Emotions and Explanation in Cultural Criminology

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Abstract

Cultural Criminology (CC) is one of the most recent and exciting developments in criminological theory. Its main argument is that mainstream criminological theories provide inadequate explanations of crime due to epistemological and theoretical flaws. CC´s alternative involves assuming a phenomenological and interpretative approach that focuses on the cultural and emotional components of crime. In this article I shall argue that although CC makes a valid demand for more realistic and complex explanations of crime, its own alternative needs to deal with two main challenges referred to its conceptualization of explanation and emotion. First, two problematic antagonisms should be avoided: understanding vs. causal explanation; and universal nomothetic explanations as opposed to ideographic descriptions. Considering recent developments in philosophy of social science, particularly the 'social mechanisms approach', CC should focus on explaining retrospectively through identification of specific causal mechanisms rejecting universal and predictive pretensions. Second, although cultural criminologists rightly question the emotionless character of criminological explanations, they lack an articulated alternative conceptualization of emotions to explain crime. A more refined concept needs to be elaborated in dialogue with recent advances in social sciences.

Keywords

Cultural Criminology, Emotions, Affective States, Explanation, Theory

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I. Introduction

Cultural Criminology (CC) is one of the most exciting recent developments in criminological theory (Carlen, 2011). Inspired by a range of sources (phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, sub-cultural theory, labelling approach, moral panic theory, neo-Marxist critical theory), the attraction resides in its ambitious goal, that of providing an explanation of crime which emphasizes cultural and emotional dimensions. Emotions are a neglected topic in criminology (De Haan & Loader, 2002; see also Sherman, 2003; Karstedt, 2011) and particularly in the explanation of crime. However, CC involves more than including emotions in the explanation of crime and constitutes an epistemological and theoretical challenge to orthodox criminology synthesized in two 'nemeses'; *scientific positivism* and *rational choice* (Ferrell et al., 2015).[1]

On a *theoretical* level, CC questions a central assumption of most mainstream criminological theories. Crime is a mundane, routinized and instrumental activity. Criminals are depicted as either rational individuals who maximize opportunities (Clarke & Cornish, 1985), or as individuals driven to crime owing to deficits in psychological and social controls (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Felson & Boba, 2010). Both alternatives assume an individual lacking moral interpretation of crimes. Therefore, explanations of crime are theoretically weak, involving a poor account of deviant motivations (Fenwick & Hayward, 2000; Young, 2004, Hayward, 2016). CC provides a theoretical alternative based on three components. First, crime is considered 'seldom

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[1] Although CC is not a unified paradigm, cultural criminologists share an important number of theoretical and methodological orientations (Ferrell et al., 2015; Hayward, 2016). The idea of CC as more than a loose collection of criminologists is implicitly present in discussions in the literature where both cultural criminologists and their critics refer to CC, assuming that there is much internal commonality. Although my focus will be a discussion of CC´s basic shared assumptions and claims, whenever necessary I shall distinguish arguments among different cultural criminologists.

mundane, frequently not miserable – but always meaningful' (Ferrell *et al*., 2015: 67). It should be understood as creative behaviour expressing issues of identity, lifestyle and resistance embedded in particular subcultures (Hayward & Young, 2012). Deviant subjects´ attempts to make sense involve a political 'rebellion', a capacity to resist meanings assigned by dominant power groups (Ferrell, 2007; Presdee, 2000). Therefore, culture should play a decisive role in the explanation of crime. Second, CC assumes Katz's project of opening the explanatory black box between traditional background factors and crime by exploring the emotional foreground (Hayward, 2002; Katz, 1988). Without a phenomenology of transgression focused on emotions, it is impossible to make sense of many crimes and border behaviours such as joyriding, football hooliganism, binge drinking, etc. (Hayward, 2007). Third, cultural and emotional understanding of deviance should include the conditions of late modernity and the structural and institutional conditions of inequality and power relations dismissed by Katz (Hayward & Young, 2004; Young, 2003; Ferrell & Hayward, 2014).

On an *epistemological* level, CC and its 'intellectual lawlessness' is assumed as 'an anathema to the project of criminology as a science of crime' (Hayward & Young, 2004: 269).[2] Three elements are in question. First, universal and abstract explanations insensitive to the diversity of criminal experience should be replaced by a more specific, phenomenological and interpretative approach capable of apprehending the cultural dimension of crime

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[2] Some critics have pointed out the existence of epistemological disagreements among cultural criminologists particularly regarding the idealism – realism debate (Matthews, 2014; O'Brien, 2005). However, this disagreement might be less strong than is generally assumed by critics. CC has strongly rejected this reversion to left idealism and the 'romanticization' of the offender even by authors such as Jeff Farrell, who are assumed as be closer to idealism (see Ferrell, 2007; Ferrell et al. 2015). Additionally, the existence of this type of disagreements is not an obstacle for sharing a view regarding causality, prediction and the scientific enterprise.

