

The 'Death of Deviance' and Stagnation of Twentieth Century Criminology

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The publication of Colin Sumner's (1994) *The Sociology of Deviance: An Obituary* marked a critical transformation in the theorisation of crime and criminality. In a work that offered a narrative history of criminological theory from Durkheim's (1982 [1895]) *Sociological Method* to Taylor *et al's* (2003 [1973]) *The New Criminology*, Sumner explored the rise and fall of early sociological explanations for criminality, the emergence of a new perspective and a radical transformation of the discipline during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The original 'sociology of deviance' – the book's initial object of study – emerged during the 1920s as an early attempt to offer a sociological theory of criminal causation. Its reliance on a normative perspective, however, left little room for the putative plurality of social norms in light of the counter-cultural ideals of the nineteen-sixties. In these circumstances Sumner goes on to identify an increasingly forceful pluralist critique that placed greater emphasis on the potential illegitimacy of normative prohibitions, the censorious nature of centralised power and hysterical social reactions to the perceived deviance of subordinate groups.

In Sumner's estimation this social reaction perspective became increasingly symptomatic of criminological theory during the latter decades of the twentieth century to the extent that the discipline looked to be undergoing a marked paradigm shift leaving behind many of its founding concepts for a more 'mature', 'enlightened' interpretation of its subject matter. While noting that the old 'sociology of deviance' seemed to be running out of steam, variously describing it as 'outmoded', 'stagnant' or 'stalled' and even likening it to the terrain of a battlefield – empty, scarred, deathly silent – the emerging social reaction perspective attracted far more affirmative discussion. In Sumner's (2012: 165) analysis, "the concept of social censure has considerably more descriptive and explanatory power, is research generative and can be deployed irrespective of politics". In this way, Sumner's narrative, while not uncritical of the developing

perspective, effectively captured the criminological zeitgeist providing a key statement of how the discipline saw itself during the decades running up to the new millennium, finding a deeply appreciative audience and a ready-made home amid the wider criminological literature (see, O'Connell, 1995; Venkatesh, 1995; Roberts, 1996, for typical assessments).

In this way an emerging 'sociology of censure' arguably altered the discipline's surface texture, repurposed criminological theory and even realigned the ultimate aims of criminological analysis to focus more on media discourse, political portrayal and the effects of representation. In this chapter we will look back on the resultant intellectual transformation from a twenty-first century perspective in order to critically explore its long-term impact. We will divide this discussion into three component parts. The first will put a little more flesh on Sumner's observed transformation in order to fully appreciate the ideas and concepts that define both the 'sociology of deviance' and the subsequent 'sociology of censure'. We will then look again at social censure's explanatory capacity based on a growing critique its political, philosophical and ideological roots (see, for instance, Hall et al, 2008; Hall, 2012). The final third will consider the possibility that criminology is currently returning to some of the ideas that once characterised the 'sociology of deviance' with particular reference to growing interest in the socio-cultural forces behind criminality.

From 'Deviance' to 'Censure'

The 'sociology of deviance' grew out of Durkheimian social theory and its attempts to establish a 'realist' social science that would locate social interaction within a broader cultural, political and economic context. Its purpose was to move beyond the 'methodological individualism' that marked nineteenth-century positivism's theorisation of crime and deviance to offer a holistic analysis of relationships between social context and individual action based on empirical observation of the social world. Where most pre-existing theoretical frameworks held 'social facts' such as crime to be artefacts of individual pathology, Durkheimian sociology began to recognise the ineffable contingency

of social action. In other words, Durkheim began to offer explanations for social phenomena grounded in practical and philosophical context, promoting a “phenomenological perspective... which challenged the crude [individualist] empiricism of the positivist vision, and offered new images of the thoroughly social character of vision... [making] it altogether more difficult to separate the phenomenon allegedly observed from the emotional, political, linguistic and cultural conditions of the observation” (Sumner, 1994: 10).

While there is much more to be said about the complexities of Durkheimian sociology the assertion that social interaction is driven by much more than the internal nature of the individual was quite a radical idea for the early part of the twentieth century. It held that the social world was a product of socio-ethical ideals, practical circumstances and the interplay between people, organisations and collective moral sentiments rather than the clash of isolated individuals, some of whom with singular pathological defects. This basic idea appeared in a few different guises throughout Durkheim’s work but perhaps most instructively in his assertion that increasingly complex modern societies were losing many of their old moral certainties amid the creeping decline of organised religion and the rise of an industrial economy that severed individual attachments to instructive moral sentiments. Where western society perhaps seemed to have come from a single moral order, Durkheim (2002 [1897]) noted that the growing complexity of social relations seemed to isolate individuals from the normative values that structured interaction heralding a condition of normlessness that turned pre-existing social dispositions toward self-preservation – greed, interpersonal competition and material acquisition – resulting in growing deviation from established norms amongst those worst affected by the rapid pace of social change in industrialising societies.

