

Review of *Making Trouble: Cultural Constructions of Crime, Deviance, and Control*

Editors: Jeff Ferrell and Neil Websdale
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To the delight of some and the utter horror and dismay of others, the field of cultural studies has leached its way into the remotest capillaries of academic life. Even criminology, a field that, with a few notable exceptions, had been all but abandoned to the path model technicians and the neo-Liberal "risk" managers, could not, it seems, check the seepage. With this volume (and the very existence of this journal!), we see that there are at least some folks in the discipline who think that social constructions, language, the media, and popular culture actually matter with regard to issues of crime, deviance, and control.

"Cultural criminology," the editors declare, is grounded in both "the frameworks of cultural studies and postmodernism" as well as being "firmly rooted in sociological perspectives"(p.5). I must admit that I was skeptical that such a rubric could bridge the deep modernist/postmodernist divide, but found that after reading the opening pages, I was sufficiently intrigued by the prospect. Shrewdly, these editors see cultural criminology as not trying to "synthesize or subsume" the more contentious variants of cultural studies and postmodern theory as well as the "new" (now quite old) criminology of the 1970s, modernist interactionist sociology, and critical theory into some kind of amalgam, but rather seek to "...engage them in a critical, multifaceted exploration of culture, deviance, and crime. Linking these diverse intellectual dimensions is an overarching concern with the meaning of deviance, crime, and control" (p.16 emphasis mine). I found their arguments to be persuasive and compelling and learned quite a bit from their approach.

This eclectic, yet thematically engaged agenda comes together in this collection of fourteen interesting papers as well as the editors' outstanding introductory and concluding essays. We see, for example, evidence of the "Birmingham School" of post-Gramscian studies of hegemony and ideology reflected in the second of Neil Websdale's own essays in the volume, "Police Homicide Files as Situated Media Substrates." Motivated by Stuart Hall's analysis of the synergistic relationship between law enforcement and media portrayals, Websdale investigates the construction of police investigative reports and "the relationship between these reporting styles, frames, and boundaries and the broader culture" (p.278).

Here, he situates language within a broader framework of power, politics, and economics. Rather than containing some kind of distant objectivity, he finds that these investigative narratives are rife with moral-political judgments about offenders, their families, and their acts. These reports are then consumed by the media and looped back to us and the police as part of our cultural understandings of crime.

A second motif comes more directly from postmodernist sensibilities as evidenced by Peter Manning's essay, "Reflections: The Visual as a Mode of Social Control." Manning contends that modernist views of identity, the self, and biographical continuity seem "of dubious validity in an era shaped increasingly by electronic information technology and mass communications" (p.255). Manning argues that we need to connect theories of the "decentered" postmodern self, social control and deviance with the "interactional context of self-viewing, watching, and performing, collectively, and individually, as well as to modes of control, surveillance, and simulation now commonly found in work consumption, and mass leisure" (p.255). The proliferation of screens in social life, Manning contends, multiplies our experiences while the increasingly blurry line between these private and public encounters not only shapes the self, but is likely to be used in social control. He cites examples from policing, medicine, and the workplace where the visual is used "often without the awareness of the person, to control and punish, to stimulate consumption, and to protect individuals from legal action" (p.264).

Other papers in the collection reflect the mix of modernist, critical, and constructionist approaches. Paul Kooistra and John Mahoney set out to reveal "The Historical Roots of Tabloid TV Crime" in their contribution. Here they examine the strategies and practices of the 19th century working-class oriented "penny press," the "yellow" journalism of Pulitzer and Hearst, and the later day "tabloid" style TV shows such as "Cops," "America's Most Wanted," "Hard Copy," and the like. They conclude that tabloid media, then and now, not only emphasizes entertainment and sensationalism but that typically these formats are used when a news organization is attempting to break into a very competitive media market. Moreover, these organizations are likely to exploit new developments in technology such, as in these cases, the rotary press, the ability to print high quality photos in a newspaper format, and the use of inexpensive hand-held video cameras. And while these formats are often derided by moral entrepreneurs and the mainstream media alike, they are often quickly imitated by

established media once they begin to see an erosion of their market share.

In other papers, such as "Media Misogyny: Demonizing 'Violent' Girls and Women," Meda Chesney Lind does a nice job of sorting fact from fiction when it comes to the reality of female criminality versus its exaggerated media portrait, and by extension, the public perception of the social problem. Likewise, Gray Cavender takes on fact and fiction in his chapter called "Detecting Masculinity" when he considers both the role of "doing masculinity" in actual criminal conduct and the depiction of crime and the detective figure in two 1940s films as well as in two contemporary films. He concludes that much has remained the same in this genre of popular culture, "that the detective has a quest to solve a crime...[but that] a part of that quest is also to search for what it is to be a man" (p.173). A wide variety of other topics are explored in the book including the cultural construction of a street population and "punk" uprising in Montréal in 1996, the cultural meanings of hip hop graffiti on freight trains, and anti-abortion violence as "unconstructed terrorism."

In sum, *Making Trouble* is an excellent collection of papers that manages to bring a wide range of topics and approaches under the conceptually interesting umbrella of cultural criminology. Anyone interested in some of the more provocative interdisciplinary takes on crime, deviance, and control will do well to consider this volume. I highly recommend it.

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