# Cardiff School of Social Sciences

## Paper: 105: Inventing Community Safety:Representation and Performativity in the Criminological Imagination

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**Abstract**

What is a criminological imagination for? This paper considers developments in criminological theory that question orthodox concerns with contesting representational claims about crime and control, emphasising instead the performative qualities of criminological thought; that theory brings into being the very social relations it then explains. Against the proposition that performativity liberates criminological thought from the burdens of sociological realism, it is argued the two are interdependent; criminological futures are invented through representations of the present. Further, a rejection of sociological realism obviates the anterior conditions of any particular imagination, notably other, competing, imaginaries. This anteriority is demonstrated through reference to four inventions of 'community safety', a floating signifier within contemporary criminology with no fixed referent and a multiplicity of significations. Rather than demonstrating the detachment of performative and representational claims, the polyvalence of this concept reveals the necessary dependence of each invention on contested representations of the present; of what community safety 'really' is about.

> 'security' is therefore something we imagine, and what we imagine shapes our mentalities and practices of governance. (Wood and Shearing, 2007: 6)

> We should also beware of confusing narratives, of any kind, with what they are about (even in cases where they are about other narratives); this is an 'epistemic fallacy' which has plagued hermeneutics (Sayer, 2000: 141).

**Introduction**

What is a criminological imagination for? The orthodox response to this question, to better represent the causes and/or meaning of crime, has been challenged by advocates of a performative understanding of criminological thought. Performative accounts are concerned with the ways in which narratives bring into being, or 'instantiate', the very objects they then seek to explain[1]. Whether or not any particular instantiation is a more or less accurate representation matters less than what it does in producing particular ways of understanding whilst obviating others (Rose, 1999). It has been argued, for example, that American society is increasingly 'governed through crime', wherein problems of government, such as the transition from adolescence to adulthood, are instantiated as problems of criminality and disorder requiring criminal justice interventions rather than as problems of health and welfare implying social policy responses (Simon, 2007). In the UK, similar arguments have identified the 'criminalisation of social policy' in 'neo-liberal' rationalities of rule, in which welfare is justified primarily in terms of its contribution to the reduction of crime and disorder rather than as an end in itself (Crawford, 1997).

The performative approach has been celebrated for liberating criminological thought from the burdens of better representing 'reality' to instead, 'provide resources to think beyond what already exists' (O'Malley, 2006: 193). This approach has been particularly influential in studies of 'governmentality' in criminology, which seek to diagnose, 'the intellectual, linguistic and technical ways in which phenomena are constituted by government as governable problems' as a basis for questioning, 'how not to be governed thus' (O'Malley,

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[1] In social science the concept of 'performativity' is associated with the linguist J. L. Austin's (1955) discussion of 'speech acts' which bring into being the objects they signify rather than just describing or representing them , for example 'I bet you …' brings into being a wager, 'marry me', a betrothal, and so on. More recently the concept has been applied in studies of gender (Butler, 1990) or markets (Callon, 1998) to consider the ways in which theories of sexuality or economics don't just describe objective social relations but constitute them. As discussed below, in criminological thought, performativity is most obviously associated with the studies of governmentality which document the ways in which theories constitute the crimes and processes of control, the objects of study, which they then seek to explain (Smandych, 1999).

2006: 192, 193; Smandych, 1999). Realist arguments, for example over 'what works, what doesn't and what's promising' in crime prevention (Sherman et al, 1997) and allied attempts by organisations such as the Campbell Collaboration to arbitrate useful and valid criminological knowledge, particularly on methodological grounds (http://www.campbellcollaboration.org), are criticised for failing to escape the problematic of government, 'the task of making us into something else, to govern us better, on the basis of a superior regime of truth' (O'Malley, 2006: 193). For social science orthodoxy this rejection of producing knowledge that can better represent the past and present, is nihilistic. For its advocates, performative studies are better placed to promote an open-ended, future-oriented and democratic contestation of government than intellectual traditions that proscribe what can be thought; they prioritise imagination and political choices over methodological censure and other forms of theoretical closure (O' Malley et al, 1997).

Conversely, our contention is that re-defining the purpose of the criminological imagination in terms of the production of performative rather than representational concepts misrepresents their interdependence. Performativity is dependent on existing representations as we necessarily stand on the shoulders of existing narratives in bringing into being new concepts. Performative criminology is also dependent on representational criminology insofar as it aspires to translate its visions of crime and control into practice. Beyond an anarchistic desire to 'destabilise rule' (O'Malley, 2006), the imagination of desired futures will not be translated into action unless they effectively represent an originating state from which this alternative future is projected. In the terms of discourse analysis, successful narratives of change are those that convey a convincing story about an original state ('where we are'), a desired end state ('where we need to be') and decisive interventions ('how we get from here to there') (Hay, 1996: 157n16). As such criminological futures are instantiated *through* representations of the present.

