The vilification and pleasures of youthful transgression

By Keith Hayward

Introduction

There can be few subjects as effective at setting in motion the meter of public opinion as youth crime. For many, it betokens a general erosion of public standards, providing visceral and compelling evidence of an ever more 'permissive society'. For others, such contemporary fears about the increased seriousness of youth criminality represent little new: simply the continuation of a two-century old tendency to scapegoat and vilify the transgressions of the young (e.g. Pearson 1983), yet another moment in a long series of moral panics. This chapter however, is not an attempt to retrace the contours of this debate (not least because the subject has been covered with considerable insight and authority in the preceding chapters: see especially chapters 3 and 5). Nor should it be seen as an attempt to offer any practical political or social solutions for reducing or controlling the errant behaviour of young people. Instead this chapter takes an altogether different tack. Following the theoretical approach of a group of scholars whose work is often collectively referred to as 'cultural criminology' (see Katz 1988; Lyng 1990; Presdee 1994, 2000; Ferrell and Sanders 1995; Redhead 1995), the chapter focuses on the excitement, pleasures, and opportunities for psychic resolution involved in certain modes of youthful criminality.

The chapter will unfold in three sections, each one drawing on a distinct facet of contemporary cultural criminology.[1] It begins with a discussion of one of the pivotal texts in the post-modern reconstruction of aetiology, namely Jack Katz's *The Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil* (1988). Katz's emphasis on the seductive quality of crime represents a refreshing alternative to much mainstream criminology and arguably has resonance for anyone wishing to understand the compelling and exciting nature of much youth crime. The chapter continues with an attempt to locate Katz's framework within a broader social context. More specifically, the section will seek to emphasize the dialectic between excitement, (self) control and crime under conditions of late modernity, arguing that, in an increasingly socially precarious world, many individuals are seeking to construct identity for themselves by engaging in practices (including criminal practices) that involve what I wish to call a 'controlled loss of control'. The final section looks at the very different responses of the State and the market to such a set of circumstances; focusing in particular on what it is about contemporary culture, and the societal reactions to that emergent culture, that makes transgression and the consumption of transgression so seductive.

'The seductions of crime': Jack Katz and the attraction of transgression

As the title of his book suggests, the central contention of Jack Katz's (1988) theory of crime is that there are 'moral and sensual attractions in doing evil' and that a truly inclusive account of 'anti-social behaviour' has to start from this premise. However, as Katz stresses from the outset, while the subject of crime has been approached from numerous perspectives, very few of these explanatory accounts have focused on the varied emotional dynamics and experiential attractions that are an integral element of much crime (the notable exception of course being the work of David Matza and Howard Becker). Consequently, the 'lived experience of criminality' rarely features in traditional criminological and sociological explanations of crime and deviance: 'Somehow in the psychological and sociological disciplines, the lived mysticism and magic in the foreground of criminal experience became unseeable, while the abstractions hypothesized by "empirical theory" as the determining background causes, especially those conveniently quantified by state agencies, became the stuff of "scientific" thought and "rigorous" method' (ibid. 311-2).

      For Katz, causal explanations of criminality that stress the importance of structural, environmental, genetic or rational choice factors, over and above the emotional and interpretative qualities of crime, are often guilty of stripping away and repressing key individual emotions such as humiliation, arrogance, ridicule, cynicism, (and importantly) pleasure and excitement; emotions that, in many cases, are central to the criminal event. In doing so they 'turn the direction of inquiry' around, so that the focus of criminological attention falls on the 'background' rather then the 'foreground' of the criminal act (ibid: 9). Thus, fundamentally, Katz poses a question that many criminologists either take for granted, or completely ignore: namely 'why are people who were not determined to commit a crime one moment determined to do so the next?' (ibid: 4). The solution, he claims, can be found only by going beyond background factors and delving deeper into the criminal act itself. He argues that the various mechanisms which move actors between 'background factors and subsequent acts' have been a kind of 'black box', assumed to have some motivational force but left essentially unexamined (ibid: 5). Katz proposes to retrieve and prize open the contents of this 'black box'. In short, one might say that Katz's work can be seen as an attempt to reclaim the 'unexamined spaces in criminological theory' (Henry and Milovanovic 1996: 60).

