

CHAPTER 6

Cultural Criminology

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Cultural criminology critically investigates the ways in which the dynamics of media and popular culture, the lives and activities of criminals, and the operations of social control and criminal justice come together in everyday life. Cultural criminologists emphasize the role of image, style, and symbolic meaning among criminals and their subcultures, in the mass media's representation of crime and criminal justice, and in public conflicts over crime and crime control.

Originally, "cultural criminology" denoted a critical perspective on crime, criminal subcultures, and popular culture developed by Ferrell (1999) and Ferrell and Sanders (1995). The notion of cultural criminology now refers more broadly to the increasing attention that many critical criminologists give to popular culture constructions, and especially mass media constructions, of crime and crime control. Most broadly, the existence of a perspective such as "cultural criminology" reflects the growing influence of cultural and media analysis in the traditional domains of criminological inquiry, such that critical criminologists increasingly investigate, for example, not just domestic violence, but the mass media's gendered coverage of domestic violence; not just crimes committed by street gangs, but the everyday values, language, clothing styles, and graffiti that define the lives of gang members; not just illegal drug use, but the media campaigns and mediated "wars on drugs" that create public understandings of drug use and shape drug policy.

As a foundation for this sort of inquiry, cultural criminology imports the insights of cultural studies into criminology, building especially from the pioneering work of the British cultural studies movement regarding subcultural symbolism and mediated social control. Similarly, cultural criminology draws on the insights of postmodernism, operating from the postmodern propositions that style is substance, that meaning resides in representation, and that crime and crime control can therefore only be understood as an ongoing

ing spiral of intertextual, image-driven "media loops" (Manning, 1998). 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 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 off one another. Undergirding the use of these contemporary perspectives in cultural criminology is a more traditional intellectual projects as well: the expansion of existing sociological, social interactionist, and social constructionist understandings in criminology. Cultural criminologists attempt to develop the "symbolic" in "symbolic interaction" by exploring the stylized dynamics of illicit subcultures and the symbolic representations of crime and justice offered by the mass media. Similarly, they seek to explore the many ways in which perceptions and understandings of crime and crime control are constructed.

Most importantly, cultural criminology emerges out of the tradition of critical criminology, 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 images 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 perspectives, cultural criminology thus attempts to develop what Cohen (1988:68) has called "a structurally and politically informed version of labeling theory"—that is, an analysis that accounts for the complex circuitry through which the meaning of crime and deviance is constructed, enforced, and resisted. 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 and critique those cultural relationships, those contested webs of meaning and perception, in which all parties are entangled.

These theoretical orientations also inform the methodologies favored by cultural criminologists. As employed within cultural criminology, field research and ethnographic research investigate at close range the nuances of meaning and symbolism developed within particular situations and events, and explore the precise dynamics of various criminal subcultures. At its extreme, such research is designed to develop a form of criminological *verstehen* whereby the researcher approaches an empathic understanding of the meanings and emotions associated with crime and crime control. Alternatively, other cultural criminologists utilize methods of media and textual analysis to develop critical readings of mediated crime accounts. Such scholarship investigates both historical and contemporary texts, rang-

ing from newspapers, film, and television to popular music, comic books, and cyberspace. Recently, cultural criminologists have also begun to integrate these two methodological frameworks in producing case studies that document the ways in which the workings of criminal subcultures, the operations of the mass media, and the fears and understandings of the public all shape and influence one another.

Subtopics

Framed by these theoretical and methodological orientations, cultural criminology has emerged within a number of substantive areas. As will be seen, some of these focus more on the mass media, others more on criminal and deviant subcultures. But as will also be seen, many of these areas expose the complex interplay of both media representations and subcultural dynamics.

Media Constructions of Crime and Criminal Justice

Cultural criminologists investigate the complex institutional interconnections between the criminal justice system and the mass media, documenting not only the mass media's heavy reliance on criminal justice sources for imagery and information on crime, but more importantly, the reciprocal relationship which 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 contribute to the political agendas of the criminal justice system and to the generation of public support for these agendas. In a relatively non-conspiratorial 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 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 everyday understandings of crime controversies, this research critiques taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the

prevalence of criminality and the particular characteristics of criminals, and 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 existing analytic models. McRobbie and 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 cultural constructions. He demonstrates that attention must be paid to the media and political dynamics underlying not only constructed crime but "unconstructed" crime as well. For example, Jenkins explores the failure to frame activities such as anti-abortion violence as criminal terrorism, and situates this failure within active media and political processes.