It is in these terms that we use the notion of 'invention' to refer to this process of imagining criminological futures through representations of the present. The idea of invention also alerts us to the anterior conditions of criminological thought which mediate any one imagined future. These conditions can include other, competing, criminological narratives as well as the concept-independent conditions of the criminological imagination, particularly the unequally allocated political, economic, organisational, informational and constitutional-legal

resources available to proponents of competing futures[2]. This anteriority has further implications for understanding the different purposes of the criminological imagination. Apropos the introductory quote from Wood and Shearing (2007: 6), above, we may imagine security in terms of various wars on crime, drugs, terror etc., or in terms of more egalitarian, solidaristic, socially just polities. Such imagination also *shapes* our political rationalities of rule, insofar as imagination is required to instantiate governable phenomena, but governing *practices* cannot be reduced to the imagination. To do so is to grant imagination too much power, to commit the 'epistemic fallacy' referred to in the other headline quote (Sayer, 2000: 141). Confusing any one criminological narrative with what it is about provides no grounds for contesting its knowledge claims[3]. In relation to this, the epistemic fallacy obscures how any one particular criminological narrative exists in an anterior relationship to the particular social contexts in which it is produced and deployed.

The invention of community safety provides a useful illustration of the interdependence of performative and representational criminology both because of its polyvalence and because of the specific geo-historical contexts in which it has been produced and deployed. This concept has proved to be a fertile ground for the criminological imagination in Britain, acquiring a following amongst an increasing volume of policy-makers and practitioners of local governance. The concept has also produced a growing body of academic research and debate, including the establishment of specialist journals, *The Community Safety Journal* and *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: an international journal*, a number of textbooks, research monographs and edited collections (Gilling, 1997, 2007; Crawford, 1997, 1998; Hughes, 1998, 2007; Hughes and Edwards, 2002; Hughes et .al, 2002, Matthews and Pitts, 2001). It has been variously defined as, 'a synonym of crime prevention with fluffy overtones added' (Pease and Wiles, 2000), a feel good word marked by extreme vagueness (Gilling, 1997), and a 'capacious phrase' signifying security against harms from all sources, not just those proscribed by criminal law (Hughes, 2006). In turn, the international transferability of the concept, particularly around the non-Anglophone world, has been limited by its ethnocentricity, reflecting its origins in the very particular politics of control in British

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[2] As documented in research into the power of populist media representations of crime and disorder relative to the more subtle and sober representations of the academy in defining the acceptable parameters of the politics of law and order (Reiner, 2007; Downes and Morgan, 2002).

[3] For those arguing for a performative criminology, unfettered by any need to represent 'reality', circumventing this contest is precisely the point but then, of course, one is liberated to be as cruel as one likes.

localities since the early-1990s (Stenson and Edwards, 2004; Edwards and Hughes, 2005) and the limited export of the concept around fellow Commonwealth countries (Carson, 2007)[4].

This polyvalence has accommodated a number of competing narratives. In the remainder of the chapter four in particular are selected as a means of exemplifying the interdependence between representational and performative criminology. They are those that depict community safety as a progressive 'third way'; a repressive state apparatus; a neo-liberal political rationality; and as an 'arboreal vision of control'. Each are structured around representations of the original state of community safety from which desired futures are projected.

**A progressive 'third way'?**

An obvious point of departure is the uses to which the concept of community safety has been put by governmental advisors, policy-makers and practitioners. Notwithstanding scepticism amongst some academics over the imprecision and utility of the concept, it has acquired a substantial following amongst police officers, local government employees and voluntary and commercial organisations since its popularisation in British public administration through the publication of a report by the Home Office Standing Conference on Crime Prevention (colloquially known, after the chair of the committee producing the report, as 'the Morgan Report') in 1991[5]. A National Community Safety Network (NCSN) providing support to those employed as community safety officers by local authorities and constabularies was established shortly after the publication of the Morgan Report and currently has members covering the vast majority of CSPs across the UK[6]. The Morgan Report itself was also

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[4] It may be noted that the 'export' of social crime prevention and community safety ideas and practice in Australia in the 1990s appears to have been an interesting admixture of the managerialist pragmatism of the Morgan Report alongside an emphasis on the symbolic social inclusivist and social democratic politics of social crime prevention associated with the Bonnemaison experiment in the 1980s in France (personal communication between Gordon Hughes and Adam Sutton, University of Melbourne).

[5] The British crime prevention expert, Professor Ken Pease, has argued, 'It is of interest that the Morgan Committee preferred the phrase "community safety" over "crime prevention" because the latter "is often narrowly interpreted and this reinforces the view that it is solely the responsibility of the police" … The extreme vagueness of the Morgan Committee's definition of community safety gives no confidence that the revised definition will provide a satisfactory focus for the work.' (Pease, 1994: 687n11).