      Using an eclectic array of sources, Katz builds up a picture of the sensual, magical and creative appeals of crime. Evoking the notion of the Nietzschean superman, Katz asserts that deviance offers the perpetrator a means of 'self transcendence', a way of overcoming the conventionality and mundanity typically associated with the banal routines and practicalities of everyday 'regular life'. At the subjective level, crime is stimulating, exciting and liberating. To think of crime as either another form of rational activity or as the result of some innate or social pathology is to totally miss the point. [2] At the same time, he urges more attention to the criminal act – for each specific crime, he maintains, presents the criminal with a distinct set of subjective experiences and existential dilemmas, and thus has its own singular attraction.

      If emotions are major contingencies in the 'lived contours of crime', Katz's broad cross-section of crimes offers many resonances for anyone attempting to devise a theory of youth crime. The 'sneaky thrills' of juvenile shop-lifting are discussed, from the

'sensual metaphysics', pleasure, and 'ludic' quality of the act itself, to the shame and embarrassment felt on apprehension. Robbery is also discussed at length. Katz builds up a picture of robbery as a spontaneous, chaotic and often hedonistic act. Also emphasized is the 'sense of superiority' involved in the act of 'stickup' and the pride that robbers take in their defiant reputation as 'badmen'. Katz even examines the lived sensuality behind events of cold-blooded, 'senseless' murder. In particular, he charts the role of 'defilement', 'sacrifice', 'righteous rage', 'vengeance' and 'hedonism' - emotions that are frequently at the root of most 'non modal homicides'. Controversially, Katz explicitly extends this line of argument to include youth criminality - specifically, gang-related crime and other forms of street violence - and in doing so challenges the assumptions of broadly marxist-inspired critical commentators who portray working-class youth delinquency as symbolic rebellion against the dominant values of society and the contradictions of capitalism (e.g. Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1977). At the same time, in some moments, his language is highly reminiscent of such work, notably in the emphasis on the 'transformative magic' of crime/deviance. The key difference is Katz draws out the inherent 'emotionality' of the criminal act, as opposed to the emphasis on ideas in the analysis of ideology, the actor as a rational agent working with, as it were, 'corrupt information'.

Certainly, as I have argued elsewhere in a co-authored piece with Mark Fenwick (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 36-39), Katz's work on the thrill of transgression can easily be extended to include a range of other criminal activities - especially those perpetrated by young people - and to oppose any simplistic diagnosis in terms of immediate financial or practical benefits. Teenage criminal practices such as vandalism, theft and destruction of cars, firestarting, hoax emergency service call-outs, car 'cruising', peer group violence and other forms of street delinquency have much to do with youth expression and exerting control in neighbourhoods where, more often than not, traditional avenues for youthful stimulation and endeavour have long since evaporated.

> Similarly, graffiti 'artists' and members of 'tag crews' in both the United States and in Europe, often talk at length, not only about the thrill and emotional charge experienced when breaking into buildings and compounds and defacing private property, but also about how their work serves as a means of self-expression and a way in which they can make themselves heard (see Ferrell 1995; Lasley 1995)… Arguably, if no material gain is likely to be forthcoming from this practice, then it must surely centre around either the excitement of perpetrating an illegal act or the exhilaration of wanton destruction. A similar argument might be put forward in relation to drug use which is probably the most prevalent of all youthful criminal transgressions. There can be little doubt that the drug sub-culture is inextricably linked with emotion: from the social circumstances in which the majority of teenage drug use takes place (for example, bars, clubs, raves and so on); to the anticipation involved in the 'scoring' process; continuing with the heightened sensations experienced prior to and during ingestion of the drug; and finally, the roller-coaster of emotions one feels following the resolution of the process and the psychopharmacological high. (ibid: 36-7)

Such examples serve to illustrate that, in many cases, individuals are seduced by the existential possibilities offered by criminal acts - by the pleasure of transgression. And hence, a key advantage of this approach is that it helps us to understand why it is

that youth criminality is not solely the preserve of those groups who are economically and socially disadvantaged. These groups may well be over-represented in the criminal justice system but – to make a familiar point - this may have more to do with the social construction of criminality than higher actual rates of criminal participation (see chapter 4). Youth crimes such as drug-taking, "twocking",[3] peer-group fighting and vandalism have an expressive element which (as I shall argue later) is inextricably related to excitement and the exertion of control; consequently, their motivation cannot be limited to any specific set of social circumstances or economic inequality. Such crimes are about the thrill of transgression and the pursuit of the limit (ibid).