Through all of this, cultural criminologists emphasize that in the process of constructing crime and crime control as social concerns and political controversies, the media also construct them as entertainment. Intertwined with mediated moral panic over crime and crime waves is the pleasure found in consuming mediated crime imagery and drama, in "entertaining the crisis" (Sparks, 1995). Given this, cultural criminology focuses as much on popular film, popular music, and television entertainment programming as on the mediated manufacture of news and information, and 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 television programs like "COPS" generate conventional, though at times contradictory, images of crime and policing. 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.

Media Constructions of Popular Culture as Crime

The notion of "popular culture as crime" refers to the reconstruction of cultural activities as criminal endeavors—through, for example, the public labeling of popular culture products as criminogenic, or through the criminalization of cultural producers. Art photographers, for example, have faced public campaigns accusing them of producing obscene or pornographic images, and art centers exhibiting such images have been charged with criminal activity. Punk and heavy metal bands, and associated record companies, distributors, and retail outlets, have encountered obscenity rul-

ings, 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 recordings; highly publicized protests, boycotts, and political hearings; and ongoing media campaigns and legal proceedings accusing them of promoting crime and delinquency. More broadly, a variety of television programs, films, and cartoons have been targeted by public campaigns alleging that they incite delinquency, spin off "copycat" crimes, and otherwise serve as criminogenic social forces.

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. In this way, media-produced popular culture forms and figures are, ironically, criminalized by means of the media. 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), the mediated reconstruction of meaning and perception around issues of culture and crime.

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" waged by political and cultural reactionaries; and controversies over the criminal or criminogenic characteristics of art photographers and rap musicians have largely resulted from the sorts of well-funded, politically sophisticated campaigns that have similarly targeted feminist/gay/lesbian artists. In this light it is less than surprising that contemporary cultural criminalization is aimed time and again at marginalized subcultures—progressive punk musicians, politically militant black rap groups, lesbian and gay artists—whose stylized confrontation with their marginality threaten particular patterns of moral and legal control. And, 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.

The Media and Culture of Policing

Today 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, 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” that, 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, expanding spiral of mediated social control.

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 and Kappeler (1995:85) 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 ethnographic methodologies discussed above, is Kraska’s (1996) 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 documents the deep-seated ideological and affective states which define the collective meaning of such situations. With crime control as with crime, subcultural and media dynamics construct experience and perception.

Situated Media, Situated Audiences

Many cultural criminologists argue that the everyday notion of “media” must be expanded beyond the “mass media” to include those media that are situated within the various subcultures of crime, deviance, and crime control. Various illicit subcultures certainly come into regular contact with the mass media, but in so doing appropriate and reinvent mass media channels and products as part of their subcultural worlds. Further, illicit subcultures regularly invent their own media of communication; as McRobbie and 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 and websites; street gang members construct elaborate edifices of communication out of particular clothing styles, colors, and hand signs; BASE jumpers videotape their own illegal jumps; and graffiti writers develop a continent-wide network of freight train graffiti that links distant subcultural members within a shared symbolic community. Further, multiple, fluid audiences witness efflorescences of crime and crime control in their everyday exis-

rence, 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. Ultimately, perhaps, this investigation suggests blurring the analytic boundary between producer and audience, and recognizing that a variety of groups both produce and consume contested images of crime.

Crime as Culture and Subculture

Much of what we label criminal behavior is at the same time subcultural behavior, collectively organized around networks of symbol, ritual, and shared meaning. 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 are defined by elaborate conventions of argot, appearance, and stylized presentation of self, and thus operate as repositories of collective meaning and representation for their members. Taken into a mediated world of increasingly dislocated communication and dispersed meaning, this insight further implies that illicit 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.

Much research in this area of cultural criminology has focused on the dispersed dynamics of subcultural 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 gang style exist as the medium of meaning for both street gang members and the probation officers who attempt to understand and control them. Ferrell (1996) has shown how contemporary hip hop graffiti exists essentially as a "crime of style" both for graffiti writers, who operate and evaluate one another within complex stylistic conventions, and for media institutions and political authorities who perceive graffiti as violating their ongoing control of urban environments. Lyng and 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 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 demonstrate that the importance of style resides in the tension between subcultural dynamics and external media and political constructions.

If subcultures of crime and deviance are defined by their stylistic organization, cultural criminology has also begun to show that they are defined by intensities of collective experience and emotion as well. Cultural criminologists like Lyng (1998) and Ferrell (1996) have utilized verstehen-oriented methodologies to document the experiences of "edgework" and "the adrenaline rush"—immediate moments of risk, danger, and skill—that shape participation in deviant and criminal subcultures. Discovered across a range of illicit subcultures, these intense, ritualized moments of pleasure and excitement define the experience of subcultural members and seduce them into continued subcultural participation. Significantly, research shows that these experiences of edgework and adrenaline are collectively constructed, and encased in shared vocabularies of motive and meaning. Thus, while these experiences certainly suggest a criminology of the body and the emotions, they also reveal the ways in which collective intensities of experience, like collective conventions of style, construct shared subcultural meaning.