and crime control (Hayward, 2004; Young, 2011; Currie, 2014). Second, CC opposes prediction and causality based on the correlation of objective/material factors that ignore diverse individual responses based on their interpretation of the situation (Ferrell *et al*., 2015; Young, 2004). A different notion of explanation as *understanding* is required. Based on Geertz's (1983) interpretative notion of social science, and on the naturalistic tradition in criminology, CC assumes the idea of 'criminological *verstehen'*, which enables an empathic interpretation of subject´s situation, motivations and actions (Ferrell, 1999). Third, CC criticizes the mainstream obsession with quantitative methods based on statistical testing, considering them an 'intellectual prison' which wipes out creativity (Ferrell, 2004; Morrison, 2004). The most adequate methods are the combination of ethnography and media and textual analysis through the accumulation of in-depth case studies as opposed to quantitative methodologies (Ferrell, 1999; Ferrell & Sanders, 1995; Young, 2011). In particular, ethnography enables a horizontal and negotiated relationship between the researcher and the subject of research (Ferrell, 2009). Ethnography blurs the distance between the researcher and the setting (Ferrell 2004) and is better suited to the volatile character of deviance (Presdee, 2004). In other words, 'sociology of correlation' should be substituted by 'sociology of skin' (Hayward & Young, 2004: 268).[3]

CC has received a mixed response. Some critics have welcomed its revitalization of criminological theory and its provision of a more complex understanding of crime (Coyle, 2009; Downes, 2005; Maruna, 2008; Matthews, 2014; Mclaughlin, 2008). Other authors find it difficult to identify what is new in

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[3] Although CC was originally developed in US and UK, in the last decade it has expanded outside the Anglo-Saxon context in Europe (see Schuilenburg et al., 2018 for the Dutch case) and even in Latin America (see Rocha 2013 for the Brazil case).

CC and label it as merely 'reinventing the wheel' (Carlen, 2008; Farrell, 2010; Hallsworth, 2006; Tanner-Smith, 2004). Finally, some have questioned CC as an explanatory alternative due to its theoretical insufficiencies and epistemological contradictions (Hall & Winlow, 2007; O´Brien, 2005; Webber, 2007).

CC makes a valid demand for more realistic and complex explanations of crime. Yet its excessive emphasis on antagonizing a 'fuzzy' opponent, mainstream criminology, and its 'evangelizing' about what should be done rather than doing it (Carlen, 2008) has obstructed the development of an articulate alternative explanatory framework. I shall argue that although CC is not merely 'old wine in new bottles', it needs to deal more adequately with some epistemological and theoretical challenges. The analysis will focus on discussing two key components: *explanation* and *emotions*.

Although CC clearly opposes the idea of *causality* associated with a behaviourist natural science model that dismisses culture, it remains ambivalent about its own alternative. Critics have questioned this ambiguity and called for a distinction between two epistemological options; either assign culture a key role and resign explanatory goals under an interpretative approach, or retain explanatory pretentions under a causal law like universal model (O´Brien, 2005). I will argue that this criticism and CC´s weak responses assume two problematic antagonisms; interpretation as opposed to causal explanation, and *universal* nomothetic explanations as opposed to ideographic descriptions. I will explore how the 'Social mechanisms approach' provides with an intermediate alternative focused on explaining retrospectively through identifying specific causal mechanisms, and rejecting universal and predictive pretensions. This

approach provides culture with a relevant explanatory role and makes sense of multiple causal connections present in CC analysis. However, the identification of specific causal mechanisms demands precise explanatory categories. Therefore, CC´s key explanatory concept, emotion, needs to be analyzed.

One crucial component in CC is the inclusion of emotions. CC questions the incapacity of criminological theories to explain irrational crime and deviance. The central idea defended by Hayward, Ferrell, Young among others, is that individuals get involved in crime because it enables them to experience emotions. Crime offers an exciting liberation from a mundane reality and the opportunity to obtain sense and transcendence. However, CC lacks an alternative conceptualization of emotions. I will discuss what are the different ideas associated with emotions by CC. Next, I will discuss CC´s emphasis on the emotions´ meaningful and intentional character and its problematic functionality. I will also analyse CC's vague use of specific emotions. Finally, I will analyze two possibilities of causal connection with criminal behaviour dismissed by CC: as deterrents and as motivational antecedents.

II. Explanation, understanding and causal mechanisms in CC

Social scientists face two challenges. First, how can the dualism between social determinism and freedom be resolved? Should social theories focus on objective macro level entities, or should the emphasis be placed on the micro level, giving agency a central role? (Giddens, 1984; Hollis, 1994). Second, what type of epistemological model should social science assume? Should social scientists emulate the natural sciences and identify general law – like causal

explanations? Or is the nature of social affairs so different that it requires an ideographic – interpretative approach focussing on exploring the contextualized meaning of human practices? (Rosenberg, 2015).