The Chicago School of Sociology started out with the assertion that crime and deviance needed to be treated as concrete aspects of social reality rooted in contingent circumstance rather than the base nature of the individual. With this in mind they set out to explore the significant context of deviance and quickly noticed that all manner of social problems, including criminality, seemed to map disproportionately onto run down inner city areas primarily inhabited by

disadvantaged groups. It quickly started to look as if there must be a connection between the two, as if 'disorganised' circumstances lead into increased deviance from pre-existing social norms, including acquisitive and violent criminality. In this way, much of the Chicago School's theoretical approach, heavily influenced by Durkheim, shows more than a passing concern for the possibility that deleterious social circumstances, as a result of their effect on moral life, effectively pushed those in dire straits to otherwise alien forms of social action. Within this theoretical framework we find the foundations of social disorganisation theory (Shaw & McKay, 1972 [1942]), Sutherland's (1992 [1924]) differential association and Mertonian (1938) strain all of which came out of a tacitly Durkheimian concern for collective morality, the cultural pressures of industrial/consumer society and their deviant implications. In the latter case, for example, Robert Merton specifically argued that people confronted by the inability to live up to social goals within a materialistic culture potentially adapt to the resultant sense of inadequacy by dropping any remaining allegiance to prohibitive moral norms in favour of more forceful competition for wealth and status.

In other words, the 'sociology of deviance' was primarily interested in criminal motivation, in the forces that drive people into the acquisitive, combative and often violent behaviours that generally constitute criminality. It may well be the case that none of the Chicago School's ideas, nor, for that matter, any of the theories that followed in their wake, provide an entirely persuasive account of motivating cultural forces but as foundations on which to build they collectively represent an interesting and engaging attempt to explore a vital aspect of criminology. The sociology of deviance was a distinct and purposeful attempt to grapple with the fundamental problem of criminal causation, or, as recently phrased, to explain, "why individuals or corporate bodies are willing to risk the infliction of harm on others in order to further their own instrumental or expressive interests" (Hall, 2012: 1).

Most importantly, however, Sumner (1994) notes that the 'sociology of deviance' was bound up with the radical change of direction in western politics that gave rise to European social democracy and the American 'New Deal'. The privations

of the Great Depression, not to mention two world wars, soured western cultural relationships with nineteenth century *laissez faire*, leading British and American populations to demand major improvements in their social circumstances through new institutions and egalitarian policy change (see Galbraith, 1994; Freiden, 2006).

The sociology of deviance became entwined with the resulting political project as the empirical elaboration of the social world allowed for clearer identification of problems and more purposeful formulation of corrective policy. Its understanding of social ills and their apparent relationship with industrialism's rapid pace of social change naturally flowed into welfare programmes, job creation schemes and new social institutions that dramatically improved everyday life (see Hutton, 1996; 2003) while working against the forces that notionally pushed people into criminality. In the hands of administrators and political pragmatists, however, the sociology of deviance, even within its apparently Durkheimian perspective, quickly returned to much older concepts of individual pathology and personal failing. The conceptual advances of the early twentieth century reverted to "casual condescension and mindless jargon justifying full intervention in the lives of the powerless and poor... theoretical advances became mere subliminal references and the old concepts and prejudices openly structured the surface text" (Sumner, 1994: 130-31). The sociology of deviance, it seemed, simply provided a veneer of intellectual respectability for those with a political interest in castigating the disadvantaged and justifying authoritarian intervention in their lives.

Where the sociology of deviance concerned itself with social ills and their causative impact on criminality, the decline of those problems coupled with a seemingly inexorable rise in recorded crime in step with an increasingly authoritarian response all but forced a change of perspective. If criminality was not simply the product of social ills – an observation amply demonstrated by rising crime amid vaguely egalitarian social policy and massive improvements in social conditions on both sides of the Atlantic (Reiner, 2007) – its causation, it seemed, must lie elsewhere, perhaps even in the social democratic intrusion of the state into everyday life. With this possibility ringing in their ears the sixties

generation of social theorists internalised the growing philosophical rejection of centralised power at the heart of contemporary politics (Frank, 1999) moulding it into the criminological observation that the state's efforts to maintain social control exacerbated the 'crime problem' through constant expansion of the criminal law and the effects of getting wound up with justice systems. In line with a broad labelling perspective adapted from the sociological work of Erving Goffman (1963) and Edwin Lemert (1972) criminology started to concentrate more on how the power to create laws and apply their associated censures effectively generates 'crime' and 'deviance' where before there may only have been neutral social action. In Becker's (1963: 9) often repeated terms,

social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labelling them outsiders. From this point of view deviance is not a quality of the act... but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'.

