. Whereas critics use cultural criminologists' "own words" to evidence a lack of clarity (Farrell, 2010, p. 60), I use such words to clarify the logic, scope, and meaning of cultural criminology. In so doing, I explore the role of cultural criminology as a subfield of academic criminology; examine prior conceptualizations of 'culture' and their relation to that of cultural criminology, and trace the main methodological and theoretical antecedents from which the field emerged.

The Meaning of Cultural Criminology:
A Theoretical and Methodological Lineage

The field of cultural criminology has "borne many slings and arrows, more so than almost any other of the critical criminologies in the last few years" (Muzzatti, 2006, p. 74). Many such slings and arrows are aimed at the perspective's perceived theoretical ambiguity and inadequate definition of its core concept: culture (O'Brien, 2005; Webber, 2007; Farrell, 2010; Spencer, 2010). It is characterized as "a combination of existing [theoretical] elements...with rather confused consequences," one that "lack[s] clear aims" (Farrell, 2010, pp. 58-60). Cultural criminologists—in their "rush to be the next big approach in critical criminology"—are charged with "theoretical gerrymandering" and failing "to adequately adhere to the theoretical perspectives they rely on" (Spencer, 2010, pp. 20-21). Spencer concludes his critique of the perspective by asking: "One has to wonder, what is cultural criminology?" (2010, p. 21) Herein, I endeavor to answer this question utilizing the theoretical texts of cultural criminology. Whereas critics use cultural criminologists' "own words" to evidence a lack of clarity (Farrell, 2010, p. 60), I use such words to clarify the logic, scope, and meaning of cultural criminology. In so doing, I explore the role of cultural criminology in relation to the larger discipline, examine prior conceptualizations of 'culture' in criminology and their relation to that of cultural criminology, and trace the main theoretical and methodological lineages from which the perspective emerged.

Since its inception, cultural criminology has remained in flux. Jeff Ferrell, who coined the term, has framed it as "less a definitive paradigm than an emergent array of perspectives linked by sensitivities to image, meaning, and representation in the study of crime and control" (1999, p. 396). There is a common thread, though, that weaves through this emergent array of perspectives. As Ferrell recently acknowledged (2013), this defining feature shared by the perspectives of cultural criminology is an intellectual and political focus on the human construction of meaning. In this context, crime and crime control are conceptualized as cultural products, i.e., creative human constructs, which are "read in terms of the meanings they carry" (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 259). If we are to understand cultural criminology on its own terms (i.e. as a creative human construct), then we must ask: What meanings does cultural criminology carry into academic criminology? In order to address this question, it is first necessary to understand how cultural criminology sees itself, how it defines its own role in relation to the larger discipline.

The Role of Cultural Criminology

Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward and Jock Young conceptualize the subfield as a "sort of janitorial service" for academic criminology (2008, p. 158). This conceptualization and terminology originates from Mark Hamm's (1998, p. 111) description of his research on "social discards" (e.g., skinheads, terrorists, etc.). Ferrell and co-authors extend the custodial metaphor well beyond the study of "discarded" groups and deviant subcultures, though. Just as Ferrell might be literally digging through your dumpster if you live in certain parts of Texas (Ferrell, 2006; Wiley, 2011), he and his colleagues are combing through anything and everything that orthodox criminology throws out.

In addition to conducting research on subjects and groups "other criminologists don't much care to encounter" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 158), cultural criminology also studies cultural artifacts discarded by dominant, "high" culture and/or defined as undeserving of serious scholarly analysis (e.g., graffiti walls, public memorials, state penitentiary graveyards, comic books and television programs, etc.). Cultural criminology not only acknowledges these excluded cultural artifacts as meaningful, it attempts to position them "at the heart of criminological inquiry" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 158). Choosing what 'the mainstream' has discarded or ignored is more than simple sleight of hand or a form reified resistance, opposition for its own sake. Cultural criminology "seeks to highlight the interaction between constructions upwards and constructions downwards" (Hayward & Young,

2004, p. 259), and choosing to study that which has been discarded is an attempt to locate this interaction between containment and resistance.

In addition to salvaging outcast cultural artifacts and engaging deviant subcultures discarded by mainstream society, cultural criminology also makes use of the methodological approaches and techniques often thrown out by mainstream academic criminology: ethnography, participant observation, and discourse analysis. Overall, the subfield of cultural criminology not only serves as a type of janitorial service, making use of what others define as rubbish. In practice as well as aesthetic appearance, it serves as a "trashy counterpoint" to the "neat execution" and "clean results" of orthodox criminology (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 159). Whereas this "sanitary" orthodoxy, this "aesthetic of academic precision," is characterized by "finely ruled tables...precisely preset questions and answers, mailed to predetermined lists of respondents" toward the attainment of "certainty and assurance," its trashy counterpoint is more interested in the "dirty ambiguities of daily transgression, the dangerous details of criminal acts" and "tends to reproduce in its results the messy uncertainty of people and their problems" (Ferrell et al., 2008).