[6] It is important to recognise that community safety work, however defined, has had a significant institutional presence across local authorities and police forces in the UK both before and more markedly since the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Estimated, never mind precise, numbers of public servants engaged in community safety-qua- crime and disorder reduction work are not easy to pin down. This is of course due to the capacious character of community safety per se and its currently rapid expansion and colonisation of both old and new areas of local governance, such as 'waste management', 'regeneration', 'youth inclusion', 'city centre management' and so on . However, if we restrict ourselves to dedicated community safety team members in

heavily influenced by representatives of local government, particularly the Association of Metropolitan Authorities representing large urban authorities in England and Wales that tended to be run by the Labour Party. This social democratic influence on the Morgan Report, established to review developments in multi-agency crime prevention since Home Office circular 8/1984 on the need to adopt a more preventive approach to crime, can be discerned in its content definition of community safety in terms of a 'portfolio of activities' (Home Office, 1991: 32). These activities extended beyond measures to reduce the opportunities for crime, for tackling specific types of crime and assisting victims to a focus on 'Tackling the causes of crime', through, 'family support initiatives, youth programmes, community development programmes and neighbourhood initiatives, pre-school programmes, alcohol and drug misuse prevention schemes, education and school based programmes, work with offenders and their families, employment and training programmes, debt counselling.' (Home Office, 1991: 32).

As such the Morgan Report used the concept of community safety to retrieve the gamut of dispositional theories of crime causation that constitute the principal sociological and psychological contributions to governmental criminology. These had been eschewed during the previous decade by a national Conservative administration critical of the social determination of crime and concerned to promote neo-classical principles of deterrent penal regimes for rational offenders. The unsurprising rejection of the Morgan Report's recommendations for community safety by this administration provided the Labour Party, then in opposition in Westminster, with a basis for reformulating its approach to 'law-and-order', specifically through Tony Blair's now renowned concept of being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'.

The political importance of Blair's reformulation of crime control policy, during his tenure as opposition spokesperson on Home Affairs, both for his personal political career and for the subsequent electoral fortunes of the Labour Party, has been the subject of much analysis and commentary (Downes and Morgan, 2002; Matthews and Young, 2003; Tonry, 2004). Our point is that the concept of community safety enabled the Labour Party, both at the national and municipal levels, to re-assert the social democratic association of crime control and social policy whilst accommodating more immediate, palliative, measures for reducing crime and addressing the needs of victims. It therefore provided a means of loosening the 'hostages to

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local authorities across England and Wales, a conservative estimate would be minimally about 3000 public servants.

fortune' that had characterised the Labour Party's depiction, by its political opponents, of being 'soft' on crime, tolerant of civil disorders, particularly those associated with disputes undertaken by the industrial wing of the labour movement, and more concerned with the welfare of offenders than the rights of victims (Downes and Morgan, 1994; Gilling, 1997, 2007; Crawford, 2001).

From its origins in the political dynamics of national and local government in Britain, the very imprecision of community safety as a concept proved useful in instantiating the problem of crime as a composite of social causes, to be addressed through policies on family support, employment and training, education and youth work, situational opportunities, remediable through household security, environmental design and planning, support for victims. In these terms, the intellectual coherence and internal consistency of the concept is less important and less interesting than its capacity to outflank and out-think more reductionist narratives about crime control through either enforcement of the criminal law, punitive deterrence or social policy interventions.

This imprecision is confirmed in the evolution of the concept in official discourse about crime and disorder reduction from the uses made of the Morgan Report by the Labour Party whilst in opposition to its more muted expression in the blizzard of legislative and policy initiatives passed by Labour in government since the general election of 1997. The plasticity of the concept was signalled almost immediately in one of the white papers that preceded the omnibus Crime and Disorder Act 1998, in which reference was made to 'community safety orders', subsequently renamed Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), concerned with tackling incivilities and restoring moral authority within blighted communities. Following protests from the growing population of community safety workers who, apropos the Morgan Report, saw themselves more in the mould of welfare professionals-come-technicians of crime prevention than arbiters of moral authority, the concept was dropped. Instead of being redefined more in keeping with the sentiments of the Morgan Report, reference to community safety was replaced altogether with an emphasis, instead, on 'crime and disorder reduction'[7]. The Crime and Disorder Act placed a statutory obligation on both district local authorities

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[7] This emphasis on crime reduction in the first instance and latterly also disorder reduction has been given intellectual support and seen the production of new governmental technologies such as GIS mapping, hot spot analyses, situational measures etc. the so-called 'new criminologies of everyday life' (Garland, 2001) and what we may term 'anti-social/anti-sociological' crime scientists formerly associated with the Home Office and now located in the Jill Dando Institute at University College London.

and constabularies to establish multi-agency partnerships and implement preventive strategies. It is argued this provided a 'politically satisficing' solution of getting elected local government to assume responsibility for crime reduction without antagonising the police or threatening their operational autonomy (Hope, 2005).