CC claims to overcome the structure/agent dualism in criminology (Ferrell, 2007) by assuming an interpretative approach and rejecting a natural science model (Hayward & Young, 2004). However, CC´s theoretical solution has been questioned due to its confusing use of ideographic and nomothetic approaches. CC develops ideographic thick descriptions (apropos Geertz´s perspective) to support nomothetic general statements (apropos Marvin Harris's perspective), ignoring its methodological, theoretical and epistemological contradictions (O´Brien, 2005; Webber, 2007). This criticism revives the social sciences´ challenge between ideographic and nomothetic approaches. On the one hand, nomothetic approaches assume the natural sciences model, envisaging abstract universal laws in which particular cases can be subsumed, and causality plays a key role in achieving explanation and prediction of social phenomena (Machlup, 1994; Risjord, 2014; Rosenberg, 2015). O´Brien shows how this approach in anthropology, notably Harris´s cultural materialism, looks forward to examine the cultural '*contents'* (values, rituals, etc.) of community members in order to obtain cultural '*forms'*, that is, 'general laws of cultural development'. Culture is conceptualized as a finite, patterned and specific response to external and material conditions (O'Brien, 2005). On the other hand, ideographic approaches oppose natural science models, consider general social laws as either impossible or inadequate, reject prediction and causal explanation as valid goals, and seek detailed descriptions of social reality in order to understand human practices (Taylor, 1967; Little, 1991). In

anthropology Geertz's dense descriptions are a paradigmatic example in which 'cultural forms' are not the final goal, but a means of understanding its 'cultural contents' (O'Brien, 2005).

Due to an incorrect use of the anthropological tradition, it is argued that CC shows contradictions on three levels. First, while it criticizes mainstream criminological explanations for assuming a natural science approach, CC exhibits similar levels of abstraction and generality (Fenwick, 2004). Second, CC questionably uses an ideographic approach to obtain these general conclusions (O´Brien, 2005). Finally, CC involves theoretical contradictions, stating simultaneously that i) agents are deliberate and creative and their cultural practices produce the structure, and that ii) structural constraints determine agents and their cultural interactions. 'Human culture cannot be simultaneously finite and infinite, fundamentally free and fundamentally constrained, programmed and willed' (O'Brien, 2005:607). According to O'Brien, CC has to choose either Geertz's tradition and produce rich criminological descriptions of subcultures, assuming that individuals play the decisive role, refusing explanatory/predictive goals; or assume Harris's tradition and develop general nomothetic causal laws with explanatory and predictive power over crime, assuming that individuals play a weak role, and reducing culture to a dependent variable shaped by material circumstances.

Although O'Brien correctly identifies an imprecise and contradictory use of the concept of culture in CC, his conclusions are incorrect due to two connected problematic antagonisms that both O´Brien and CC assume:

i. Either the social sciences includes human intentions/motivations and makes its goal understanding and making sense of social behaviour, or it

assumes as a goal causally explaining social behaviour but needs to exclude human intentions/motivations.

ii. Either the social sciences explains and predicts social phenomena through general law-like statements, or it abandons explanation and prediction and produces detailed and idiosyncratic narratives/descriptions of social phenomena.

In relation to the first problem, causal explanation and interpretative understanding tend to be seen as antagonistic. In Von Wright´s terms: 'Explanation involves identifying general causes of an event, whereas understanding involves discovering the meaning of an event or practice in a particular context' (1971:5). Similarly, Geertz´s notion of understanding as 'thick description' where a deeper knowledge of individuals' purposes, values, and practices enables *making sense* of their actions or making them *intelligible* (Geertz, 1983). Therefore: 'interpretation is the beginning and the end and *causal analysis is out of place* in social inquiry' (Little, 1991:74). CC follows this approach and rejects causal explanation as deterministic, behaviourist, empiricist, lacking validity, and proposes understanding as an alternative (Ferrell et al., 2015; Young, 2004; 2011). However, although CC rejects terms such as 'cause' or 'causal', it employs terms such as 'explanation' or 'explanatory' without clarifying its meaning or how are they connected with the interpretative approach in a non-causal way. CC´s opposition to causality is more rhetorical than real and is based on an unnecessary antagonism between understanding and causal explanation. Geertz's approach is inspired by a Weberian perspective that integrates understanding and causal explanation. Sociology´s goal is to understand social action in order to causally explain its

development and effects (Weber, 1951). Davidson claims that mental states are not only 'reasons' for action but also 'causes' of action. If an individual has a *reason* for acting in X way, that reason for acting can be understood as a *cause* for his acting in X way (Davidson, 1963). It is problematic to see criminology as having to choose between either understanding or explaining causally, as '*to interpret is to explain*' or in other words '*interpreting an action is to explain it in terms of its antecedent motivational states*' (Elster, 2015:52), and using causal language does not require paying the price of determinism or ignoring actors' purposes.

CC´s approach implicitly includes the notion of causality through background factors and structural conditions that operate throughout actors´ motivational states to produce crime. There are examples of causal statements in CC at different levels of analysis. A *micro level* example is the idea that individuals do graffiti writing because it enables them to experience powerful visceral sensations such as pride, pleasure and recognition (Hasley & Young, 2006). Involvement and continuity of those practices is causally produced by these specific emotional states. At the *meso level* an example is the idea that institutional policies unexpectedly stimulate transgression (Morrison, 1995; Presdee, 2000). Two causal connections are present: i) authorities under a mistaken belief (youths are deterred by the increasing probability of arrest) apply policies oriented to dissuade potential offenders; ii) youths motivated by the desire to challenge authority perceive these policies and feel encouraged to defy them, and therefore, commit crimes. Making explicit the causal statements in CC does not imply ignoring the *macro level* or the role played by institutions in the construction of criminality. Ferrell´s (1995) research on graffiti shows how:

i) urban changes under late capitalism involve the rising privatization of public spaces and help to generate ii) a perception of graffiti writers as an 'aesthetic threat to cities' economic vitality', and therefore, provokes iii) that authorities' implement different policies (e.g. high tech surveillance systems) and 'cultural wars' to criminalize graffiti writers as violent vandals and remove them from the public space, which in turn, aggravates the problem, producing; iv) a more organized and politicized resistance by these groups.