In other words, the discipline turned its attention to the 'deviance of the lawmakers', the 'ensorious' advancement of social control over individual freedom, the power of definition vested in political institutions and the role of public discourse in criminal justice. What we have in the work of early labelling theorists is the beginning of a paradigm shift in criminological theory, a set of ideas that have come to dominate the discipline over the next few decades at least partially eclipsing the concept of crime as normative transgression leading to the assertion that this latter disposition was all but dead, the core assertion of Sumner's (1994) obituary.

After the 'Death of Deviance'

The 'sociology of censure' entered criminology during the nineteen-sixties with symbolic interactionism's adaptation of American phenomenology and the assertion that the societal reaction to perceived deviance was perhaps the most important factor driving the escalation of recorded crime rates on both sides of

the Atlantic. In this original form what became labelling theory argued that minor lifestyle differences only become the first movements of sustained deviance by provoking wider society into an excessive crackdown on youthful hijinks. The application of a deviant 'label' then forces affected individuals to construct social identity amid ongoing records of past misdeeds that colour their social relationships, erode legitimate opportunities and, as a result, ensure their allegiance to deviant lifestyles. In other words, the label effectively 'spoils' (Goffman, 1963) individual identity creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in which society's attempts to buttress social norms exacerbate deviancy, increase the profile of social problems and generate public demand for a punitive response.

If we jump forward into the nineteen-seventies we find these ideas rapidly assuming the mantle of dominant paradigm. In his well-known study of London drug culture, for example, Jock Young (1971) argued that society's punitive reaction tied his research subjects into their drug-taking identity, amplifying initially insignificant levels of deviance by raising the public profile of their offences. Much the same narrative is to be found in Cohen's (2002 [1973]) work on British 'subcultures' in which he argued that efforts to maintain social norms and regulate interpersonal conduct reinforce potentially criminal deviancy by further alienating offenders from mainstream social norms, driving their deviancy to new heights and generating demand for an even more punitive response. These ideas, however, really came to a head with critical criminology and its attempts to locate both crime and criminal justice discourse within inalienable class conflict. In Hall's (2012: 109) terms:

Generally, there are three major themes to critical criminology: 1) criminologists should focus on why some people and not others are labelled as criminals rather than... the characteristics that distinguish criminals from non-criminals; 2) moral panics about street crime are engineered to justify harsh and authoritarian laws; 3) the criminal justice system is a tool used for the maintenance of the status quo and serves the interests only of the powerful members of society.

Taylor *et al* (1973), for instance, asserted that criminal justice places undue emphasis on the 'crimes of the powerless' whilst the far more troublesome

transgressions of the relatively powerful classes often pass without comment because justice itself is an artefact of class power. What's more, they argued, the fundamental conflicts at the heart of Marxist philosophy meant that that all manner of 'deviants', through their rejection of biased social norms, constituted a proto-revolutionary vanguard whose 'creative resistance' to mainstream society engendered wholly disproportionate criminalisation and reactionary social control. With this in mind the business of criminological theory was to redress the balance; to portray 'criminals' as potential folk heroes rather than the 'folk devils' they were made out to be by authoritarian powers. What mainstream society successfully portrayed as disintegrative, harmful forms of social interaction inimical to social order were, for the new criminologists, actually reassertions of human freedom amid the overbearing oppression of social democratic – in America read 'New Deal' – bureaucracy. In their terms, "for us... *deviance* is normal – in the sense that men are now consciously involved (in the prisons that are contemporary society and in the real prisons) in asserting their human diversity... The task is to create a society in which the facts of human diversity, whether personal, organic or social, are not subject to the power to criminalise" (Ibid. 282).

In this way criminological theory benefited from a notable paradigm shift in which social reaction theory, labelling, criminalisation and moral panics repurposed the discipline, turning it away from underlying socio-cultural motivations toward the castigation of 'authoritarian' state power, social control, media discourse and inequalities of representation. Furthermore, these ideas remain a substantial force within twenty-first century criminology. Cohen's (2002 [1972]) take on moral panics, for example, seems to have found its way into the common lexicon as an abstract but apparently naturalistic description of social life that is constantly recycled with every new turn in criminal justice discourse. Whether it's child abduction and paedophilia (Cavanagh, 2007; Marsh & Melville, 2011), white-collar crime (Levi, 2009) or 9/11 and the threat of terrorism (Rothe & Muzzatti, 2004) someone takes the opportunity of a publication in which, no matter the subject, it's all just an issue of over-representation.