From this compromise over both the institutional responsibility for leading local crime control and the allied nomenclature of 'crime and disorder reduction' rather than community safety, through to the current Home Office Reform Programme for the statutory partnerships there persists a 'politically satisficing' ambivalence over what the concept of community safety can and should signify (Hughes, 2007: 42-8). It is notable, for example, that in the context of devolution, the statutory partnerships in Wales are officially known as 'community safety partnerships' and that the overwhelming proportion of funding received by these partnerships comes from programmes for youth crime prevention and tackling substance misuse administered by the community safety division of the Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Local Government and Social Justice (Edwards and Hughes, 2008a,b). Here the nomenclature of community safety partnerships is deliberately counterpoised to that of 'crime and disorder reduction partnerships' employed in England whilst the location of community safety work within a Department explicitly concerned with *social*, not criminal, justice matters in relation to the broader politics of devolution and attempts to differentiate Labour in Wales from Labour in Westminster. Specifically the Assembly Government has dismissed the high volume use of ASBOs in certain English localities as typical of a 'low-trust' politics that further undermines the relationship between public authorities and the general public (Drakeford, 2005). In place of this the Assembly Government uses the concept of community safety to privilege a more social democratic preoccupation with crime prevention through youth work and rehabilitative drug treatment regimes.

Whether this articulation of community safety within the politics of devolution translates into discernible, systematic, differences in practice between Welsh and English multi-agency partnerships remains a moot point for research. The point here is that as a concept, community safety, has been used in official discourse over the past decade to signify moral authoritarian interventions against 'anti-social behaviour' and social democratic measures for promoting socially just, 'high-trust', polities. The polyvalence of the concept is further demonstrated through research on community safety officers about the meanings they attribute to their own work (Hughes and Gilling, 2004; Edwards and Hughes, 2008a). This

suggests a complex admixture of understanding, including in one, admittedly atypical, case a community safety manager describing himself as an 'unreconstructed Marxist-Leninist' who welcomed ASBOs, not as an instrument for the class oppression of the usual suspects but as a means of protecting law-abiding working class communities from a feral lumpenproletariat in a context in which they have been deserted both by the market and by liberals more concerned with the civil liberties of actual and 'at risk' offenders than the with the multiple victimisation of already disadvantaged communities (Edwards and Hughes, 2008a, forthcoming).

That such a practitioner of community safety could deploy concepts associated in academic criminology with, *inter alia*, Wilson and Kelling's 'right realist' broken windows thesis, Ken Pease's notion of repeat victimisation, Lea and Young's 'left realist' concern with the vulnerabilities of the working class to criminal victimisation and Reiner's recent invocation of a social democratic political-economy of law and order, demonstrates the scope for invention admitted by the concept of community safety. It demonstrates the distance there often is between the relatively 'smooth' narratives of academic criminology and their messy adaptation in criminological practice. The messiness of the social life onto which social science often imposes a specious conceptual order is a major theme in broader methodological debates (Law, 2004), here the implications for understanding the actual and prospective interrelationships between criminological imagination and practice can be explored further through reference to self-consciously academic accounts of community safety.

**A repressive state apparatus?**
Counterpoised to the bricolage of criminological ideas found in official, particularly, practitioner narratives on community safety, some commentators working within the tradition of critical social science have offered an altogether smoother interpretation of this concept and what it signifies. Drawing inspiration from the Althusserian and Gramscian Marxist analyses of an earlier generation of critical criminologists (Hall et al, 1978; Scraton, 1987), these commentators identify community safety as a set of particular practices that form part of a repressive state apparatus whose function is to regulate the conditions for capital accumulation (Coleman, Sim and Whyte, 2002; Coleman, 2004, 2005).

Using findings from local case study research, such as a study of the Safer Merseyside Partnership in the North West of England, this narrative identifies the preoccupation of community safety work with urban regeneration strategies concerned with the civic boosterism of attracting inward capital investment and increased consumption, particularly in the retail sector, 'This project is underpinned by a logic of social and economic regeneration that attempts to forge and disseminate a market oriented and entrepreneurial inspired notion of the "public interest"' (Coleman et al, 2002: 97). Having problematised community safety in terms of places that are safe for business, it follows that challenges to safety are those that threaten capital accumulation requiring, in turn, measures to contain or expunge such threats. In these terms, CCTV technologies are deployed alongside more aggressive, 'zero tolerance', street policing to cleanse the commercial centres of cities of unproductive labour and populations that deter consumers, particularly beggars and those consuming alcohol on the streets (as opposed to in the bars and restaurants).