Bodies and Emotions

Perhaps the most intimate of situations in which crime and crime control intersect are those in and around the physical and emotional self. The fleeting experience of edgework and adrenaline rushes, heightened by risk of legal apprehension; the evolution of subcultural style as marker of identity and criminalization; the utilization of researchers' own experiences and emotions in the study of crime and policing—all suggest the importance of the situated self. These also 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, 1998). Together, these and other situations in turn point to a cultural 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 verstehen-oriented methodologies described above—of ways of investigating that are embodied and affective, always moving closer to the intimate meaning of crime and crime control.

Cultural Space, Crime, and Crime Control

Many of the everyday situations and everyday controversies in which crime and policing are played out involve the contesting of cultural space—that is, the contentious construction of meaning and identity in public domains (Ferrell, 1997). Homeless populations, for example, reveal by their public presence the scandal of inequality, and 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, 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 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 mediated campaigns of cultural criminalization, these conflicts over crime and cultural space regularly emerge around the marginalized subcultures of young people and ethnic minorities, and thus raise essential issues of identity and justice. Such conflicts in turn incorporate a complex criminalization of these subcultures, as part of a systematic effort to erase their self-constructed public images, and to substitute in their place symbols of safety and commerce. Ultimately, these disparate conflicts over crime and cultural space reveal the prevalence of contested public meaning in contemporary society, and something of the work of control in the age of cultural reproduction.

Politics, Crime, and Cultural Criminology

Clearly, a common thread connects the many domains of cultural criminology: 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 and commodified 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 those involved, marginalizing them from idealized notions of decency and community and, at the extreme, silencing the political critiques which 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 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 must constitute the subject matter of critical criminology.

At the same time, cultural criminologists emphasize and explore the various forms which resistance to this complex web of social control may take. The audiences for media constructions of crime are diverse in both their composition and in 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" refuse governmental awards, resign high-profile positions, win legal judgments, and organize alternative media outlets and performances. Within other marginalized subcultures, personal and group style exists as a stigmata, inviting outside surveillance and control, but at the same time as a valued badge of honor and resistance made all the more meaningful by its enduring defiance of outside authority. Likewise, those immersed in moments of illicit edgework and adrenaline construct resistance doubly. First, by combining high levels of risk with precise skills, those involved invent an identity, a sense of crafted self, that resists the usual degradations of subordinate status and deskilled labor. Second, as these moments become more dangerous because targeted by campaigns of criminalization and enforcement, participants in them find an enhancement of the edgy excitement they provide, and in so doing transform political pressure into personal and collective pleasure.

Moreover, cultural criminology itself operates as a sort of intellectual resistance, as a diverse counter-discourse on 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. Beyond this, Barak (1994) argues for an activist "newsmaking criminology" in which criminologists integrate themselves into the mediated construction of crime, and in so doing produce what constitutive criminologists (Henry & Milovanovic, 1996) 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 conventional understandings produced by the media and the criminal justice system and reproduced by a "courthouse criminology" that relies on these sources. By attentively documenting the lived realities of groups whom conventional crime constructions have marginalized, and in turn documenting the politics of this marginalization process, cultural crim-

inologists attempt to deconstruct the demonization of various outsiders and to produce alternative understandings of them. Approaching this task from the other direction, Hamm (1993) and others venture inside the worlds of particularly violent criminals to document dangerous nuances of meaning and style often invisible in official reporting on them. In its politics as in its theory and method, then, cultural criminology is designed to produce alternative images of crime.

Points Made by Opponents

Perhaps the broadest criticism of cultural criminology involves the charge that, like the cultural studies perspectives on which it draws, cultural criminology uncritically embraces an emerging postmodern world driven by the mass media and defined by image and style. From this view, cultural criminology is as shallow as the world it seeks to explain, never moving beyond surface appearances and stylized identities. And in this sense, cultural criminology focuses so intently on the cultural dimensions of contemporary society that it misses the politics and economy on which such cultural dimensions are predicated.

From the perspective of cultural criminologists, however, this focus on culture, media, and image constitutes an attempt to critically analyze emerging forms of power, control, and injustice. As critical historians of crime and justice have repeatedly shown, new arrangements of power and domination incorporate new forms of legal and social control; generate new forms of crime and criminalization; and at the same time foster new forms of resistance and insubordination. Thus, in a contemporary world whose politics and economy are increasingly defined by the mediated marketing of images and impressions, whose criminal justice policies are increasingly intertwined with mediated anti-crime campaigns and aimed at the stylized identities of marginalized groups, critical criminologists must pay close attention to matters of representation and meaning. In this world, cultural dynamics constitute the turf, the battlefield, on which issues of identity and community, justice and injustice, crime and crime control are decided.