The same emphasis on social reaction also finds its way into 'cultural criminology', perhaps the most significant development of the nineteen-nineties, which "references the increasing analytical attention that many criminologists now give to popular culture constructions, and especially mass media constructions, of crime and crime control" (Ferrell, 1999: 395). In fact, cultural criminology continually draws on the labelling and critical criminology tradition to construct a narrative of political opposition around low-level criminality and frequently claims to have uncovered forms of 'creative resistance' to authoritarian governance (see, for instance, Presdee, 2000). Many of cultural criminology's research conclusions follow a pattern that has not changed all that much in the last forty years running from the observation of low-level deviance, through public reaction to amplification. Ferrell *et al's* (2011: 17) recent invitation to broader 'cultural' analysis of criminal justice discourse, for instance, summarises some their recent work on 'crime and resistance':

When gentrification and 'urban redevelopment' drive late capitalist urban economies, when urban public spaces are increasingly converted to privatized consumption zones, graffiti comes under particular attack by legal and economic authorities as an aesthetic threat to cities' economic vitality. In such a context legal authorities aggressively criminalize graffiti, corporate media campaigns construct graffiti writers as violent vandals – and graffiti writers themselves become more organized and politicized in response.

In this vein, the social reaction perspective has contributed much to the continued development of criminological theory both of which have singularly benefited from a variety of new ideas each of which associated with a critical perspective on the effects of official discourse. We might point, for example, to the role of politicians and corporate media in stoking up public fears, the reasons why some harmful acts and not others attract criminal prohibition and the political function of a 'culture of fear' in legitimising the sort of authoritarian governance that threatens to erode civil liberties.

If we return our analysis to the philosophical context, however, we might suggest that the 'sociology of censure' was also rooted in political philosophy. Where it is

only slightly simplistic to say that post-war society invested in bureaucratic regulation for the betterment of social conditions, the dominant political ideals of the nineteen-sixties and seventies identified the same regulation as the root of socio-economic stagnation along with a consequent need to reassert “every person’s claim to maximized private freedom... the unrestrained liberty to express autonomous desires and have them respected and institutionalised by society at large” (Judt, 2010: 87). It rejected “any form of *determination* liable to restrict the self-definition and self-fulfilment of *individuals*” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 433) and associated the expansion of social regulation with anything perceived to be wrong with that system of governance.

In other words, mainstream political philosophy came to argue for the sanctity of the individual, the moral correctness of radical self-determination and, conversely, the illegitimacy of social expectation, restrictive norms and other constraints on ‘freedom of choice’. The idea that ‘the state’ excessively constrained individual freedom came to typify cultural discourse during the latter decades of the twentieth century as various different groups claimed that one or another social norm prevented them from fully expressing their individuality, ‘letting it all hang out’ and generally ‘being themselves’. The new political and cultural paradigm preached the separation of the individual from collective authority, the ethical sanctity of self-determination and the necessity of ‘tolerance’ all of which quickly ascended to the status of dominant ideology (see Frank, 1999; Hedges, 2011) becoming incredibly forceful in both the cultural and economic fields of social activity. Where some adopted the idea of individual liberty to call for increased cultural freedom, emancipation from the monotony of work and greater flexibility in social life, others claimed the same rejection of centralised power for their attempts to roll back economic oversight, liberate the finance industry and bring the state into line with the demands of continued capital accumulation (Galbraith, 2008).

When these ideas filtered into criminological theory they turned the discipline toward a detailed study of the application of stigma and the possibility that ‘deviant’ labels effectively push people into criminality as they try to maintain social identity within reduced life chances. The social reaction perspective thus

came with its own take on criminal causation, its own way of explaining why and how people get involved in socially destructive criminality. In this schema, however, criminal causation rests not on odious circumstances – poverty, deprivation, exclusion – and deteriorating social ethics but on the idea that deviance signals active construction of social meaning on the part of labelled individuals and provides criminology with a significant illustration of ‘innate human freedom’. In other words, it suggests that criminality allows labelled individuals to negotiating meaning within a society that holds them in contempt, coming up with all manner of justifications, explanations, excuses and dismissals (Albas & Albas, 2003) that allow them to freely integrate deviance into their understanding of selfhood and claim a sense of identity from a society that excludes them from legitimate pursuits. The social reaction schema, drawing on symbolic interactionism and C. Wright Mills (1940) ‘vocabularies of motive’, effectively argues that that crime and deviance are artefacts of self-determination, expressions of inalienable freedom, amid the conservative moralisation common to over-bearing states and corporate media outlets. The key intimation of course being that the labelled individuals would have no need and possibly no reason to construct social meaning by amplifying their deviance if society could simply refrain from putting them in that position.

The idea that crime and deviance are products of stigmatised individuals’ attempts to negotiate, acquire and preserve social meaning on an ad-hoc basis, however, brings us to the one of the greatest problems with the social reaction paradigm and late-twentieth century criminological theory. When it comes to actually explaining why people get involved in criminality, social reaction relies on a concept of motive that excludes ideology and social ethics in favour of a distinctly individualist, almost rationalist interpretation of criminal causation. The idea that motive comes down to explanations and excuses offered by self-positing subjects in light of socially assigned stigma concentrates on surface detail at the expense of underlying causes - any form of social action, we might suggest, involves an immediate choice of whether to partake or refrain and that choice necessarily occurs within a single mentality but social reaction mistakes the internality of said choice for motivation. In other words, it trades on the