In this narrative community safety is imagined as a set of repressive, 'revanchist', policing practices aimed at retaking public space for the purposes of capital accumulation whilst obviating alternative conceptions of safety, such as youth work within disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Further, the narrow conception of community safety amongst urban elites obviates action on other threats to public health, such as toxic waste disposal, traffic pollution and allied corporate crimes that are excluded from the purview of community safety work, 'these inclusionary and exclusionary practices can be understood as part of a wider social ordering strategy which is legitimated by the moral and intellectual project of social and economic regeneration.' (Coleman et al, 2002: 96).

Interest in capturing the concept of community safety and using it to signal the need for public protection against a variety of harmful activities perpetrated by corporations against vulnerable working class communities has increased amongst critical criminologists (Croall, forthcoming; Toombs et al, 2007). Again, this demonstrates both the polyvalence of the concept and its focus for political contestation over the definition of 'safety' for different communities of interest. Our particular interest here, however, is in the relationship between the performative and representational aspects of this critical narrative and, in turn, what this tells us about the criminological imagination. In problematising community safety as an exercise in securing the conditions for capital accumulation strategies (such as the regeneration of post-industrial cities such as Liverpool around retail consumption during the daytime and alcohol consumption at night), this narrative instantiates community safety as a repressive apparatus and channels the vision of the social researcher onto those policing practices that fit this initial problematisation. To what extent this imagination also provides an accurate and exhaustive representation of community safety in the case study area in question as well as further a field is questionable. It is questionable precisely because of the messy, inchoate and often disorganised conceptions of community safety revealed through research into the dispositions of

community safety workers (Edwards and Hughes, 2008, forthcoming and above) and into the practice of partnerships in other localities in England and Wales (Hallsworth, 2002; Stenson, 2002; Foster, 2002).

What this alternative research alerts us to is the doubly hermeneutic character of the criminological imagination; it must place an interpretation on the interpretations of the workers, organisations and practices it envisages. As such, there is ample opportunity for slippage between the performative and representational claims of criminological knowledge; is the depiction of Liverpool as a 'revanchist' city an exhaustive representation of community safety in that locality or a product of the very imagination of those employing an Althusserian/Gramscian lens through which to view it (Hughes, 2007: 172-6)? This needn't matter if, apropos O'Malley's (2006) promotion of the diagnostic and destabilising role of criminological thinking, there is no pretence at making superior truth claims about the world as it really is. Where the purpose is, however, precisely to imagine real-world conditions further conceptual work is needed to negotiate the various problems of reductionism and determinism that can debilitate representational knowledge. That a healthy scepticism toward self-consciously academic narratives should be cultivated as much, if not more, than the distrust shown towards those offered by the subjects of these narratives (Clegg, 1993) – to community safety workers and policy-makers for example – is further reinforced by the existence of competing academic theories of community safety. Reference to two of these will suffice in making the point that representations of community safety belie the capacity of any one, smooth, narrative to adequately capture is multi-faceted causes and consequences.

**A neo-liberal political rationality?**

Whereas critical criminology was, at one time, synonymous with the kind of Marxist political-economy advocated by Coleman and his colleagues, it now accommodates the work of those influenced by a very different intellectual tradition associated with Foucault's study of power, particularly his concept of governmentality which examines the role of political rationalities in defining objects of control and proscribing how these objects so defined should be interpreted and acted upon (Foucault, 1991; O'Malley, 1992; Stenson, 1993; Garland, 1997; Smandych, 1999; Rose, 2000).

In Britain arguments about the meaning of crime prevention and community safety have provided a focal point for this tradition of thought, in particular David Garland's thesis about the contradictory political rationalities at play in 'late-modern' strategies of control. Specifically, the episodic bouts of 'punitive display' by sovereign states anxious to legitimate

their authority through various wars on drugs, crime, terror and so forth, exist in tension with the *sotto voce* admission that state authorities lack the effective capacity to govern crime and disorder alone. This limit to the sovereign state and the normality of high crime rates in Britain provides the real world conditions to which governing strategies must adapt by 'responsibilising' citizens and other private actors to more actively participate in their own governance. Central to this adaptation is the promotion of measures for identifying and reducing the opportunities for crime and disorder generated through the everyday routines of citizens (Garland, 1996, 2001).

In these terms, community safety is counterposed to various forms of punitive display, such as zero tolerance policing, anti-social behaviour orders, child curfews, parenting orders etc., and allied to a new logic of prevention and risk management that, 'instead of pursuing, prosecuting and punishing individuals … aims to reduce the supply of criminal events by minimising criminal opportunities, enhancing situational controls, and channelling conduct away from criminogenic situations … Community safety becomes the chief consideration and law enforcement becomes merely a means to this end.' (Garland, 2001: 171).