In this way, the role of cultural criminology as a subfield is similar to the role of radical art movements in early 20th century artistic landscape. It follows in the footsteps of earlier critical, culturally based criminologies that stood against orthodoxy in the 1960s, which Stan Cohen compares to "the products of radical art movements such as Dada and surrealism, anti-art created by artists" (1988, p. 11). What these movements have in common is the will to challenge that which is taken most seriously within their respective fields. Relating this Dadaist critique to orthodox criminology, Ferrell and coauthors (2008, p. 161) state, "the more seriously a criminological method takes itself—the further it positions itself above other approaches through invocations of 'objectivity' or 'science'—the more that method is suspect of impeding understanding rather than advancing it." Thus, it is the core methods of the discipline, those established as given, that must be critiqued, challenged, even made fun of, most aggressively (see Ferrell 1996, pp. 191-192).

Given this healthy disrespect for the established wisdom of the discipline, the role of cultural criminology in relation to the larger field of criminology can also be conceptualized as a deviant subculture in itself, a pocket of resistance to the dominant culture of academic criminology. Indeed, many of the logics expressed in cultural criminology in regard to deviant subcultures are also expressed as characteristics of the subfield itself. Some of its earliest influences (Cohen, 1955) conceptualized subcultural behaviors as attempts to solve collectively experienced problems or reconcile contradictions within a larger culture. A defining characteristic of cultural criminology is that it views the "larger culture" of orthodox criminology as in crisis, a contradiction in need of reconciliation; the first line of cultural criminology's "manifesto for the twenty-first century" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 204) is "Mainstream criminology is an abject failure." They speak of taking "pleasure in moments of subversive resistance" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 16) and of using methods and approaches they describe as "hectic, irreverent, transgressive, and, above all, fun" (Young, 2002). When this subversive, transgressive academic approach is examined by the light of its own conceptualization of "transgression as a source of meaning" (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 261), the subfield of cultural criminology appears as a subcultural site of resistance. From this space, newly formed constructions of meaning are negotiated and aimed upwards toward academia and agencies of control.

With the addition of this last conceptualization of cultural criminology as a deviant subculture that transgresses established norms of the culture of criminology, its function comes to form. As a subfield of criminology, cultural criminology serves the role of gadfly. Attached to the horse of academic criminology, it seeks "to reinvigorate the study of crime" (Ferrell et al., 2008). As Socrates' horse of Athens had grown "sluggish because of its size and needed to be awakened by some sort of gadfly" (Plato, 2002, p. 46), it sees mainstream criminology as in a state of "stasis and decay" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 161). Just as the gadfly's role was to "awaken, persuade, and reproach" (p. 46), cultural criminology's role is to "undermine those who claim authoritative knowledge of crime...[and] leverage up the very intellectual foundations of their work" (Ferrell et al., 2008, pp. 196-198). Most essentially, as Socrates saw his role as the gadfly as a service and responsibility to his

city, cultural criminology acknowledges the role we all play in the construction of the everyday reality of injustice and define it as their "obligation" to build a criminology that can "define social life in other, more progressive terms" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 198).

Conceptualizing Culture

'Culture' has been conceptualized throughout the history of social science in myriad conflicting iterations. It is thus helpful to briefly touch upon some meaningful patterns in the logic of these prior conceptualizations to better understand what 'culture' means to cultural criminology. In *Culture as Praxis*, Zygmunt Bauman (1999, pp. xvi-xvii) traces two distinct, diverging patterns of discourse in regard to the concept of culture. The first discourse, of which cultural criminology is an extension, conceptualizes culture as a kind of creative activity as well as the site of that creativity. Thus, it refers to culture as both a dynamic process as well as the symbolic space in which that process is carried out. It is the site of "invention, self-critique and self-transcendence" in which one can "step beyond closely-guarded boundaries." It is a space defined by the subversive freedom possible within it. Implicit within this conceptualization is the presence of multiple, possibly overlapping, cultures and subcultures. It aligns with the conceptualization of culture espoused within Albert Cohen's subcultural theory (1955), which marks this symbolic space as a site of resistance for "outsiders"—those groups of individuals viewed in a pejorative light by dominant cultural standards. In this formulation, a "dominant" cultural standard refers to those most widespread, and the transgression of prescribed boundaries is viewed as meaningful, creative action.