Despite its originality,[4] Katz's work has been much criticized for failing to recognize the wider social and structural contexts within which all individual experience takes place (for another version of this argument see O'Malley and Mugford 1994; Van Hoorebeeck 1997). However, this line of argument itself seems to ignore Katz's criticism of the failure of 'background' structural theories of crime to address the fundamental question of why (under shared social conditions) one person rather than another commits a crime? (Katz is not even without precedent here: witness all the 'over prediction of crime' critiques.). At this point, we find ourselves traversing very familiar ground - the 'structure versus agency' debate. However, rather than view Katz's work simply as resurrecting one side of this binary framework, I wish to proffer a very different claim. It is my contention that Katz's analysis is not so much about agency versus structure, but rather about prioritizing emotionality in such a way that it neither reduces emotions purely to the level of individual psychology (Katz should be credited for taking emotions out of the realm of pathology) nor pre-locates the question of those emotions in the drama of state-resistance and political rebellion.

It is this cultural line of inquiry that I wish to develop in the remainder of the chapter. Focusing on one particular emotion – excitement – I will explore what is particular about human experience and social conditions *today* that makes the pursuit of excitement so seductive. More specifically, it will be proposed that transgressive behaviour is becoming seductive not only because of the excitement it brings at the level of the individual experience (à la Katz) but also, importantly, because it offers a way of seizing control of one's destiny. This latter point is of increasing importance. For Katz, as stated above, the issue is escape from the mundane routines of everyday life. However, the contemporary milieu is now more complex. For not only do we inhabit an ever more uncertain world in which control is frequently wrested away from us, but, at the same time – in something of a social irony – late modern society responds to such circumstances by enacting a series of constraining so-called rational measures that, rather than creating order and stability, serve only to create a sense of what I will call here the 'hyper-banalization' of everyday life. And yet again, this movement interacts with that perverse cultural as well as economic agency – the market – too often overlooked by criminologists with their relentless focus on official agencies of social control.[5]

Excitement, 'edgework' and risk: avenues for a 'controlled loss of control' in late modern life

As numerous commentators have suggested, late modern society (not least in the industrialized West) can be characterized by a pervasive sense of insecurity and

disembeddedness: not just in the well-documented areas of cultural production (Featherstone 1991; Jameson 1991; Lash and Urry 1994) and industrial capitalism (Hall and Jacques 1990; Harvey 1990; Amin 1994) but also importantly in the realms of everyday life (de Certeau 1984) and at the level of individual consciousness and awareness. Everything, it seems, is subject to change and reconstitution, as seen in the apparent 'crises' in masculinity (Connell 1995; Jefferson 1997), the family (Wilson 1975) and the demise of the nation state (Taylor 1999: 20-27). While such a chaotic and uneven world may, in the long term, offer society a whole new range of opportunities and possibilities, in the short term, it often throws up feelings of melancholia and uncertainty as large numbers of people are forced to reconsider their past, present and future and face up to the fact that many of the teleological presuppositions they clung to for so long have now collapsed and cannot be reconstructed. Grand narratives and individual narratives rise and fall together (Lyotard 1984).

This has been the stuff of much observation. Giddens (1990), for example, colourfully equates everyday life in late modernity with trying to regain control of an out-of-control juggernaut. Mike Davis (1990, 1998) and Zygmunt Bauman (1987, 1998) meanwhile see the future only in terms of a new dialectic of social control predicated on each individual's ability to bridge the cultural/financial gap that dictates entry into the consumer society, creating a new category of the excluded urban repressed. However, from a purely criminological perspective, perhaps the best articulation of the impact of current social and economic conditions on individual subjectivity is the one recently set out by Jock Young:

> We live now in a much more difficult world: we face a greater range in life choices than ever before, our lives are less firmly embedded in work and relationships, our everyday existence is experienced as a series of encounters with risk either in actuality or in the shape of fears and apprehensions. We feel both materially insecure and ontologically precarious. (Young 1999: vi)

What all these commentators have in common is the belief that, success in tackling the contemporary crime problem, depends upon acknowledging the 'ontological insecurity' that is now such a striking feature of modern life (ibid: 97-104). In short, we must engage with the contingencies and dilemmas (the dilemmas of the contingent?) brought about by the late modern condition.