Community safety is consequently allied to a certain neo-liberal political rationality in which state intervention, even in the core competence of order maintenance, is rolled-back as private citizens are required to act as individualised prudential actors better insuring themselves against future risks of criminal victimisation (O'Malley et al, 1997). What, for Garland, is eclipsed in this interplay between punitive criminologies of the other and adaptive criminologies of the self, is the social democratic criminology that had prevailed in the mid-twentieth century under the influence of Merton's strain theory, the Chicago School's ecology of social disorganisation and Cloward and Ohlin's subcultural theories of delinquency, privileging welfare state interventions, particularly those aimed at the education, training, employment and recreation of young people.

As noted above, however, community safety has been regarded, notably by community safety workers themselves, as a means of resuscitating a more Fabian vision of control (Edwards and Hughes, 2008). The elision of community safety with neo-liberal politics has also been challenged for obscuring the increasing accommodation of punitive strategies within community safety work, most notably through the pressure put on multi-agency partnerships to use ASBOs and other coercive powers, which was present at the outset of the local

statutory partnerships in 1999 and further intensified following the passage of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Allen, 1999; Hughes, 2007).

Again, the capacity of the concept of community safety to escape any neat and coherent association with any particular political rationale, like the difficulties of associating it with the function of regulating capital accumulation strategies, reiterates its polyvalence. It should be clear that community safety is a floating signifier with no fixed referent and a multiplicity of significations capable of being aligned with a broad spectrum of political positions on crime and disorder. As such the criminological imagination of Garland or O'Malley, no less than Coleman et al, cannot be equated with an effective representation of community safety *per se*, albeit the performative effect of these academic narratives has been significant in bringing into being new perspectives on its political uses and, by contrast, clarifying the often implicit aetiologies of crime and disorder buried in the bland managerialism of local community safety strategies and action plans. The question remains, does this diagnostic role for criminological thought suffice? Presumably critics of community safety bother to criticise because, having imagined social order otherwise, they wish to translate this imagination into effect?

**An arboreal vision of control?**

The fourth and final narrative on community safety is, in many regards, the most provocative and de-stabilising exercise in criminological imagination of all those considered here. It draws its inspiration from the work of the post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), whose broader critique of western philosophical traditions challenges the common preoccupation with producing 'arboreal' knowledge, as exemplified by the historical device of genealogical or family trees. They use the family tree as a metaphor for a recurrent philosophical tendency to seek total, exhaustive, knowledge of a phenomenon and to do so using clearly delineated conceptual boundaries and hierarchies employing, in turn, unidirectional notions of causality, as in the lineage of a family with roots that branch out in binaries of spouses – children – spouses etc. For Deleuze and Guattari this is a specious exercise which misconceives the more inchoate, protean, multi-directional and unpredictable qualities of social relationships, which are better envisaged in terms of the botanical metaphor of the rhizome. This metaphor captures the heterogeneous mutation of social relationships and their osmosis into one another, creating in turn further mutations, for example in the assemblage, breakdown and re-assemblage of non-nuclear families. The point of the

metaphor is that it expresses the kind of thinking that is needed to apprehend the dynamic qualities of social relationships and how this thinking has been debilitated by the rigid conceptual hierarchies and categorisation associated with, for example, modern social science.

This opposition between arboreal and rhizomatic thinking has been imported into criminological thought by those interested in innovations in the control of crime and disorder often associated with community safety. Two key examples will suffice, Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) study of the 'surveillant assemblage' and Hallsworth's (2008) interpretation of violent street worlds. These demonstrate the dissonance between the problem-solving activities which community safety workers are asked to undertake, to render problems of crime and disorder intelligible and measurable for the purposes of their subsequent remediation, and the protean qualities of these problems which escape precise definition and calibration. Arboreal visions of control are subverted both by the rhizomatic qualities of control itself and by the rhizomatic qualities of the street crime and disorder that are the focus of much control. This narrative suggests a basic contradiction in community safety work, the struggle to delimit the limitless.

Haggerty and Ericson (2000), for example, describe the proliferation of CCTV as part of a broader 'surveillant assemblage' of technologies and practices geared toward the generic surveillance of the population. This is contrasted with the narrower images of Orwell's 'big brother' or Foucault's discussion of the panopticon, which thought of surveillance in terms of particular technologies employed by the powerful to discipline specific groups or individuals (the political rebel, the inmate of a penitentiary etc.). Whereas much analysis of surveillance is preoccupied with discrete technologies, such as the deployment of CCTV, and their cumulative impact on civil liberties, such as the rights of 'non-productive' or 'under-consuming' populations to move freely about the commercial city, Haggerty and Ericson focus instead on the underlying logic of surveillance, which they argue is, 'driven by the desire to bring systems together, to combine practices and technologies and integrate them into a larger whole. It is this tendency which allows us to speak of surveillance as an assemblage, with such combinations providing for exponential increases in the degree of surveillance capacity.' (2000: 610).