The second discourse, on the other hand, stands opposed to the first in a number of ways. Instead of conceptualizing cultural activity as a dynamic process, it is framed as a set of static practices. With a regularity to their patterned repetition, these cultural practices serve as "a tool of routinization and continuity—a handmaiden of social order." This conceptualization, more closely aligned with orthodox social anthropology and Parsonian functionalism, sees culture as kind of prop for social structure or a means to accomplish something akin to Durkheim's collective cohesion. Explicit within this conceptualization is the singularity of culture. There is no concept of resistance because there is no concept of dominant culture, only the value-laden notion of collective culture. Meaning is not actively constructed; it is held within this collective and is attained through successful socialization of the established cultural practices. In this formulation, the transgression of prescribed boundaries is neither meaningful nor creative; it is simply immoral. It marks the absence of culture, the result of failed socialization into the established collective meaning.

To see how cultural criminology relates to these two discourses, the work of Stuart Hall can be of service. Hall's work can be characterized by its emphasis on the uneven relations of cultural power—"the power to decide what belongs and what does not" (1974, p. 452). His formulation of culture as a dynamic process is built around a dialectic of cultural struggle. This struggle is poised between two ever-present poles of influence: control and resistance. Applying this logic to Bauman's cultural discourses, cultural criminology positions the two at opposing ends of a dialectic of cultural struggle. The first represents a cultural discourse of resistance, a willingness to risk envisioning and enacting collective alternatives to the latter, which represents the cultural discourse of control—"the notion of culture as existing somehow outside human agency...the collective belief in tradition, the emotional embracing of stasis and conformity, the ideological mobilization of rigid stereotype and fundamental value" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 4).

The conceptualization of culture in cultural criminology maintains much of the first discourse outlined by Bauman. It is a dynamic concept intimately tied to the collective human construction of meaning. It is used to refer to the active process of constructing meaning as well as the symbolic space in which these meanings are constructed. Thus, cultural criminology reformulates and extends culture not just as the site of creative activity but also as the site of creative constructions of meaning. Culture is even used as synonymous with meaning itself, as Ferrell and co-authors refer to

cultural criminology's "twin focus on culture and crime—put differently, on meaning and transgression" (2008, p. 4). This statement not only equates culture directly with meaning. By designating this as cultural criminology's "twin focus," the authors refer to the interplay between the two, or the process through which meaning is collectively (re)constructed as its boundaries are transgressed.

As transgression itself is conceptualized as a source of meaning (Hayward & Young, 2004), examining it in relation to culture is a way to get directly at this live process always and already taking place. This negotiation of meaning not only elucidates the processes through which humans creatively construct their social world. This intersection of meaning and transgression, of culture and crime, is of particular interest to cultural criminology in that it is the space in which constructions downwards (control) and constructions upwards (resistance) collide. Whereas both crime and crime control are each cultural products (i.e., creative human constructs), their meanings are constantly generated and regenerated around these interactions.

Reflecting the logic of Hall's dialectic of cultural struggle, cultural criminology not only conceptualizes culture as a site of resistance and subversive freedom but also as the site of control and repression of difference; it is a site of struggle. The continuous construction of meaning within the dialectic of cultural struggle creates an ongoing tension between (1) cultural maintenance (moral entrepreneurship), (2) cultural disorder (transgression), and (3) cultural regeneration (moral innovation). This is the conceptualization of culture as arena: the symbolic space in which constructed meanings compete for the power of legitimacy. This formulation implies that, through the lens of cultural criminology, even the meanings we construct around the concept of 'culture' are cultural products. It is an ongoing, cultural process with a long-standing tradition through which the meaning of the term 'culture' is negotiated. If that negotiation is ever finalized, if every last person agrees and assigns the same meaning to the term, it will still be a human creation and thus, a cultural product.

In addition to conceptualizations of culture as creative process and sites of struggle, cultural criminology's formulation can also be characterized as a semiotic. Keith Hayward and Jock Young quote cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz:

> The concept of culture I expose...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be these webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. (1973, p. 5)

There are several important points within Geertz's quote. First, he states that culture and its webs of significance are human constructions, and he then places emphasis on the assignment of significance and meaning. Both points, down to the selection of metaphorical imagery, are reflected in cultural criminology's conceptualizations of cultural relationships— "those webs of meaning and perception in which all parties are entangled" (Ferrell, 1999, p. 398)—and cultural forces—the "threads of collective meaning that wind in and around the everyday troubles of social actors" (Ferrell et al. 2008). It is also relevant that he refers to his concept of culture as semiotic, as the closest thing to a direct operationalization of culture in the literature is "the symbolic environment occupied by individuals and groups" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 2).