These examples show that the idea of explanation as the search of causal antecedents is present in CC. Basically, some type of event (crime, transgression, or its criminalization) is being explained and other types of events or entities at different levels of analysis are used as causal antecedents to explain them. The difference is that, rather than focusing exclusively on objective and material antecedents, CC gives a central role to motivational and mental states unlike other criminological alternatives. According to cultural criminologists statistical analysis and control theories ignore motivations, either by correlating background risk factors with no subjective content in the first case (Young, 2003), or by assuming that crime is unmotivated and is the result of deficits of inner or external controls in the second case (Ferrell et al., 2015). In rational choice theories, motivation is included but in a very simplistic way. Offenders are depicted as 'pallid creatures calculating the best manoeuvres in order to minimize risk and maximize contentment' (Young, 2003:391).

However, if CC can be expressed in terms of causal connections and culture is used through motivational states as a causal antecedent, does this mean that CC has to assume a more abstract law-like approach following Harris's model? Or should it give up any explanatory pretentions and return to

Geertz´s deep descriptions? This second antagonism can be framed in more general terms: 'Are there law like generalizations in the social sciences? If not, are we thrown back on mere description and narrative? In my opinion, the answer to both questions is no' (Elster, 1989:32). There is an intermediate alternative that has been defended by analytical sociologists and some philosophers of social science which centres explanations on the identification of '*social mechanisms*' (Elster, 2015; Hedström, 2005; Hedström & Bearman, 2009; Hedström & Ylikoski, 2011; Mahoney, 2001; in criminology see Sampson, 2011). This approach allows reframing CC as a more precise explanatory option in relation to inadequate contemporary alternatives and simultaneously avoids O´Brien's two unattractive possibilities. Three characteristics are relevant in this approach directly connected with CC´s goals.

Reductionist strategy

There is a '*reductionist strategy*' which 'narrow[s] the gap between cause and effect' and which opposes to covering law explanations and statistical explanations (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998:25). The goal is to make explicit the internal workings underlying the explanatory 'black boxes' (Elster, 1989; Boudon, 1998; Hedström & Bearman, 2009). Explanation requires a conceptual account of how change in some variable is brought about which involves exploring what goes on inside specific social processes (Sorensen, 1998). Opening 'black boxes', however, is not merely finding unknown intermediate variables between *explanans* and *explanandum*. To avoid a correlational perspective, we must seek theoretical 'unobservable causal processes' which link observable events, variables and outcomes (Mahoney, 2001; Goertz &

Mahoney, 2012). For example, Young (2007) challenges a simple causal connection between poverty/inequality and crime by providing four additional intermediate causal mechanisms: individuals share cultural values/goals; they perceive as unfair their situation of relative deprivation; they feel humiliated and angry; and they perceive crime as a way of challenging this state of affairs. Adequate explanations can be articulated when we open this invisible subcultural and emotional 'black box' unexplored by explanations focused on objective background variables.

Specificity and indeterminacy

Social mechanisms approach provides explanations characterized by greater *specificity* and *indeterminacy*. Social mechanisms explanations are more specific than abstract laws but 'more general than the social phenomena that they subsume' (Elster, 1998:49). For Elster, detailed knowledge of the causal connections improves explanations that minimize the risk of spuriousness but also weakens predictive possibilities. Social complexity generates causal indeterminacy in two senses. Sometimes, indeterminacy is related to the unknown conditions under which a causal mechanism will be triggered. On other occasions, it is possible to foresee that diverse causal mechanisms will influence a variable in conflicting directions but with an indeterminate net effect. Although we are unable to predict what the output will be we can explain it retrospectively (Elster, 1989). Similarly, CC has criticized criminological theories which resemble little the specific and real experiences of offenders (Hayward & Young, 2004). Additionally, Young has questioned prediction as a failed criminological project unable to anticipate the increase of

crime from the 1960s to the 1990s and the decrease of crime since the 1990s. Predicting crime based on the correlation of objective factors overlooks that individuals and their interpretations might change independently of those factors. And prediction has become even more illusory under the volatile context of late modernity (Young, 2004; 2011).

The idea of undetermined social mechanisms helps to defend CC's explanatory value despite its inability to predict. Additionally, CC´s explanatory claims have a lower level of abstraction and are less vulnerable to criticisms about its similarity to general statements employed by mainstream criminology (Fenwick, 2004), as well as its necessity for assuming law like nomothetic explanations (O´Brien, 2005). For example, the key causal connection between committing crimes in order to defy authority and experiencing emotions (Ferrell, 1995; Presdee, 2000) can be interpreted as a complex and undetermined combination of causal mechanisms. An individual who has been arrested might suffer stigmatization and humiliation. Yet, his reaction depends, as these emotions might result in additional emotional mechanisms. Perhaps, if they produce a predominant combination of guilt and fear, the agent feels dissuaded and avoids being involved in deviance again. However, if anger and resentment are prevalent, maybe his future deviation might be reinforced. But if excitement of defying authority predominates over negative feelings, an increasing deviance might occur in the future. We cannot predict offender's reaction because we do not know which of the three mechanisms will be triggered or whether the three will operate simultaneously. But once we know the outcome, we can explain retrospectively what occurred.