One form of social response to these fundamental transformations and epistemological uncertainties has been the emergence of various social agencies that attempt to deal with these changes through a non-judgmental, non-reductive form of 'risk management' (Giddens 1990, 1991; Beck 1992). However, as Beck suggests in his influential text *Risk Society,* very often the very steps taken in a bid to stave off (or more accurately 'manage') risk, serve only to produce new risks or exacerbate older ones. Thus, this new awareness of the consequence of our actions – what Beck describes as a heightened 'reflexivity' – can only intensify and make more anxious the sense of the 'juggernaut out of control'.

It is, however, interesting to look at the subject of risk from a somewhat different perspective, specifically, the way that many individuals are using risk (and associated practices) as a means of achieving a semblance of control - or, more accurately, (following Mike Featherstone 1991) a 'controlled sense of loss of control' - in the face of

the changes and upheavals associated with late modernity. One might say that, rather than eschewing risk, the modern subject is embracing it. Let us pause to consider this point in more detail. As alluded to above, one of the strange paradoxes of contemporary society is how, in the same moment, an individual can feel both ontologically insecure *and* - as a result of the increasing drive within everyday life towards the 'hyper-banalization' of society - over controlled. In other words, not only is it becoming more difficult to exert control and navigate a life pathway via the 'established' norms and codes of modernity but, at the same time, the individual is confronted by a burgeoning 'culture of control' (Garland 2001), whether in the form of State-imposed criminal legislation and other modes of rationalization, or private, decentralized, forms of auto-surveillance and other techniques. Given such circumstances, might it not be the case that many individuals will wish to escape this conflicting situation by exerting a sense of control and self actualization – to feel alive in an over-controlled *yet at the same time* highly unstable world? Moreover, might reflexive risk-calculation (such a prominent feature of our times) be the very instrumental device that enables that escape?

Indeed, within the various cultural practices associated with contemporary youth culture there is much evidence to suggest that risk-taking is becoming more pervasive. From the youthful (and not so youthful) excesses associated with 'E' and 'rave' culture, car 'cruising',[6] and 'binge drinking', to the rise in dangerous extreme sports and the upsurge in socially risky practices such as unprotected sex and the use of hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine, it seems that for many young people, the greater the risk, the greater the attraction. Perhaps it should come as no real surprise then that many of the forms of crime identified above also become a way of navigating a path through such uncertain times? But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us return to the question of how the conditions of late modernity are affecting everyday life, and in turn contributing to much youth criminality.

Stephen Lyng (1990) has explored what one could call the existential nature of voluntary risk-taking – or, as he prefers to call it, 'edgework' - in post-industrial society. According to Lyng edgework involves:

> [a] clearly observable threat to one's physical or mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence. The archetypal edgework experience is one in which the individual's failure to meet the challenge at hand will result in death, or at the very least, debilitating injury. This type of edgework is best illustrated by such dangerous sports as skydiving, hang gliding, rock climbing, motor cycle racing/car racing, and downhill ski racing or by such dangerous occupations as fire fighting, test piloting, combat soldiering, movie stunt work and police work. The threat of death or injury is ever-present in such activities, although participants often claim that only those 'who don't know what they are doing' are at risk. (*ibid*: 857)

For Lyng, edgework activities are a means of seizing control, a way of reacting against the 'unidentifiable forces that rob one of individual choice' (*ibid*: 870).