Lastly, Geertz's aligning himself with Weber is of interest on multiple levels. First, it speaks to the aforementioned, ongoing process through which the meaning of 'culture' is negotiated. Most likely due to differences in translation, it is difficult to position Weber's conceptualization of culture. Whereas some position culture at the forefront of his method (Ringer, 1997), for other Weberian scholars it is so inconsequential to appear in the index only as "culture, meaninglessness of" (Kalberg, 2007). Even in these works, however, if one follows the lead of cultural criminology and equates 'culture' with the construction of meaning, the role assigned to "subjective meaning" in Weber's work becomes the "culture" of cultural criminology.

Theoretical Lineage

The theoretical roots of cultural criminology are longstanding and widespread. As a theoretical framework, it continues to build on the foundations of sociological thought encompassed within the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim while also incorporating modern developments in fields of postmodernism, symbolic interactionism and social constructionism. Its particular theoretical lineage within the study of crime and deviance can be traced back to the "cultural turn" made by new deviance theorists in the 1950s and 1960s, through the emergence of late modernity and concurrent "turn towards deconstruction" in the 1970s, and into the "British synthesis" of phenomenology, subcultural theory and labeling theory made at the New Deviance Conference, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the London School of Economics.

New Deviance Theory

The direct theoretical lineage of cultural criminology, the starting point of "the gathering storm" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 25), springs from the emergence of new deviance theory. This theoretical development is conceptualized as containing two strands: subcultural theory and labeling theory. Developing alongside one another and often in debate, the two schools of thought "shared in common a distinctly cultural approach to the explanation of crime and deviance" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 26).

Subcultural Theory

The first work marked as a gathering cloud is Albert Cohen's classic subcultural work *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (1955). Emblematic of the logical shift in subcultural theory, Cohen borrowed from the conceptualization of culture developed in social and cultural anthropology, which saw subcultural behaviors as responses to collectively experienced problems—attempts to reconcile contradictions within the larger culture. The key theoretical point that separates this line of logic from prior subcultural theories is that, in addition to accounting for the transmission of subcultural values through socialization, "mature subcultural theory" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 34) also addresses the origins of these differentiated cultural values.

The most essential insight within this context is that—rather than a hollow, mechanical response to external stimuli or merely a symptom of cultural deficit—the behavior of deviant subcultures is understood as meaningful action. Because its meaning is defined by the particular social time, place and context in which it is created and embedded, the subjective experiences of subcultural members become important areas of inquiry. Flowing from this logic is the insight that most delinquent behavior is not strictly utilitarian; rather than a simple means for desired material goods out of one's perceived reach, most delinquency is transgressive at its core. Growing up in the face of a cultural milieu defined by specific (middle class) values coupled with structural impediments to their attainment for some (lower-class) individuals can create the feeling of status deprivation. A possible attempt to ameliorate this feeling is to reject and replace, or invert, the unattained values by which one is judged. As new meaning is constructed, this becomes a process of cultural work. As this process becomes a collective endeavor, a subculture is created.

Labeling Theory

The second strand of the new deviancy school came from labeling theory. Drawing from social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and radical phenomenological traditions, labeling theorists eschewed positivist attempts to reflect the objective reality of deviance on the basis that no

such objectivity exists outside of creative human agency. Deviance is not an already-existing type of action or behavior waiting to be uncovered by the scientific method, nor is it defined by any intrinsic characteristic. Deviance is a social construction. It is culturally contingent. It is the dynamic product of an ongoing collective process of human creation and is definitively intersubjective.

A critical element within the labeling theory framework is the addition of the W.I. Thomas theorem: "If men [and women] define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Thus, although definitions of crime and deviance are socially constructed and inherently subjective, the meanings created through this cultural work have very real, objective consequences. Important also is the acknowledgment that the social processes of constructing meaning around the labels of crime and deviance are not of a democratic nature. Constructions do not carry equal weight within the cultural arena. As the specters of political authority, legal sanction, and socialized stigma loom large, "the labeling process is one of power and marginalization" (Ferrell et al., 2008).

A principle of labeling theory crucial in the logic and development of cultural criminology is the relationship between crime/deviant behavior and social control. Rather than the strictly linear, unidirectional relationship previously presumed within positivist thought (i.e., crime/deviance exists, social control reduces these behaviors), labeling theorists acknowledged the subjectivity and nuanced complexity of this relationship, and in so doing, turned this orthodox relationship on its head. This shift in logic makes a basic principle of English common law: *nullum crimen sine legs*, *null poena sine legs* (no crime without law, no punishment without law) relevant again in two slightly different yet connected ways.