everyday meaning of 'motivation' as a proximate, conscious and inherently individual reason that colours social action in the moment so as not to engage with the more sociological possibility of subconscious ideological precepts that inform momentary decision-making at a much deeper level, influencing the ideas and preconceptions that affect the way such choices are made. In this vein, Hadfield (1955 quoted in Campbell, 1996: 102-3) suggested that 'motivation' can be interpreted in one of two ways "when... we say that the 'motive for the crime was theft', we mean that this was the 'end in view' which moved the prisoner to commit the crime... it would be equally true to say that the motive for the crime was avarice... in which case we use 'motive' to mean the instinctive motive or *force* which impelled him to perform the theft". What's missing from the social reaction perspective is any deeper understanding of social ethics, the ideas, concepts and common philosophical dispositions which, in keeping with Hadfield's example, might build 'avarice' into broader socio-cultural ideals turning it into an operant force capable of impelling social action. In taking the immediate offending choice for an illustration of agency and free will, social reaction theory sidesteps the vital ideological context that might bring criminology to an analysis of the ideas, common understandings and philosophical precepts that made crime seem worthwhile.

In this light, Hall (2012: 109) suggests that social reaction theory has "nothing to do with the social scientific and philosophical investigation into why individuals are willing to do harm to others in the interests of the self" leading to the increasingly forceful assertion that criminology's portrayal of the deviant/criminal as wronged victim of overbearing power may well be insufficient. Many of our key theorists are beginning to recognise that the discipline's allegiance to individualist notions of liberty and agency have left it unable to offer a perspective on the second meaning of motivation, on differential social ethics and how certain dispositions might drive the infliction of harm. If we return to Steve Hall (Ibid. 94), for example, we might even suggest that "decades of liberal dominance, controlling research programmes and selecting and deselecting theoretical frameworks, has denied us any insight into the vital ontological category of the subject of ideology". The discipline's

predilection for portraying the 'deviant' as a free-thinking individual rather than a subject of ideology has arguably prevented the emergence of a properly critical perspective on criminal motivation including its relationship with what Weber might have called the underlying 'spirit' of late capitalism (see Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Campbell, 2006)

The great problem for contemporary criminological theory is that our decades-long dalliance with social reaction seems to have produced little of any value when it comes to actually explaining the socio-ethical basis for criminality and the cultural ideals that apparently justify the infliction of harm in the service of instrumental or expressive interests. Its underlying liberal narrative has left us struggling to explain persistent forms of criminality appearing throughout the social structures of late modern capitalism by placing undue emphasis on self-determination and the ethical autonomy of the individual at the expense of the relationship between individuality and ideology. In Hall et al's (2008: 5) estimation, the:

early criminological work correlating crime rates with poverty, inequality and unemployment was largely ignored and dismissed as 'reductionist' by both the Left and Right... The left were keen to downplay working-class deviancy and focus on the crimes of the powerful, and the right were keen to ignore consumerist values, political economy and the social conditions of existence to press their traditional case for personal responsibility.

In this context, however, the last few years have seen a marked return to theorising criminal motivation and a greater willingness to look beyond public discourse in favour of political economy and socio-cultural explanations for criminality. The final section of this chapter turns our attention to these latest movements in our discipline's immediate intellectual lineage as it attempts to counter the overbearing influence of social reaction theory and develop a more holistic, explanatory perspective on crime and deviance.

The 'Return to Motivation'

When it comes to social reaction theory's dominance of criminology there have undoubtedly been a number of notable countertrends including left realism's ongoing attempts to move beyond debating the power to define crime and deviance to look at real world impact (see Currie, 2010) as well as a small but steady undercurrent of political-economic theorisation (see, for instance, James, 1995; Taylor, 1999). Nevertheless, such contributions are far outweighed by the sheer volume of social reaction theory. Hall and Winlow (2007: 83), for example, observe that critical exploration of relationships between criminality and socio-cultural ideals have been confined to "a dismissive aside in undergraduate texts or a sporadic volley launched from a disgruntled Mertonian or a lonely neo-Marxist". Meanwhile the largest part of the discipline "followed the prevailing trend in radical liberal philosophy and decided it was no longer hip to posit the capitalist economy and its relations of production as the bedrock of social life," rejecting the analysis of driving forces in favour of public representation, criminal agency and the idea of proto-political deviation.

What's missing from the resultant social reaction narrative is any account of criminal motivation beyond a vague, nameless and supposedly proto-political dissatisfaction with existing social norms that contributes little to any analysis of the 'spirit' of criminality. It proffers a critical perspective on inherently unjust social relations and their tendency to exclude, impoverish, label and confine but apparently chooses not to engage with the underlying forces of liberal capitalism's accumulation imperative and the increasingly forceful suggestion that it has created a swath of 'high-crime societies' (Garland, 2000; Hall & McLean, 2009; Reiner, 2006; 2012) by promoting the socio-ethical pre-requisites of increased criminality. The discipline's overarching subscription to late-twentieth century liberalism foregrounded the assertion that crime and deviance were often problems of social reaction to the extent that these ideas took up the lion's share of research funding, caught the attention of new students and future researchers and filtered into teaching programmes as 'contemporary' criminological theory eventually acquiring the status of dominant analytical paradigm. In the process, however, it also blocked analysis of the ideological forces – beliefs, ideals, common understandings, philosophies of social life, and,

above all, social morality – that arguably drive people into criminality by providing the social-psychological impetus for violent and acquisitive interactions.