Against deterministic explanations

There is an antagonism towards deterministic explanations which dismiss individuals and intentional components. Actions need to be analyzed as 'meaningful' or 'grounded on reasons' (Boudon 1998:175). As Hedström puts it: 'I would like to reserve the word cause for a less causal notion of causality' (Hedström, 2005:23). Yet, strong emphasis on micro foundations or the micro level of actor´s motivations, do not preclude including the meso and macro levels (Hedström & Bearman, 2009; Ylikoski forthcoming). This analytical approach focused on identification of causal mechanisms is not necessarily committed with methodological individualism. For example, Hedström and Udehn (2009) argue for 'structural individualism' which attributes 'substantial explanatory importance to social structures in which individuals are embedded' (2009:4). Daniel Little's 'methodological localism' also provides a key role to the meso level constituted by institutions and organizations: 'The molecule of all social life is the socially constructed and socially situated individual, who lives, acts, and develops within a set of local social relationships, institutions, norms, and rules' (2011:280).

This claim complements CC's goal of overcoming structure–agent dilemma by focusing explanation on the subject's cultural motivations in the context of macro structural and material conditions (Hayward & Young, 2004). This claim also goes in line with recent developments that combine CC and Left Realism (aka, 'Cultural Realism') that defend the use of critical realism and the identification of contingent and generative causal mechanisms underlying social processes and structures (Matthews, 2014a; 2014b). However, it also demands a specification of the social mechanisms involved between micro and macro

levels which involves including the institutional level. In CC's explanations institutional components are scarce and, if mentioned, they are generally depicted as homogenous and simple contextual conditions or reactions to transgressions (O´Brien, 2005). For example, the criminal justice system, the media or the labour market are incorporated in Young´s (2007) merely in their basic function of social exclusion and cultural inclusion. In Ferrell´s (1996) explanation, again, public institutions appear as an homogenous reaction that criminalizes and exacerbates graffiti writing.

To sum up, it is incorrect to argue that explaining crime using culture demands i) assuming a nomothetic model and ii) reducing culture to a materialistic output.[4] An alternative solution involves challenging the opposition understanding vs. explanation, assuming that CC involves explanation through motivational antecedent states, and reframing its causal statements in terms of a social mechanisms approach. This intermediate explanatory perspective between universal laws and idiosyncratic narratives emphasizes the contingent, specific, and retrospective nature of explanations centred on the exploration of motivational states in interaction with the institutional and structural levels. Yet, reframing CC in terms of a social mechanism approach demands precision in the categories used to explain crime. Consequently, it is relevant to analyze a key explanatory concept in CC: emotions.

III. Emotions in Cultural Criminology

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[4] An unexplored issue in this study is the conceptualization of culture. Despite culture has a key role in CC, its excessive amplitude and heterogeneity of meanings weakens its value for the explanation of crime. Additionally, its problematic conceptualization involves risks of tautology and axiomatic definitions which make difficult its empirical assessment (see Trajtenberg, 2011).

CC has questioned conventional criminology´s 'desiccated' perspective in which crime is considered mundane and lacking any emotional content (Ferrell et al., 2015, Hayward, 2016). Sociological positivism 'translates background factors of deprivation into a simple foreground narrative of experienced deficit with crime as the relief of such deprivation' (Hayward & Young, 2004:267). Rational choice theory opposes emotions by assuming the criminal´s rational maximization of available opportunities as the unique narrative (Hayward, 2007; 2012). None of these accounts understands the: 'internal psychic – emotive processes' taking place in crime (Ferrell et al., 2015). They are inappropriate to explain 'the crimes of the irrational actor' (Hayward, 2004), that is, chaotic and expressive offences such as gang violence, child molestation, drunken vandalism, etc. (Hayward, 2007).

Cultural criminologists' analysis of the emotional component of deviance has been mainly influenced by Matza and Sykes's work on youths' subculture of crime (see Ferrell et al., 2015; Presdee, 2000). Particularly, key questions are: why youths find attractive deviance? Why youths take 'moral holidays' and drift into delinquency? (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The motivating force for breaking the law lies in the emotional stimulation. Unlike mundane and routine conventional life ('only suckers work'), crime provides youths with a life style characterized by excitement, adventure, danger, physical dangers and thrills. In fact, youths purposely 'produce' excitement by defying authorities and legal order (Matza & Sykes, 1961).[5]

More recently, Katz has exerted a decisive influence on the phenomenology of emotions in CC. He localizes motivations for crime in the

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[5] However, it is wrong to assume a gap between deviant and conventional values. Many of these attitudes, even those associated with violence and aggression, permeate societies' conventional culture (Matza & Sykes, 1961; see also Presdee 2000).

foreground of 'immediate lived experience' in opposition to distant background forces. For example, in order to know why the 'righteous slaughter' commits homicide is key to explore the emotional dynamics of the situation. When individuals find that moral principles are violated, they feel humiliated and angry, and in order to recuperate their self-respect they carry out a vengeful slaughter. Without this emotional component, criminology is unable to explain why individuals with similar characteristics differ in their criminality (Katz, 1988). Crime constitutes a way of transcending humiliation and the triviality of everyday life, providing a sensual and liberating experience. CC contextualizes Katz´s analysis in the conditions of late modernity exploring its direct role on individual´s motivation, and its indirect influence through the state and the market (Brotherton, 2014; Ferrell et al., 2015; Young 2007).