First, labeling theory acknowledges the aforementioned subjective nature of crime. The concept of crime is created through the outlawing of specific behaviors by a legal authority. Without the law to label a behavior as criminal, there can be no such thing as crime. Thus, logically speaking, social control in the form of criminal law and legal sanction creates crime by labeling an already existing behavior as criminal. The second and much more dangerous idea is of a less abstract nature: When criminal labels are attached to an individual, he or she can internalize the label as part of his or her identity and thereafter act in accordance. Thus, social control creates crime not just as a new classification of an already existing behavior; in this way control creates behavior that would not have taken place otherwise through the creation of secondary deviance.

The cultural turns of these two theoretical strands, subcultural and labeling theories, constituted the emergence of the new deviance theory, the direct theoretical antecedent to cultural criminology. The next step in this progression is the synthesis of the two approaches. As Stan Cohen came to explain, "[a]fter the 1960s—well before Foucault made these subjects intellectually respectable and a long way from the Left Bank—our little corner of the human sciences was seized by a deconstructionist impulse" (1997, p. 101). This movement in the sociology of deviance, "cultural in its focus and post-modernist in its sensibility" (Hayward & Young, 2004), germinated at the London School of Economics.

The British Synthesis

Beginning with David Downes' (1966) book *The Delinquent Solution* and further developed by London School of Economics PhD students Jock Young (1971) and Stan Cohen (1972), what has been referred to as "the British synthesis" (Ferrell et al., 2008) came to fruition at the National Deviancy Conference of 1968 and within the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Hayward and Young set as a defining characteristic of cultural criminology that it "seeks to highlight the interaction between constructions upwards and constructions downwards" (2004, p. 259). The exploration of this interaction was a key development of the British synthesis.

As labeling theory address the constructions of meaning flowing downward from those with power and legal authority onto the marginalized, subcultural perspectives address the (re)constructions of meaning flowing upward from marginalized subcultures. When these two strands

are synthesized toward the understanding of the interplay and interaction between constructions upwards and downwards, a crucial concept within cultural criminology comes to the fore: processes of mediation. By studying the complex relationships between the interpersonal worlds of deviant subcultures, social control interventions by the powerful, and constructions of each within mass media, the "new criminologists" (Taylor, Walton, & Young, 1973) and cultural analysts (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1977) began to explore the processes of mediation reflected in Ferrell's vast "hall of mirrors" (1999).

Thus, the theoretical foundation of cultural criminology is built from the perspectives emerging from British "new criminology" and the Birmingham school of cultural studies (Ferrell, 1999, p. 396). From the new criminology, it borrows and builds on an emphasis of the relationships between crime, representation and social control (Cohen & Young, 1973; Chibnall, 1977). From cultural studies, it borrows and builds on the exploration of the situated dynamics of deviant subcultures (Hebdige, 1979) and the importance of symbols and style in the construction of meaning and shaping of identity (Willis, 1977;1990). From their integration, it borrows and builds on the analysis of mass media's role in constructing the reality of crime and generating new forms of social and legal control (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978; Cohen, 1972;1980).

A Hybrid Orientation

As a "hybrid orientation" (Ferrell, 1999, p. 397), though, the constitution of cultural criminology is built on more than this simple integration of British cultural studies and the new criminology; it continues to develop and be influenced by insights in a number of fields. Indeed, Ferrell frames it as "...less a definitive paradigm than an emergent array of perspectives linked by sensitivities to image, meaning, and representation in the study of crime and control" (1999, p. 396). Among this array of perspectives, cultural criminology draws from recent developments in (1) postmodernism, (2) interactionist sociology/symbolic interactionism, and (3) constructionist sociology.

Postmodernism

Cultural criminology reflects a number of ideas seen within the postmodern intellectual orientation. It rejects the dualistic mode of thought characteristic of modernist theorizing, in particular the duality and formal separation of form and content. Whereas a modernist orientation would position the two in a hierarchical relationship, conceptualizing form as the inconsequential surface that must be pried away in order to access truly meaningful essence 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" (Ferrell, 1999, p. 397). This is the logical extension of earlier cultural turns within the study of crime and deviance that rejected positivist notions of an objective reality waiting to be uncovered.