Despite raising many interesting ideas, Lyng's article has been criticized for overemphasizing prototypically masculine, middle-class pursuits, while at the same time ignoring the risk-taking practices associated with other sections of society. Eleanor Miller (1991) has suggested that the idea of edgework or 'considered risk-taking' as a means of

exerting control should be extended to include women and other sections of society such as the poor and the socially excluded - the very individuals who appear in Bauman's and Davis's accounts of the urban 'repressed'. Such an assertion makes perfect sense. Given my earlier arguments, the search for risk, hedonism and excitement requires outlets – but the opportunities vary enormously, and in class/gender/neighbourhood-related ways - whether it be a certain activity, a form of experience, or indeed a specific type of space. In Lyng's account such emotions are experienced on the cliff face, the racetrack, in the combat zone, during a sky-dive, or in other demarcated spaces. However, if one is not able to escape one's social environment to engage in licit risk-taking or edgework activities, then one has to find alternative outlets to play out these emotions. In a great many instances, the likelihood is that individuals will 'get their kicks' in spaces they know well (to use a term made famous by Brantingham and Brantingham (1981), within the 'cognitively known area'). In other words, the run-down estate or ghetto neighbourhood becomes a paradoxical space: on one hand it symbolizes the systematic powerlessness so often felt by the individuals who live in these environments, and on the other, the sink estate serves as a site of risk consumption that provides numerous illegal avenues. The ghetto becomes a 'performance zone' in which displays of risk, excitement, masculinity and even 'carnivalesque pleasure' in the form of rioting are frequently perpetuated (see Presdee 2000: chapter 3).

This is the point at which we need to go beyond Katz's simple model of crime as escape from/transcendence of the routine, to present instead, a 'control-excitement' model (understood via risk, hedonism, expressivity and the concept of edgework). Put simply, many forms of crime frequently perpetrated within urban areas should be seen for exactly what they are, an attempt to achieve a semblance of control within ontologically insecure social worlds (O'Malley and Mugford 1994; Morrison 1995; Henry and Milovanovic 1996).

This idea that deviance is connected to reality construction and identity in late modern consumer society has been explored in the fascinating book *Kamikaze Biker* by Ikuya Sato (1991). Sato's firsthand account of the motivations and phenomenology of *boso* driving culture in Japan (*boso* driving refers to the practice of illegal street-racing and high-risk, high-speed reckless driving displays undertaken by teenage Japanese car and motorcycle gangs or *bosozoku*) sheds some light on the experiential feelings of individuals involved in risk-laden, illegal activities - not least, how certain feelings were common to the *bosozoku* when racing or eluding the police. In particular, the sense that what they were doing was somehow 'bracketed off from everyday life'. Consequently, *bosozoku* self-reported that they experienced a 'loss of self-consciousness', the feeling that 'means-ends relationships were simplified', and the sense that *boso* driving involved a different temporal framework from 'ordinary life'.

Obviously, this argument applies more to crimes with a strong so-called 'expressive' element than it does to other more utilitarian/rationalistic forms of criminality (for example, joy-riding exemplifies these ideas in that it is both rich in excitement and may seem to offer a means of self-actualization, while at the same time providing the participant with a physical means of traversing (and escaping) the socially deprived neighbourhood). But one should not forget that these are the very crimes that abound within troubled inner-city neighbourhoods. Consequently, one might view such

crimes as 'urban edgework', attempts to construct an enhanced sense of self by engaging in risk-laden practices on the metaphorical edge:

> On the one hand, there is the routinised alienation and boredom of everyday life - a world in which individuals find themselves over-controlled and yet without control. On the other hand, there are those activities which offer the possibility of excitement *and* control. Lyng's account focuses on extreme sports, whilst the new cultural criminology focuses on transgression. Although ostensibly dangerous, these activities offer a mode of being in which individuals take control through a calculated act of decontrol. The seductiveness of crime is not only linked to the inherent excitement of the acts involved, but also to the more general feelings of self-realization and self-expression to which they give rise. It might be an unpalatable thought, but it is through such activities that individuals come alive. (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 49)

The 'criminalization of everyday life' versus the 'commodification of transgression'

> Excitement, even ecstasy (the abandonment of reason and rationale), is the goal... The quest for excitement is directly related to the breaking of boundaries, of confronting parameters and playing at the margins of social life in the challenging of controllers and their control mechanisms... It is the realm of resentment and irrationality *par excellence* and also the realm of much crime. It is that part of social life that is unknowable to those in power and which therefore stands outside their consciousness and their understanding. They cannot understand it or indeed even 'read' it as real life, but only as immoral, uncivilised, obscene and unfathomable social behaviour. (Presdee 2000: 7-8)