In relation to the motivation to transgress, cultural criminologists agree with Matza and Sykes on emotion´s general role in crime. According to Hayward, individuals face a paradoxical situation in late modernity. Feelings of ontological insecurity owing to structural uncertainty are combined with being hyper-controlled by diverse state and non-state agencies. Crime and risky activities represent a way of breaking with everyday life and escape from an insecure but over-controlled world. Crime provides the excitement of breaching the rules which enables individuals to exercise control of their destiny and to express identity (Hayward, 2011). Similarly, for Lyng individuals engage voluntarily in extreme activities, where the threat of death or injury is permanent and they push themselves to the edge looking forward to experiment 'adrenaline rush' in order to achieve self-determination. By risking their lives, individuals seek to recover choice and to escape from society´s alienation

(Lyng, 2004). For Hayward and Young individuals 'lose control to take control' (2004:268). According to Ferrell, actual societies are characterized by an 'unbearable boredom', producing situations of existential breakdown and strain between expectations and goals. Non-legal activities are '*antidotes'* to deal with this structural boredom (Ferrell, 2004). Illegal graffiti involves feelings of adrenaline rush and constitutes a means of self-expression and resistance to authority. It is an anarchist response that resists assuming negative emotions imposed by agents of social control (Ferrell, 1995). Presdee also observes that crime explains how individuals go 'from being bored to being excited [...] from being powerless to being powerful' (2004:280). Transgression is a 'therapeutic action' that relieves the pain of being 'excluded'. In lives characterized by boredom and lack of meaning breaking the limits allow individuals to acquire feelings (2004:281). Young depicts how 'bulimic societies' which culturally includes but structurally excludes, generates for the excluded intense emotions of disrespect, loss of identity and anger. Breaking the norms involves more than utilitarian behaviours. Deviance is 'delightful' and 'exciting' as it provides ways of dealing with humiliation and helps to reassert dignity and identity (Young, 2007).

In relation to the role played by institutions in the connection between emotions and crime, the exciting activities which revolutionize everyday life are increasingly labelled and considered illegal by state authorities (Ferrell, 2004). However, institutional efforts to control crime have an unexpected effect. Many of the 'rational' state efforts to impose order ignore real sensual motivations and paradoxically exacerbate the same transgressions they intend to eliminate. Transgressors are given what they demand: challenges and thrills (Morrison,

1995; Presdee, 2000). Some situational crime prevention policies increase the attraction of offences by generating new risks and intensifying older ones (Morrison, 1995; Hayward, 2007). The market generates a permanent and insatiable hedonistic desire to consume associated with frustration that may be assuaged through crime. At the same time, market forces commodify and transform transgressions in 'cool, fashionable, and desirable consumer choices' (Hayward, 2002). Ironically, the subversive meaning of borderline behaviours might be stimulated by state responses and yet weakened, trivialized and assimilated by processes of market commodification (Ferrell, 2007).

It is difficult to find in CC's papers any theoretical account focused on the nature of emotions and their connection with action, except from a short section in Ferrell, et al. (2015:64–74).[6] Based on developments in the sociology of emotions, it is argued that emotions involve three dimensions: i) corporeal/physical; ii) affective; iiii) and a cognitive dimension of interpretation and mental processes. CC assumes Katz´s perspective on the functionality of emotions. Emotions are 'self reflective actions and experiences' (1999:7). We are 'artful in producing emotions' because they enable us to comprehend 'the tacit, embodied foundations of ourselves' (1999:7). Emotions constitute an effort to understand an existential problem: knowing the substance of the self (Katz, 2000; 2002). Two dimensions in Katz´s conceptualization of emotions reinforce this functionality. First, emotions are 'situation – responsive' and 'situation – transcendent' narrative projects. Emotions are useful to individual interests and goals in understanding and dealing with particular situations. Second, emotions should be analyzed as an interaction process constructed by actors in relation

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[6] An exception is Halsey and Young (2006) who criticize assimilating emotions with affections. However, they use only Massumi's poststructuralist perspective on affections and do not argue why this is the best theoretical option.

to the interpretation and reaction of others. Individuals creatively use resources, notably their own bodies, to generate impressions of their emotions in other actors (Katz, 1999).

The way cultural criminologists conceptualize and use emotions seems problematic for the explanation of crime for three main reasons.[7]

1. Imprecise and intuitive conceptualization

One problem is that Cultural criminologists have an imprecise, intuitive and operative use of specific emotions without any reference to a general definition. For example, Young (2003) uses humiliation, anger, and resentment among others without discussing the nature of these emotions and how they particularly influence behaviour, as if the reader´s common sense were sufficient. When it is possible to find some vague and implicit definition or reference, the emotional dimension has been assimilated to: i) irrational states or a non-instrumental quality of actions (Hayward, 2007); ii) normative/moral components of behaviours (Hayward & Young, 2012); iii) identity or existential meanings (Presdee, 2000; Ferrell et al., 2004); iv) adrenaline thrill, excitement and preference for risk (Lyng, 1990; Ferrell et al., 2015); v) hedonism or pleasure (Presdee, 2000; Hayward, 2011); vi) search for control and capacity to choose (Lyng, 1990; Ferrell, 1996); and the capacity for abandoning a powerless condition (Presdee, 2000). When the term emotion embraces such diverse and heterogeneous entities, it runs the risk of losing its explanatory power.