As actions cannot be boiled down to their individual deviant essences, neither can an idea be separated from the way in which it is presented. As content is presented in different forms, the meaning assigned to it can change. This can happen any number of times and in any number of directions, which is why cultural criminology focuses not just on images, but on "images of images." "[M]edia messages and cultural traces swirl, circulate, and vacillate" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 124). Within "networks of connections," meaning is constructed through an ongoing feedback process (Baudrillard, 1985, p. 127). These are the mediated networks Manning (1998) calls "media loops" that circulate and recirculate images, narratives and constructed meanings. They speak to the discursive interconnections emerging between criminal subcultures, agents of crime control, and

mass media (Kane, 1998). This all takes place within the cultural arena, the "infinite hall of mirrors" (Ferrell, 1999), out of which the reality of crime and crime control are constructed.

Symbolic Interactionism

Cultural criminology also reflects principles developed within symbolic interactionism and the interactionist traditions in the sociology of deviance and criminology. The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1931; Blumer, 1970) is logically consistent and connected to developments in cultural criminology. One can easily see, for example, the feelings and experience of status and/or relative deprivation through the lens of Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the looking glass self, which outlines an individual's "self-idea" as constituted by "three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his [or her] judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification" (1902, p. 152).

Though symbolic interactionism is easily connected to its foundation, cultural criminology draw more directly from later interactionist traditions within the sociology of deviance and criminology (Becker, 1963; Pfuhl, 1986). In particular, it borrows and builds upon the emphasis on the examination of social interactions through which meaning is constructed. It highlights the symbolic nature of interaction and the emergence of symbolic universes with their own codes of action and behavior. Specifically applying these principles and concepts to the study of crime and deviance, cultural criminologists examine the symbolism contained within mediated crime imagery. They analyze deviant subcultures as symbolic universes in which crime takes on political meaning as a form of resistance. On the macro-level, they examine the interactions through which criminals, agents of control, and media producers collectively construct the meaning of crime.

Constructionist Sociology

Cultural criminology also reflects and furthers developments within recent constructionist sociology literature (Best, 1995; Loseke, 2003). The principle conceptualization shared, also a key facet of earlier working in labeling theory, is of crime and crime control as social and political constructions. One can easily link key constructionist concepts to parallel logics in cultural criminology. The "social problems game" of competing "claims-makers" (Loseke, 2003) vying to convince audience members of the rightness of their cause plays out within the cultural arena, its outcome driven by cultural power—"the power to decide what belongs and what does not" (Hall, 1974, p. 452). In this way, "social problems work" (Loseke, 2003, p. 52) is cultural work.

Whereas both cultural criminology and constructionist sociology attempt to disentangle the mediated processes of social construction through which meaning is created, cultural criminology adds further nuance to this unraveling by extending their gaze beyond traditional "mass" media. In addition to exploring mediated constructions of meaning beyond mass media (e.g., ethnographically in subcultures of resistance and contextually in television, film and literature), cultural criminology also brings a "spiraling postmodern sensibility" in its analysis. In doing so, it moves beyond simple dualistic conceptualizations of crime/coverage and truth/distortion seen at times within constructionist media analysis (Ferrell & Websdale, 1999).

Methodological Influences

Cultural criminology is informed by multiple methodological approaches developed in, out, and even against the discipline of criminology. Within criminology, Ferrell, Hayward & Young (2008, p. 161) trace the beginnings of a cultural approach to methodology back to the same ground they mark "many of contemporary criminology's foundational works" as emerging from: the Chicago School. Particularly relevant for cultural criminology is the Chicago School's emphasis on engaged research practices. Current scholarship in the field harks back to the ethnographic orientations and "idiosyncratic, impressionistic approaches" of scholars such as Nels Anderson (1923), who explored the lives of the Chicago homeless, and Frederic Thrasher, who documented "the thrilling street life of the gang" (1927, p. 79) and even included his own photographs of gang rituals and life in the Chicago "ganglands." It is from this point moving forward that the methodological lineages of cultural

criminology and of "mainstream article" (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) or "orthodox" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 159) criminology begin to diverge.

Against Orthodoxy

As the influence of the Chicago School waned, the practice of engaged, participatory research suffered a similar fate. Stepping into this void was a standardized style of survey research that "has held sway within the discipline ever since" (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. xiii). Standards of random sampling and objective detachment from the subject(s) under study, among others, were adopted in order to position the discipline as an objective science (Ferrell et al., 2008). It is against this established orthodoxy that the methodological approaches of cultural criminology truly began to crystallize.

Many of the theoretical influences of cultural criminology previously mentioned also carried the torch of participatory, engaged research methodology. Subcultural and labeling theory scholars (Becker, 1963; Polsky, 1967) contributed vastly influential participatory ethnographies in addition to the "equally unorthodox methods of engaged research" (Ferrell et al., 2008) employed by British new deviance theorists (Young, 1971; Cohen, 1972). Such research is emblematic of criminological thought's "Abstract Expressionism" period that followed as a reaction against the 1950s positivist "Renaissance" (Adler & Adler, 1998, pp. xiii-xiv). In addition to these models of engaged research, two significant works were instrumental to the development of cultural criminology: Feyerabend's *Against Method* (1975) and Cohen's *Against Criminology* (1988).