In his recent book *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*, Mike Presdee (2000) argues that, for many young people, the pleasure and excitement of transgression is double: not only is it as a direct corollary of a society in the process of undergoing pronounced change and reconstitution, but also where the only response of the State is to impose more intense forms of social control. Evoking Weber's (modernist) rubric of rationalization, Presdee asserts that, in an effort to curb the apparent increase in youth crime (cf. Zimring 1998), Western governments have enacted a series of measures that add up to what he describes as 'the creeping criminalization of everyday life'. The result, he argues, is that, in certain social settings, ours is a world in which 'dominant and seemingly rational logics' act upon us and constrain us: 'As the individual becomes more and more trapped by applied science and the rational, so we become more and more emeshed and oppressed within the so-called scientific measurement of our lives' (Presdee 2000: 159; on this point see also chapters 32-36 this volume).

At this point it is worth reflecting on the exact nature of these 'rational logics'. On the one hand, there is the clearly punitive form (i.e. prohibitive legislation, the move towards harsher punishment regimes for young offenders, and other reactionary measures), on the other hand, there are those measures based around an actuarial and calculative approach to the control and management of social problems – this latter approach being all about the creation of routines, conformity and acceptable social habits/behaviour. While traditionally these two forms of social control have been seen to have clear conceptual differences (e.g Foucault 1977), in recent times, the distinction

between them has become noticeably blurred. In practice, a hybrid form of criminalization/social control has emerged. For example, curfew orders, while being punitive in essence, at the same time, represent a move towards the conditioning and 'routinzation' of individual action.

Homogenizing these two aspects, Presdee emphasizes the paradox that the more the State imposes rationalizing rubrics, the more it provokes in its citizens/subjects not compliant rationality, but rather heightened emotionality: '…we respond with irrational emotions derived from desire, pleasure and the sensualness of a postmodern commodity culture' (ibid: 29). Hence a spiral in which this 'irrational response' provokes further punitive/rationalizing moves from the State. Culture therefore becomes at once the site of excitement and social contestation, of experimentation and dissonance: 'It is a world full of contradictions, inequalities and struggle, yet it is a world where... the pursuit of pleasure is potentially antagonistic to the state' (ibid.).

Presdee now revisits the familiar language of moral panic (Young 1971; Cohen 1972). Indeed, on the face of it, little has changed: the transgressive nature of youth (sub)cultural practice still provokes a general sense of fear and moral indignation; mass media coverage still serves to 'amplify deviance'; complex social phenomena continue to be reduced to simple causal relations; and politicians continue to fall over themselves in their attempts to curry favour with the 'moral majority' by vilifying and condemning the 'immorality of contemporary youth'. This pervasive criminalization process, he argues, adds up to little more than a war against the young. From curfews to exclusion orders, from benefit reform to Public Disorder Acts, the government is turning the screw on the young, subjecting not only their 'oppositional forms of popular and personal pleasure' to increasing political arbitration and state agency sanction, but also their legitimate cultural practices and even, in many instances, their everyday round.

In a further move McRobbie and Thornton (1995: see chapter 4 this volume) argue that, for many young people, a decent dose of moral outrage remains the only acid test of a truly oppositional, and therefore, worthwhile cultural practice, corporations are now actively using moral panics (in the form of 'a bit of controversy - the threat of censorship, the suggestion of sexual scandal or subversive activity') for their own ends. This point is illustrated in Presdee's memorable account of the way that successive governments attempted (largely in vain) to criminalize and regulate one of the most popular forms of youth expression, contemporary club ("rave") culture (see Presdee 2000: chapter 7). In this account we see how such intense forms of social control are always destined to fail - one only need look at the abject failure of current anti-drug legislation to recognize this to be the case. Certainly, the collective efforts of UK governments during the 1990s to regulate club culture and outlaw many of its associated *sub rosa* activities served only to train the spotlight of attention more firmly on the "club scene" - both its underground and more mainstream manifestations. Once again we are forced to consider just how entwined is the relationship between the various processes that serve to vilify and ultimately criminalize the cultural practices of the young, and the very reasons why many young people actually engage in these practices in the first place.