Yet this is not to say that cultural criminology's focus of inquiry is without its limitations. To begin with, despite recent advances in integrating media and subcultural analysis, much of the work in cultural criminology has remained divided between the study of illicit subcultures on the one hand, and mass media texts on the other. As demonstrated in this chapter, such a sharp disjunction inevitably misses key dynamics regarding the complex interplay of culture, crime, and crime control. Also disturbing is the inability of cultural criminologists to address actual issues of audience and audience meanings; as is the case with much media analysis and criticism, the perspectives and understandings of various audiences often remain more imagined than investigated. Most importantly, cultural criminology is just

beginning to move beyond the myopia of its British and U.S. roots to explore the contested convergence of cultural and criminal dynamics in a variety of world settings, and to investigate the migration of illicit meanings across real and imagined borders.

Beyond this, certainly the most pointed criticism directed at the work of cultural criminologists involves the issue of romanticism. Left realists and other criminologists often argue that cultural criminologists create overly sympathetic portraits of deviant and criminal subcultures, romanticizing the bad behavior of criminals, ignoring its destructive consequences, and imagining that everyday criminality somehow constitutes a form of political resistance. Embedded in this debate over romanticism, though, is a key issue for cultural criminologists. The charge of "romanticizing" crime implies a divergence from the reality, the true nature, of crime. But for cultural criminologists, that's just the point: what in fact is the reality of crime, and how would we know it apart from the mediated representations and stylized images that increasingly define it? Given the recurrent creation of folk devils and mediated moral panics, and the consistent public overdramatization of crime in the interest of television ratings, political careers, and prison construction, it seems likely that what appears "true" about crime is in fact fiction, and that what appears "romantic" results mostly from cultural criminologists' attempts to rediscover the humanity, the cultural complexity, of crime, criminals, and crime control.

Finally, as a nascent perspective, cultural criminology has been criticized for constituting less a completed, definitive paradigm than an eclectic constellation of critiques linked by sensitivities to image and meaning in the study of crime and crime control. Oriented as they are to the multiplicity of meanings and indeterminacy of images continually developing around crime and crime control, though, cultural criminologists themselves would likely embrace cultural criminology as an always unfinished project, open to emerging configurations of culture, crime, and crime control, and to emerging critiques of them.

Concluding Synthesis

As an emerging perspective within critical criminology, cultural criminology draws from a range of critical perspectives. Revisiting and perhaps reinventing existing paradigms, cultural criminology seeks less to synthesize or subsume these various paradigms than to engage them in a critical, multi-faceted exploration of culture and crime. Guiding this exploration 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 critical criminology issues of "subjective meaning," and of deviance and crime as "meaningful action." Cultural criminology embraces and expands this agenda by exploring the

complex, contested construction of meaning that occurs between media and legal institutions, illicit subcultures, and audiences around matters of crime and crime control. In so doing, cultural criminology likewise highlights the inevitability of the image in the practice of power and resistance, crime and crime control. Confronting the stylized politics of a criminal subculture, watching "COPS" or perusing the morning paper, lost in the panic and pleasure of crime, there is nothing so real as representation.

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see images and symbolic representations of crime, criminals, and criminal justice in your everyday life?
2. How many of the television shows that you watch are focused on crime, criminals, or criminal justice? Why do you watch them? Do they have any effect on your attitudes about crime?
3. What image comes to mind when you hear the phrase "gang member?" What image comes to mind when you hear the word "prostitute?" What are the sources of these images?
4. How has the media image of cigarette smoking and cigarette smokers changed over the past few years? If cigarette smoking were to be outlawed completely, what images of cigarette smoking and cigarette smokers do you think might become popular?
5. As seen in this chapter, what role does style play in criminal or deviant subcultures?
6. Do you believe that "copycat crimes" occur—that is, that individuals commit crimes in imitation of what they have seen on television or in the movies? If so, what should be done about this form of criminality?
7. What does it mean to talk about the "culture of policing?" What are some positive and negative aspects of "police culture" in the United States?
8. Is it possible today for criminals to share membership in a subculture, even if they have never met face-to-face? In what way?
9. What concerns might cultural criminologists have about the trend toward crime and criminals increasingly being packaged as "entertainment" and presented to the public in popular "reality television" shows? What, if anything, about this trend would concern you?

10. What do cultural criminologists mean by "cultural space?" What are some of the significant cultural spaces in the city or town where you live? What laws regulate people or activities in these spaces?
11. What does it mean to be "critical" when focusing on images of crime, criminals, and criminal justice? How can understanding mediated images of crime and criminals lead to better criminal justice policy?