Haggerty and Ericson use the concept of 'assemblage' to describe the ways in which surveillance technologies mutate, feed off one another, become integrated into a limitless and multi-directional apparatus whose current deployment, much less future usage, cannot be deduced from a singular cause, 'No single technological development has ushered in the contemporary era of surveillance. Rather, its expansion has been aided by subtle variations and intensifications in technological capabilities, and connections and other monitoring and computing devices.' (2000: 616). For example, CCTV has become integrated with computer systems, radio-links and other telecommunications in order to monitor general populations, such as retail consumers, as well as track particular suspect populations. These technologies are now, in turn, being linked-up with computer programmes such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) not only to identify 'hot-spots' of offending and victimisation but also for 'data mining' exercises in which information held on previously discrete databases (e.g. school attendance records, health records, police recorded crime, fire service data, financial records, even retail intelligence on consumer spending patterns and so forth) is cross-referenced in an attempt to reveal the dynamics producing threats to community safety (Hirschfield, 2005). This kind of 'partnership intelligence' gathering and analysis is now promoted as the appropriate basis for the strategic assessments that community safety partnerships are now required to undertake on an annual basis[8] (Edwards and Hughes, 2008b).

For Haggerty and Ericson, this kind of mutation amongst surveillance systems is accompanied by the development of their multi-directional foci. Contrary to Orwellian and Foucaultian images of the top-down exercise of surveillance by the powerful against specific groups and individuals, the surveillant assemblage subverts this hierarchy of observation enabling the spread of surveillance to cover wealthier and more powerful cohorts of the population. Indeed, the wealthier and more powerful a person is, the greater their surveillance will be given their entry into credit card databases, private as well as public healthcare records, more intense use of the Internet and other communications and information technologies and passage through passport checks and other transport termini etc. (2000: 618). Neither are the powerful only subject to surveillance by the powerful, but in

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[8] Following the passage of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the requirement on statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England and Community Safety Partnerships in Wales to return tri-annual crime and disorder audits has been replaced by the requirement to submit annual strategic assessments of threats to community safety, defined primarily in terms of 'anti-social behaviour' and those street crimes measured by the British Crime Survey.

Matheisen's (1997) phrase, 'synoptic' technologies, such as mass media coverage and live streaming of data through the internet, render government decision makers, celebrities and other elites more visible to the general population. Further, the development of portable and affordable technologies such as digital cameras facilitate a democratisation of surveillance including, in some instances, political activists and trades unions recording the policing of their demonstrations and industrial protests to deter their unlawful suppression. The idea of the surveillant assemblage therefore challenges any simple representation of control in terms of a particular interest group or function or political rationality. For whilst surveillance technologies may be differentially applied, as in the tracking of suspect populations through commercial city centres (Coleman et al, 2002), this does not exhaust the multiple uses to which they can be put. As such the concept of the rhizome subverts the over-homogenous imagery of control whether in the dreams of public authorities or the nightmares of libertarian critics.

Just as discrete control technologies can mutate and be used in ways not originally envisaged, so their objects of control defy neat delimitation. Hallsworth (2008) extends the concept of the rhizome further to analyse how the chaotic qualities of street violence escape the arboreal visions of 'gang talk', by which he means a certain intellectual tradition of American criminology exported to the UK and other European countries in the wake of growing official concerns about the increasing use of guns and knives in acts of inter-personal violence:

> … gang talkers typically impose onto the street the kind of arboreal structures that best define the bureaucratic world in which they normally dwell. A world, that is, which is orderly, hierarchical, discernible, measurable, predictable and thus containable by thought. In effect, gang talkers are tree thinkers and interpret gangs like trees in an urban forest: there they are, this is how many there are, they have this structure, this hierarchy, this cluster of risk factors and so on. This arboreal tendency … leads them to over order the inherent contingent amorphous volatility of street life. And this is why I am always suspicious when I hear people evoke the gang in terms of lieutenants, wanabees, soldiers etc. (Hallsworth, 2008: 6).

This kind of 'mirror imaging' in which public authorities project their own ways of thinking and organising onto their subjects of control is prevalent within community safety strategies and action plans employing the repertoire of the problem-solving approach (Read and Tilley,

2000; Bullock and Tilley, 2003), and in Home Office injunctions to formulate interventions that are 'Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound' (SMART) (Home Office, 2003). In these terms community safety offers an arboreal vision of control in which feral populations of street criminals can be tamed and order restored through the promise of 'SMARTer' intelligence. For its Deleuzian critics this project is designed to fail insofar as it imposes a specious conceptual order on social relationships that cannot be understood from the standpoint of public authorities' own categories and measurement of behaviour.