> Being 'young' is characterized by a culture created out of the tensions that
> emanate between regulation and rebellion; control and care; the civilised and the
> savage. The result is a carnivalesque culture that forever pushes at the boundaries
> of transgression... Their culture, rather than being a search for the 'authentic' as

in modern culture, is an endless search for the inauthentic; that is, a culture that is empty of the authority and the imperatives that come with authenticity'. *It is this perceived 'emptiness as protest' that prompts panic from 'adult' society.* (ibid: 114 emphasis added)

What is interesting about Presdee's account is the notion of 'the search for the inauthentic' – indicating a social logic considerably altered since Cohen's classic work. Certainly, this, in my opinion, can help us understand intensified social and State responses. For as Docker (1994: 117) has pointed out, while in cultural terms modernism protested against the contemporary world, the issues of young people could still be understood in terms of their search for an authentic self and the need to break free from the constraints of imposed rationality and authority. However, the 'search for the inauthentic', as Presdee seems to be suggesting, is something very different - a break with this modernist 'tradition' and a refusal to engage with established tropes of meaning making. No wonder such resistance produces a greater fury.

Yet it is not only as prohibition (or discipline, or indeed, administrative/actuarial criminology) that the 'wider society' engages with cultural forms that are tied in to the production of youth identity, including the way in which images of crime are inscribed in this process (see Young 1996 for a more developed version of this argument). In what follows, I intend to follow this line of inquiry by looking briefly at how that other great agent of social reaction – the market – is participating in the process of promoting and marketing transgression.

Postmodernism (as eloquently illustrated by Harvey and Jameson) celebrates heterogeneity, depthlessness, unpredictability, risk, *inauthenticity* and technological advances in communication, media, and consumer culture (hence also a note of caution about the too-easy use of such terms as 'self-actualization' and 'identity'). Nowhere are these cultural tendencies more in evidence than in contemporary youth culture (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 43-46). What is important in this context, however, is the way that, in recent years, corporate capitalism has increasingly come to rely on images of crime as a means of selling products in the youth market. Certainly, crime has long sold. The compelling and salacious nature of certain criminal acts ensures a ready audience for crime and it has remained an enduring theme in popular culture throughout the twentieth century. What has changed, however, is both the force and range of the message. Crime has been seized upon; it is being packaged and marketed to young people as a romantic, exciting, cool and fashionable cultural symbol. It is in this cultural context that transgression becomes a desirable consumer choice. Within consumer culture, crime is aesthetisized, and thus our experience of crime is primarily aesthetic, that is to say, our collective experience of crime is given to us via the mass media. This is not to suggest any simple causal link between images of violence and crime in consumer culture and contemporary youth crime; rather what I am suggesting is that the distinction between representations of criminality and the pursuit of excitement, especially in the area of youth culture, are becoming extremely blurred.

It is worth pausing to reflect on this 're-branding' of crime within contemporary culture. One obvious example of this process is the way in which 'gangster' rap combines images of criminality with street gang iconography and designer chic to create a product that is immediately seductive to youth audiences. For

instance, in recent years it has become very difficult to tell whether gangster rap imagery and styling is shaping street gang culture in the US or vice versa. Since the 1980s, many cultural symbols of rap music, such as branded sports apparel and designer clothing, have been used by street gangs as a means of 'flagging' gang affiliations. Add to this the fact that several major rap artists like Tupac Shakur and the Notorious BIG have been murdered in a long-running feud between East and West coast rap artists, and it becomes immediately apparent that, at least in the field of gangster rap, art and real life are becoming ever more interwined. Stylized images of crime abound in many other areas of the mass media, sending mixed messages to a young audience who often take their lead from popular and consumer culture. In film, violent crime and drug dealing are glamorized by slick production values and carefully selected soundtracks. The central characters in films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *New Jack City, Reservoir Dogs, True Romance* and *Natural Born Killers* are then lionized as cool popular culture icons. (ibid: 45-6)