The last few years have seen a marked return to theorising crime's driving forces with a number of prominent figures adopting a more explanatory, motivation-centred approach that arguably points the way beyond social reaction and underlying adherence to late-twentieth century individualist liberalism. It is an exercise in complimenting criminology's thoroughgoing engagement with inequalities of representation by building in a greater awareness of the ideological forces that drive violent and acquisitive behaviours in the service of instrumental goals and self-determinative subjectivity. In this vein, Colin Sumner (2012: 174), while offering a critique of ongoing attempts to resurrect the sociology of deviance in the service of a 'right-wing ideology', acknowledges that "there is a need for a critical re-moralization of society" and a much deeper understanding of the "influence of the amoral culture of the rich and powerful". What's being suggested is not so much the abandonment of censure – a paradigm that has undoubtedly hatched number of useful ideas even where it may have blocked others – as a critical re-balancing of criminology to bring the analysis of crime's ideological foundations back into our collective research agenda, to once again make it a full and vibrant part of the discipline instead of a minority offshoot. It is an attempt to move beyond endlessly debating inequalities of representation by accepting the proliferation of harmful criminality over the last half decade (see Reiner, 2007) and turning our attention to the possibility that "something somewhere is going badly wrong [which] can no longer be passed off as the mere product of a conspiratorial attempt to generate fear among the population with the aim of legitimising current modes of authoritarian control" (Hall et al, 2008: 2).

The resultant 'return to motivation' (Ibid.) presents us with a partial change of trajectory that argues for deeper critical analysis of prevailing social ideals in light of the unchecked growth of recorded crime and the consequent proliferation of flailing, vaguely authoritarian attempts at control (Garland, 2001). It often begins with some acknowledgement of the dominance of

neoliberal political economy since the early nineteen eighties (Harvey, 2005, Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005) and, more specifically, the impact of its highly Randian social ethics on cultural interaction. In short, 'neoliberalism', brought with it a set of social ideals that promoted a deeply attractive picture of virtuous lives free from the demands of community and social integration with a primary responsibility to self. In Gray's (2007: 109) term's it came with a new "individualist ethos of personal responsibility" in which relying on pre-existing social structures – family, occupation, class and so on – to provide a sense of purpose, fulfilment, security and respect was little more than a sign of advanced moral degeneracy wholly inferior to going our own way and negotiating the marketplace in such a way as to become self-made men and women. If we briefly dip into Randian philosophy, for instance, we find the repeated assertion "of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity" (Rand: 1992: 1170) – a concept of human value measured by the acquisition and display of wealth and power, by the ability to have the world conform to an individualist exercise of will. For those who fail in this primary ethical duty it offers only the ignominy of defeat and the black mark of relative incapacity rooted in the deeper moral failing of not having worked as hard as those who rose above the herd by their own grit and determination.

This vaguely Randian schema (see Rand, 1961 for more philosophical discussion) altered the signifiers of 'value' – that which defines the relative worth of individual life – by which we acquire and preserve a sense of purpose and respect explicitly rooting them in the acquisition and display of material commodities and enjoyable experiences. The 'consumer society' (Bauman, 2007) has tied our sense of purpose, achievement and 'social identity' to the acquisition and disposal of pecuniary resources in such a way that we primarily construct meaning as desiring subjects within a system that exists to "enchant... with dreams (of freedom, of how your success depends on yourself, of the run of luck which is just around the corner, of unconstrained pleasures...)" (Žižek, 2009: 26). What this means, in practice, is that our place within society and our access to positive mental states – happiness, fulfilment and so on (Bellotti, 2003;

Schumaker, 2006) – exist only to the extent that we engage with the endlessly saccharine allure of consumer solipsism as a primary means of self-determination within a socio-cultural firmament that lauds the self-made, self-reliant individual while denigrating anyone who finds themselves at the bottom of the pile. It is a picture of social interaction in which consumptive solipsism is seen as a morally praiseworthy mode of being-in-the-world while anything outside those confines indicates a moral failing, a despicable incapacity that displays nothing less than incoherence, inferiority and outright inhumanity.