Against Method

In *Against Method*, Feyerabend traces the development of science's great methodological innovations. Rather than isolated discoveries devoid of human subjectivity, he outlines how such developments are historically and culturally situated. These major innovations, even the scientific method itself, are cultural products. Their widespread acceptance and implementation was accomplished through appeals to the subjective, as ascendance in the cultural arena is contingent on hearts and minds. Whereas these major methodological shifts appear as the inevitable outcomes of pure, linear scientific progress, this appearance is itself a product of a mediated vantage point. That is, if one believes the path to social progress is marked by the scientific method, any outcome attributed to the scientific method is defined as progress. This circular logic is the method Feyerabend stands against.

Against Criminology

In *Against Criminology*, Cohen calls for the establishment of immanent critique, a constant questioning of orthodox research practices, assumptions and modes of thought. He works through the influence and importance of the "Abstract Expressionist" intellectual upheaval against orthodox criminology of the 1960s and 1970s, of which he was a part. Putting this principle into practice, however, he goes on to make a case for the importance of rising up against the very movement of which he was an integral part. He is "intellectually unwilling to toe the line, even one he helped draw" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 160). Thus, the criminology that Cohen stands against is any iteration of the discipline that holds still. As truth is contingent and the world dynamic, any method or technique established as complete must be called into question. Intellectual strength springs from intellectual movement, and the closest thing to an essential method, tool or technique of criminological inquiry is "lack of commitment to any master plan" (Cohen, 1988, p. 109).

It is the combination of these two works that serve as the dynamic ground upon which a cultural methodology can be built. "Taken together Feyerabend and Cohen suggest a sort of anarchist understanding of method and knowledge" (Ferrell et al., 2008). Thus, it is less a concrete foundation than a cultivated plot of land, cleared of extraneous debris. It is this space in which Feyerabend's methodological principle can be actualized: "The only principle that does not inhibit progress is: *anything goes*" (1975, p. 23; emphasis in original). Without being restricted by the commitment to

orthodoxy, cultural criminology is free to heed Becker's call to "look at all the people involved in any episode of alleged deviance...all the parties to a situation, and their relationships" (1963, pp. 183, 199; quoted in Ferrell, 1999, p. 398).

True to Subject

A background of methodological anarchy, however, does not mean that there is no rhyme or reason within the methodological framework of cultural criminology. As orthodox principles of methodology are deconstructed, new principles and practices, more open and adaptable to the shifting landscape of a dynamic reality, must be constructed in their stead. These constructions are guided by the logic of David Matza's concept of naturalism (1969). Methodological decisions are thus driven by the necessity of researching the social world on its own terms, being "faithful to the phenomenon under scrutiny" (Ferrell et al., 2008) and "true to subject—without either romanticism or the generation of pathology" (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 268). In the case of human behavior, these terms include an emphasis on subjectivity, emotion, and the mediated construction of meaning. For cultural criminology, this emphasis is accomplished through the attentive gaze (Hayward & Young, 2004) and ethnographic sensibility (Ferrell et al., 2008) of a criminological *verstehen* (Ferrell & Hamm, 1998) and is informed by various developments across sociology, anthropology and cultural studies.

The concept of criminological *verstehen* is rooted first and foremost in the work of one of sociology's founding fathers: Max Weber. His original concept of *verstehen* called for social scientists to develop a kind of sympathetic subjectivity, an empathetic understanding of the emotional context in which social behavior takes place. Thus, a criminological *verstehen* positions cultural criminology as an inherently personal endeavor through which researchers reflexively engage with the situations and subjects under study; it denotes a "subjective appreciation and empathetic understanding of crime's situated meanings, symbolism, and emotions" (Ferrell, 1999, p. 400). This positioning reflects and is informed by long-standing traditions in criminology (Becker, 1963) and the sociology of deviance (Humphreys, 1970) on deep inquiry into the situated dynamics of deviant subcultures (Ferrell, 1999).