Beyond 'gang talk', the problems of mirror imaging can be discerned throughout the 'intelligence-led', problem-solving approaches which community safety officers are required to undertake by the statutory duty to return annual strategic assessments of their work. The predominant intellectual traditions underpinning the analysis of crime patterns in these strategic assessments are those of rational choice, routine activities theory and situational crime prevention and these delimit street crime in terms of discrete 'events' that can be enumerated and mapped to reveal their concentration in time and place (Clarke and Eck, 2003; Hirschfield, 2005). In doing so, the antecedent conditions of these events are forgotten and the meaning of street violence for its 'rational' protagonists is obviated (Young, 2004). Conversely, using findings from his own empirical research programme on street violence in London, Hallsworth identifies different 'ecologies' of violence, possessing their own rules of engagement, some of which may evolve into those associated with the purported cultures of the 'American street gang' (Klein, 1995), but many of which do not. Indeed, Hallsworth argues that, contrary to the highly structured image of gang violence in the United States, 'The problem of violent street worlds in the UK is, in part, a problem of the lack of organised gangs. What we tend to have is more loosely affiliated gangsters … and this is why the violence they do takes the explosive form it does. This … is because the violence rules they are beholden to over affirm violent escalation while unfortunately not proscribing rules that might delimit the violence they do. ' (2008: 11).

If the 'hot-spot' analysis of crime patterns facilitated by GIS imposes an arboreal vision of control upon inherently rhizomatic processes of crime and disorder, it follows that other intellectual traditions are required for the cultivation of a rhizomatic imagination. To this end, Hallsworth identifies the promise of the phenomenological methods of cultural criminology (2008: 13). In place of 'voodoo statistics' qualitative research methods are required that render intelligible the 'ecologies' of street crime, the rules of violence as understood by protagonists themselves (Young, 2004; Hallsworth, 2008: 8ff).

The broader salience of this Deleuzian-influence on the criminological imagination is that it disturbs the impulse in much critical, as well as governmental, criminology to police the conceptual as well as methodological boundaries of how crime and disorder should be represented. For the inclination to

reduce explanations of community safety to the regulation of capital accumulation or the effects of political rationality are as 'arboreal' in their delimitation of criminalisation processes as the problem-solving paraphernalia of Home Office research. In these terms, Deleuzian criminology is performative *par excellence*, preoccupied as it is with deconstructing the over-rationalised, patterned and structured imagery of crime, disorder and control found in official and some critical social science as a means of promoting an alternative rhizomatic vision of control.

It is clear, however, that Haggerty and Ericson's notion of the 'security assemblage' and Hallsworth's 'violence ecologies' are also offered as *superior representations* of crime, disorder and control, superior that is to the official and critical criminologies they have first deconstructed and dismissed as 'arboreal'. It is questionable, however, whether it is possible to ever escape arboreal representations of social life; does a non-arboreal representation of the 'inherent contingent amorphous volatility of street life' or the 'rhizomatic expansion of surveillance' imply an inherently contingent amorphous and volatile or rhizomatic method of inquiry and argumentation? How can the mutable, open-ended, quality of the social relations signified by the idea of community safety be represented in ways that avoid the structuring devices of social science, including, ironically, those of *post*-structuralist thinkers? For whilst the 'smooth' narratives of modern social science have been challenged for necessarily traducing the complexity and messiness of the very objects they seek to represent (Law, 2004), it is notable these challenges are themselves invariably articulated through smooth, structured, and coherent narratives.

**Conclusion**

In summary, this diagnosis of four alternative narratives about community safety demonstrates how both official and academic accounts are performative in bringing into being ways of thinking about crime, disorder and control that were hitherto unimagined. Whether conceived as a progressive, problem-solving, activity, a repressive state apparatus, a political rationality or an arboreal vision of control, however, each of these accounts also makes claims about the limits of other narratives as, for example, misrepresentations of political choices as matters of technical measurement or of volatile practices as structured and rational action. In turn this alerts us to the necessary, rather than contingent, relationship between the performative and representational dimensions of the criminological imagination. Whereas some advocates of performative thinking, such as those associated with the study of governmentality, believe it possible to dispense with representational thinking in order to liberate the criminological imagination to conceive 'how not to be governed thus' (O'Malley,

2006), our contention is that any diagnosis entails criticism and this entails representational claims about how the world is now as a precursor to imagining how else it could be in prospect.

Given the inescapable dependence on representational knowledge claims, criminological imagination is better cultivated through a direct engagement with, rather than circumvention of, the 'burdens of sociological realism' (Rose and Miller, 1992). In these terms theories of community safety as a progressive third way, repressive state apparatus, political rationality and arboreal vision of control provide useful abstractions from geo-historically specific practices. Elsewhere we have outlined what a critical realist programme of research into such practices could look like (Edwards and Hughes, 2005; Hughes, 2007). Here it suffices to conclude with a call for the development of criminological imagination through research programmes into concrete, criminalised, practices and their control.

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