The result is to tie our sense of selfhood into a Sisyphean labour that requires the constant acquisition of pecuniary wealth and its rotating disposal amongst a sea of proffered experiences and commodities each of which provides a momentary symbolic contribution to the maintenance of selfhood constituted amid the ever-present threat of socio-cultural insignificance. If we do not work hard enough, if we do not participate to our fullest in the virtuous round of acquisition and disposal then ours is an ignominious place at the bottom of the pile cut off from everything that communicates the Randian value of self-identity. The assertion that this self-determinative ideal has become one of late modernity's primary ethical forces has been a substantial part of the sociological literature for decades (see, for instance, Bauman, 2000a; 2000b; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) along with its attendant inversion: failure to self-determine or otherwise live up to the 'ultimate sustaining fantasy' of autonomous selfhood is to acquire the black mark of the post-modern *untermensch* excluded from the virtuous construction of social identity through value-laden acquisition of symbolic objects. In this way a 'liberal' society nominally based on the inalienable freedom of the individual communicates both success and failure conditions, the former desirable and 'virtuous,' the latter presenting us with an ever-present threat to the future maintenance of social identity, turning it into a labour of constant anxiety at the fragility of carefully constructed lifestyle-projects (Becker, 1985).

Where social reaction theory largely proceeded from the assertion that crime and deviance were constituted in opposition to these over-arching cultural forces, the 'return to motivation' takes a slightly different approach. It comes at the problem of crime in light of late-twentieth century liberalism's ascent to the

status of dominant ideology (Hedges, 2011) noting the integral position of success/failure conditions when it comes to impelling social action. In the last few decades criminology's major theoretical assertion with regards motivation has been the idea that low level deviance is the product of individuals expressing their free-will and drive to self-determination amid a social system that sought to constrain them through its ability to label and punish. It is an assertion born, more often than not, of Foucault's (1991) contention that disciplinary technologies and discourses bear down on helpless individuals, erode their innate freedom and ultimately create 'normalised' subjects wholly integrated into the needs of a power-elite. The 'return to motivation' on the other hand starts with the observation that individualist liberalism has become something of a key determining ideology and, in the process, "taught a concept of humanity according to which 'what is most 'human' about people is... their need to incorporate 'more and more' – goods, money, experience, everything" (Frank, 1999: 20) to the extent that criminology needs to develop new ideas to explain how these emergent cultural ethics effect social interaction.

Instead of arguing that criminality represents a vanguard rejection of restrictive social norms, the 'return to motivation' takes account of consumer capitalism's ascent to the status of dominant ideology in order to consider the possibility that current social problems, including criminality, perhaps result more from a broad cultural allegiance to the ideals of late-twentieth century capitalism. It proceeds from the observation that we are less constrained than constantly and unendingly enjoined to express ourselves through consumer markets (Žižek, 1997; 2006; 2009) even as our increasingly unequal societies effectively exclude large sections of the population from legitimate means of identity construction (see Lansley, 2006). What's more, the resultant failure to live up to our primary ethical duty – the self-determinative construction of consumer identity – contributes one of the primary motivating forces of life under late capitalism experienced as a radical and potentially transformative sense of anxiety, incompleteness and impending loss that looms over subjective experience inspiring us to greater heights in an effort to live up to dominant notions of virtuous action and value-laden selfhood.

In other words, western culture's socio-ethical emphasis on consumer subjectivity seems to have recalibrated or restructured dominant ethical norms in relation to instrumental and expressive interests that have perhaps changed "what is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable, proper and improper, legitimate and illegitimate, or praiseworthy and blameworthy behaviour in the light of the moral principles (e.g. justice... fairness, decency... authenticity, reliability)... changing the criteria by which people evaluate their own and each other's actions" (Weigartz, 2010: 124). What is being suggested, in other words, is that the socio-ethical ideals associated with the liberalisation of western society placed a set of pressures on individuals that have reconstituted social morality providing the impetus for self-serving criminality.

It is immediately apparent that there are more than a few shades of the old sociology of deviance in this idea and many of the early proponents of this return to motivation tend to reference Chicago School scholars with notable frequency, if only because they provide a disciplinary touchstone for what is essentially an argument in favour of political-economic causation. The influence of Mertonian Strain theory (see also, Messner & Rosenfeld, 2006), for instance, is quite obvious in Robert Reiner's (2007) recent output as well as some of the more responsive cultural criminologists such as Keith Hayward (& Yar, 2006) and Jeff Ferrell (2012: 245, 248) whose recent exploration of the 'criminology of drift' highlights "the degree to which, amidst the dynamics that define late capitalist economies, both failure and success engender dislocation... [as] mortgage fraud and insider trading costs millions their homes and their livelihoods... others lose home, neighbourhood or career to the economic bulldozer of 'consumption driven urban development'".