The methodology of cultural criminology also reflects and is informed by developments in the field of anthropology. In addition to hallmarks of the discipline such as the use of thick description and attentiveness to the power of narrative, symbolic anthropologist Clifford Geertz's work was paramount in the development of cultural criminology, in particular his method of "understanding social action in terms of the deep reading of culture" (Hayward & Young, 2004, p. 260). As Geertz's work attests, the rejuvenation of Weberian logic was not limited to the "cultural turns" of 1960s criminology and/or sociology of deviance. Influenced by Weber's concept of *verstehen*, Geertz also saw subjective engagement as necessary in the development of an interpretive understanding of human behavior. This subjective involvement also means that the individual researcher must be reflexive enough to acknowledge and account for the role played by his or her own cultural baggage, situated assumptions, and preconceived notions within the research process. Researchers must understand the role they themselves play within the construction of meaning, thus providing a kind of "ethnography of ethnography" (Van Maanen, 1995).

Cultural criminology is in many ways defined by a sensitivity to situated values and nuances of meanings. This attentiveness to the subtle particulars of cultural milieux reflects and is informed by traditions in cultural studies. As cultural criminology is driven by the desire to be "true to subject," developments in cultural studies helped to inform the conceptualization of that subject. From Stuart Hall, John Clarke, and other scholars of the Birmingham School, cultural criminology comes to define representational dynamics, symbolic discourses and stylistic ambiguities as fundamental in describing the cultural worlds from which they spring. The influence of cultural studies is also reflected in cultural criminology's ethnographic orientation, as Paul Willis stated that his ethnographic approach was "dictated by the nature of [his] interest in 'the cultural'" (1977, p. 3). Another important aspect of cultural criminology is its attention to visual forms of communication. This attention to image also reflects the Birmingham school tradition, which drew from the work of

documentary photographers, image makers and others to develop a "grammar" for decoding cultural symbols (Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979).

Thus, cultural criminology brings together disciplinary distinct but logically related research principles and practices to form a cultural methodology suited for the late modern world. In addition to the deeply influential works in criminology (Cohen, 1988; Matza, 1969) and philosophy of science (Feyerabend, 1975) that cleared the way for its construction, this methodological approach is built with (1) sociology's principle and practice of *verstehen* (Weber, [1920] 1978), (2) anthropology's emphasis on thick description and practice of understanding social action through a deep reading of cultural narratives (Geertz, 1973), cultural studies' attentiveness to precise nuances of meaning, representational dynamics and symbolic discourses (Willis, 1977; Hall et al., 1978). By meshing these principles and practices together with is own postmodern spin, cultural criminology builds its own "multi-layered ethnographic approach" (Hayward & Young, 2004).

Conclusion

The field of cultural criminology has been conceptualized as "less a definitive paradigm than an emergent array of perspectives" (Ferrell, 1999, p. 396). This lack of cohesion across the field is one of the multiple limiting factors existing at the core of the perspective. Several of these limitations, though, were built into the perspective's foundation with purpose. Rather than mere oversight, these limitations represent a calculated trade-off determined by the unorthodox aspirations of those involved. In many cases, the logic guiding these decisions can be found within the perspective's theoretical landscape. The lack of cohesion across the field, for instance, is not a result of schisms organized around fundamental disagreements in the field's founding principles. It is the result of the decision to leave the field "open and invitational" (Ferrell et al., 2008) for continued theoretical and methodological engagement. The logic of this decision is easily traced: "methodological neatness and intellectual closure suggest stasis and decay...methods not fully conceptualized or completed, suggest intellectual life and disciplinary vitality" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 161).

Another built-in limitation of cultural criminology is its lack of fit within a statistical model. Though, given the generalized disdain expressed toward methods of statistical abstraction, sampling procedures and preset question banks designed "to divorce from the research process the human particulars of both researches and those they study" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 162), it is safe to say this is closer to a point of pride than an oversight by the authors. Though hard to find, there are brief moments in which the utility of anything quantitative is acknowledged, as "a useful tool for suggesting patterns of presentation" (Ferrell et al., 2008, p. 188) for instance. For the most part, though, cultural criminology does not lend itself to quantifiable measurement or direct causal analysis. Even with access to massive, longitudinal datasets, cultural criminology's rejection of linear sequences of causation and emphasis on situated nuances of meaning are simply not designed for direct measurement and theory testing.

The most significant limitation that results from the perspective's incompatibility with quantitative analysis is a problem of political economy. As Craig Webber stated in reference to the prospective growth of cultural criminology, "with the 'smart' money being on the type of research that 'counts' human behavior, such a body of work is unlikely to be forthcoming soon" (2007, p. 139). This limitation is another built-in to the perspective, however, as cultural criminology intentionally casts light on that which the 'smart' money casts aside. Its purpose is to call attention to the humanity of those bet against in culture and political economy. In so doing, it foregrounds the cultural elements that, despite the dominance of the 'smart' money, continue to exist, and continue to have meaning.

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