Likewise, on television, crime is being packaged as entertainment (Baudrillard 1983). 'Reality' police shows are a staple of television schedules, despite being little more than a mixture of dramatic case re-enactments and real life crime footage, cobbled together to provide audiences with a vicarious televisual cheap thrill. Crime also features prominently in the world of video gaming. Violent imagery has always played a major part in this pastime, most notably in role-playing and 'shoot 'em up' games. However, in recent years, game developers have begun to produce games like *Kingpin* that use criminal activities as their central theme, two notorious examples being *Carmaggedon* and *Grand Theft Auto*, both of which had their release dates put back while the content of their games was reviewed by censors. *Carmeggedon* celebrates reckless and aggressive driving, while in *Grand Theft Auto* players traverse urban landscapes by hopping from one car to another, gaining extra points by eluding the police. These games provide their predominantly young audience with vicarious excitement from activities that are at best questionable (Fenwick and Hayward 2000: 45). Perhaps the most obvious current example of this 'genre mixing' was the reaction to the murder of Jill Dando and the thought that it must in some way be linked to her role on the popular TV show *Crimewatch*.

To conclude, while the State responds to the reconfigurations and transformations associated with the late modern condition by imposing what they believe to be more 'rational' forms of control and authority, the market takes a very different approach. Rather than attempting to curtail the excitement and emotionality that, for many individuals, is the preferred antidote to ontological precariousness, the market chooses instead to celebrate and, very importantly, commodify, these same sensations.

Conclusion

The themes and ideas presented in this chapter pose more questions than answers. For example, simply drawing attention to the various ways in which the vilification and pleasures of youthful transgression are inextricably linked provides little practical assistance to criminologists engaged in the fundamental task of reducing youth crime. Likewise, the recognition of the centrality of culture in the social production of crime also mitigates against any obvious solutions. However, it is hoped that this chapter has

drawn attention to the role of excitement and emotionality in the commission of many forms of youth crime, and importantly highlighted the ways in which many young people, when faced with the contingencies and dilemmas brought about by the late modern condition, seek refuge in what I have called a 'controlled loss of control'. At a less explicit level, this chapter has also attempted to highlight the ever-changing nature of youth crime and therefore the need to constantly subject it to the lens of deconstruction, for only by undertaking this task will criminology be able to gain a more rounded picture of youthful transgression.

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[1] Cultural criminology is a particular form of criminological theory that sets out to reinterpret criminal behaviour as a technique for resolving certain psychic conflicts - conflicts that in many instances are indelibly linked to various features of contemporary life. One might say that it represents a phenomenology of transgression fused with a sociological analysis of late modern culture. That said, cultural criminology should not be thought of as in any way oppositional to the more mainstream criminological enterprise. Rather it should be seen as a means of reinvigorating the study of crime. As Ferrell and Sanders have commented: 'bending or breaking the boundaries of criminology... does not undermine contemporary criminology as much as it expands it and enlivens it' (1995: 17).

[2] As Fenwick and Hayward have observed: 'It is worth noting that this argument challenges one of the central assumptions of much contemporary criminology, namely the belief that most crime is routinised and, in some way, banal. This is undoubtedly the case if one adopts the perspective of the police or other criminal justice and law enforcement agencies, however, it is not necessarily true for those participating in criminal activity, for whom the most innocuous transgression may well represent an exhilarating form of experience' (2000: 36).

[3] 'Twocking' refers to the practice of taking cars without their owners' prior consent.

[4] It is worth emphasizing at this point that Katz is not alone in his attempt to re-orientate criminology's gaze away from logos of materialism and rationalism towards a position on crime that more fully appreciates the existential nature of the criminal act. Authors such as Presdee (2000), Stanley (1996: chapter 7) Morrison (1995), Young (1996), Salecl (1993) and Henry and Milovanovic (1996), for instance, have all also contributed to this project.

[5] On the subject of the interaction of the cultural and the economic see Michel Callon's (1998) *Laws of the Market*.

[6] 'Cruising' is the cutting edge of *sub rosa* car culture and involves unauthorized high-speed city-centre car racing and mass car rallies at which dangerous driving practices are encouraged and lionized.

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