While such assertions may provide the opening refrain of a new approach to the sociological theorisation of criminality with its roots in the early part of the twentieth century rather than mid-century symbolic interactionism it is fair to say that the 'return to motivation' aspires to rather more than simply recapitulating the sociology of deviance for a late-modern audience. Its ultimate purpose is to offer a "deeper exploration of... direct yet complex relationships between our core values and practices, our current conditions of existence and

the individual's motivation to commit crime" (Hall et al, 2008: 5). With this goal in mind, a number of British criminologists, often influenced by Steve Hall (2012: 245) and his thoroughgoing engagement with contemporary social philosophy, have begun developing new explanations for "why liberal-capitalist life constitutes and reproduces throughout the social structure conspicuous and influential subjectivities that reject solidarity for a form of competitive individualism, one which is willing to risk harm to others as it furthers its own interests". In a wide-ranging and highly complex body of work Hall (see also, Hall & Winlow, 2005a; 2005b; Winlow & Hall, 2006; 2012) argues for a renewed analysis of criminality as an integral feature of a dialectical process in which the populations of western societies are perpetually enjoined to equate positive mental states with discerning consumption while subject to psychosocial dynamics of relative incapacity resulting from the political-economic reality of neoliberal society. The dynamic tension between these forces inspires "an economically energizing form of competitive individualism fuelled by a struggle for social distinction" which in turn fuels "destructive, competitive drives and desires and the concomitant expansion and sophistication of external and internal control measures in a relation of mutual amplification" (Hall, 2012: 254-5).

In other words, socially destructive criminality can be seen as a by product of the self-same forces that drive liberal capitalism and its consumer-finance economy with just as much influence in criminal causation as everyday, law-abiding consumption, borrowing and many other prominent forms of social interaction. The great problem with the social reaction narrative was its excessively simplistic, non-dialectical theory of criminality, which uncritically posited a causal relationship between punitive statist attempts at social control and individual deviance. Where the dominant criminological paradigm of the late-twentieth century saw crime as the product of proto-political sentiments inspired by oppressive social norms, that of the early twenty-first century proffers a far more satisfying explanation rooted in the internalisation of liberal ideals at the confluence of dynamic cultural pressures culminating in

'hyperconformist' attempts to rise above the herd and acquire the value-laden symbolism of 'consumer society' by means fair or foul.

Conclusion

The core thesis of Sumner's obituary for the sociology of deviance made two key assertions about the philosophical and theoretical development of criminology during the latter decades of the twentieth century, the first of which can be seen as a historical observation while the second provides a consequent assessment of potential contribution to sociological understandings of crime and deviance. In the former case, it is probably fairly safe to say that Sumner's analysis was right on the money. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that criminology did undergo something of a paradigm shift after nineteen-seventy in which the discipline as a whole substantially de-emphasised a normative, realist take on crime and deviance in favour of far more post-modern, relativist emphasis on discourse, representation and imbalanced powers of definition. This new paradigm began with symbolic interactionism and the labelling perspective as they came out of American phenomenology but eventually played a defining role in much of criminology's recent theoretical output including radical and critical criminology, the moral panics tradition and our discipline's version of the 'cultural turn'. What we collectively term 'social reaction theory' or the 'sociology of censure' proffered a detailed analysis of the impact of criminal labels and statist censure.

Where we might depart from Sumner's analysis, however, is in his second assertion and then only with the benefit of an extra twenty years hindsight into the overall distribution of criminological research. If we look back at the contemporary literature, despite a few notable and prominent countertrends, we can identify a discipline that seems to have collectively identified social reaction as a positive source of future development with which to extricate the sociological study of crime and deviance from a problematic relationship with bureaucratic pragmatism. The result, however, seems to have been a criminological paradigm that bought into the anti-bureaucratic and anti-

authoritarian spirit of the late twentieth century with its over-riding emphasis on liberating individual will from social expectation and collective responsibility. In the process, the lion's share of criminological theory apparently subscribed to an increasingly dominant, all but unchallenged ideology that recalibrated social, political and economic fortunes across the western world as it communicated and valorised a set of ideals that placed greater emphasis on the individual's responsibility for the 'virtue' and 'value' of their lifestyle measured by the symbolic content of material commodities and the enjoyment we gain from their disposal.

When the discipline subscribed to this paradigm shift, however, it created a block between criminological theorisation and the socio-ethical dominance on Randian liberalism leading us to ignore increasingly forceful ideals because we were too busy imagining the liberation of the individual from censorious corporate media and reactionary authoritarian state. The consequence of this realignment is a discipline that certainly offers a fairly thoroughgoing appraisal of media effects and political discourse at the expense of any substantial appreciation of how ethical concepts influence social interaction and manifest in lived experience to the extent that they might create the scope for transformations in human behaviour. While censure might have provided a number of very useful ideas and interpretations, it is distinctly lacking in the crucial respect of criminal motivation to the extent that the discipline's amassed output no longer comes close to answering some of the most fundamental questions of criminological enquiry. The dominance of censure, it seems, has led criminological theory into a stagnatory phase that is only now being rectified by growing research interest in the ethical concepts underlying an observed profusion of self-serving, acquisitive and violent interactions.

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