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[7] Failure to provide an adequate conceptualization of emotions is not an exclusive problem of cultural criminologists, and affects generally Criminology. However, it is CC that has emphasized the importance of using emotions to explain crime and deviance.

Additionally, most of these conceptual associations are problematic. Rationality involves an actor being able to achieve his goals in the most efficient way (Weber, 1951). Norms is one way in which rationality can be subverted. An individual might irrationally kill another individual following a moral norm although he perceives that he might suffer costs following his arrest. Emotions are another way in which rational behaviour can be subverted. Particularly, emotions can be such a strong motivational force that might subvert both rationality and norms (Elster, 1996; 2009). A woman who suffers domestic violence might know that killing her husband involves multiple costs and even go against her moral principles, and yet, out of humiliation and anger she might end up committing this crime anyway. Whilst it may be argued that the imposition and efficacy of social norms is based on emotional background (Durkheim, 1964), 'it is not indispensable for the operation of norms' (Elster, 1996:1389) and more importantly, it does not mean that norms and emotions are the same entity. Therefore, definitions (i) are problematic because they are based on a general characteristic (non-instrumentality) which is an insufficient condition for the presence of emotions and is also present in other concepts such as norms. Precisely, definitions (ii) confuse emotions with norms, and definitions (iii) are equivocal as while emotions might help to construct actor´s narratives and identities, they are analytically separable categories. In definitions (v) and (vi) there is a misunderstanding between emotions and outputs that may be obtained through emotions (e.g. control). Finally, definitions (iv) are questionable as they include elements that either are components of some specific emotions but are not emotions themselves (excitement,

viscerality, etc.), or they involve a different type of mental entity such as preferences.

Defining emotions is a complex task. Surprisingly, cultural criminologists have paid little attention to specific literature on this topic. Although there is controversy in about which properties characterize emotions, and for every characteristic offered there is a counter example of an emotion lacking that characteristic (Ekman & Davidson, 1994; Frijda, 2000), a list of the most relevant properties of emotions can be set out.[8] First, one of the most distinctive aspects of emotions is how they are felt. Every emotion is a unique and qualitatively different experience. Love involves a specific feeling which everybody can identify and not confuse with other feelings such as happiness or joy. Second, unlike other affective states, emotions have cognitive antecedents, which do not necessarily have to be truthful. Third, unlike feelings, emotions have an intentional object. They are generated by specific beliefs about something which can be facts or other agents´ actions or character. Fourth, emotions are usually accompanied by some physiological change or excitement (change in heart rate, blood pressure, etc.) traduced into external and visible signs such as the colour of the skin, body posture, etc. Fifth, emotions have a negative or positive valence, that is, they are pleasant or unpleasant. Anyone would include happiness among the first ones, and fear among the second ones. And finally, there is a strong and visible connection between some emotions and some tendencies to act. For example, running away when experiencing fear, or striking things/people when feeling anger. Of course, there is not consensus in the field of emotions and not all the experts agree with this

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[8] This list is based on Frijda (1986; 2000) and Elster (2009); see also Ekman (1999) and Solomon & Stone (2003).

list. Some authors argue that some of these characteristics may not be necessary, and/or that additional characteristics should to be added (see for example Ekman, 1992).[9] In any case, if emotion is to play a key role as explanans of crime, cultural criminologists need to elaborate a more precise conceptualization which takes advantage of these conceptual discussions beyond criminology.

2. Emotion´s problematic functionality

In spite of this conceptual vagueness, there is a shared idea of the functionality of emotions observed in the way in which emotions are used by cultural criminologists, and explicitly stated in Katz´s (1999) definition: emotions are not something uncontrollable which simply happens to agents. They are voluntary, expressive and aesthetic acts which help actors to gain identity, meaning and transcendence. This role is problematic in three senses.

Firstly, it assumes an excessively active view of emotions which is disputed in the literature of emotions. Other authors have argued for the involuntary, visceral and impulsive character of emotions (Frijda, 1986; Lowenstein, 1996; Scheff, 2002).[10] The idea that emotions are not chosen by individuals does not need to assume that emotions are automatic responses. Individuals can be trained to foster/inhibit emotions such as anger (Ainslie, 2005). However, one thing is to learn how to deal with emotions by trying to

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[9] Arguing for a more precise definition of emotions and its key characteristics does not involve ignoring the relevance of the social and historic context. The meaning of emotions, its social and cultural importance, and the specific nature of its connection with crime and deviance will vary significantly across time and culture.

[10] Katz acknowledges a non-intentional component. Although emotions are artfully produced by individuals, they also have the power to operate outside the 'foreground of our self–awareness' (Katz 1999:2). However, the inclusion of non–intentional and bodily elements is unclear and the idea of emotions as corporeal self-reflective actions is incomprehensible (Wouters, 2002). CC ignores this tension except for an isolated and not very clarifying allusion to Katz´s (1999) third dimension of emotions labeled as 'sensual metamorphosis' (Ferrell et al., 2015:70).

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modulate their extreme effects, and another thing is to be able to design emotions to produce 'identity projects'. Additionally, the presence of positive effects of emotional behaviour does not necessarily mean that such behaviour was intentionally produced. If behaviour is recurrent and tends to produce positive effects, it might be explained in a non-intentional way through a reinforcement mechanism (Van Parijs, 1981). Even if emotional transgression produces effects in terms of identity/transcendence, it may be the unexpected result of behaviours oriented by different and more mundane goals. Once these effects are generated, it may stimulate further transgressions but without involving offender´s intentions as a causal mechanism.

The second problematic issue is that CC´s intention-oriented version of emotion comes closer to 'rational' approaches. While psychologists have focussed on immediate emotions and other visceral factors that impact on behaviour, economists have studied anticipated emotions which are chosen or are expected to be experienced in the future (Lowenstein, 2002). Among the instrumental school, Solomon (1993) has argued that emotions are rational judgements or subjective strategies that seek to increase individual self esteem. Becker (1996) claims that individuals rationally choose emotions such as altruism and envy. In mainstream criminology, Katz´s sneaky thrills have being labelled *as* psychic returns to crime (Matsueda et al., 2006) and have been empirically evaluated in deterrence studies (Baker & Piquero, 2010; Nagin 2013). Additionally, rational choice explanations of crime have included the expression of emotions as non-instrumental goal of offenders (Clarke & Cornish, 1985). Ironically, CC's instrumental role of emotions is close to rational approaches and dismisses irrational components.

Thirdly, CC´s conceptualization of the function of emotions as meaningful and transcendent acts is empirically questionable. This approach ignores cases in which emotional reactions are isolated events detached from any voluntary identity project. Research has shown that emotionally motivated offenders resent being involved in crimes which are considered 'desperate acts', need to neutralize their crimes, and feel ashamed (de Haan & Jaco, 2003). Repulsion to crime, neutralization, and shame seem to be at odds with a transcendent life project. Owing to excessive emphasis on the significance of emotions, cultural criminologists assume as necessary a trait that is not always present in emotions, and therefore undermine its empirical validity.

3. Analytical insensitivity to specific emotions

Cultural criminologists show an imprecise use of specific emotions that, despite superficial similarities, are very different. An interesting example is Presdee (2004) that uses shame and guilt indistinctly in his writings. While both are negative emotions and produce physical pain, there are differences in the type of negative evaluation (global referring to the person as opposed to specific referring to the behaviour) and on the nature of the emotional reaction (public generated by others as opposed to private and self-inflicted) (Tagney et al., 2007). Shame and guilt connections with crime might diverge as Braithwaite´s (1989) theory shows. Although he uses other terms the idea is that emotions involving a more generalized negative evaluation of the individual tend to be more stigmatizing and therefore, more associated with crime and deviance. A similar superficial analysis can be observed in Hayward and Young´s (2004) use of emotions such as resentment, rage, anger,

vindictiveness and envy. They are all very different emotions which describe different internal states, are generated by different sources, and activate different behavioural tendencies. Using emotions to explain crime requires more than simply mentioning some negative emotions and stating loosely that they are a sensual and transcendent response to crime. Each emotion demands a specific analysis of its influence on criminal behaviour.

4. Unexplored connections between emotions and crime

CC´s analysis blurs two dimensions in the connection between emotions and crime. First, the idea that emotions might deter crime is ignored. Deterrence models include emotions as social/psychic costs and their effect on self-esteem. When individuals commit crimes they take into consideration these potential costs and try to avoid them (Grasmick & Bursik, 1990; Paternoster, 2010; Nagin 1998). Criminal justice measures might generate both emotional deterrence or emotional stimulation of crime. Second, emotional states can be associated with crime but as an antecedent motivational force involving diverse possibilities of analysis. On the one hand, emotions can act as a powerful motivational back up for fulfilling our goals. For example, actually responding to aggression might demand having a minimal emotional tone that energizes the individual to act. Katz´s (1988) righteous slaughter might perceive that some norm has been violated. Yet, without a minimal level of humiliation and rage, it would be impossible to end up killing his antagonist. On the other hand, the visceral character of emotions might act as a distorting force generating short circuits in individual´s rationality both when goals are conventional or criminal.[11] An

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[11] However, there is disagreement in the literature. While some authors defend this distorting role of emotions (e.g. Elster, 2009), other authors claim that emotions are a necessary condition for rationality:

amateur offender might fail to commit his first crimes due to paralyzing fear (Kessler, 2004). Instead, individuals might become unexpectedly involved in a fight and out of anger murder his opponent. Although there was no initial criminal goal, the transgression is the product of a strong emotional outburst constituted by anger (Luckenbill, 1977).

More generally, to understand how emotions distort rationality and motivate behaviour, a precise understating of rationality is required. According to Elster, rationality involves optimizing in three senses: i) 'choosing the action that best realizes the desires, given his beliefs about the consequences of choosing them'; ii) 'beliefs are inferred from the available evidence by procedures that are most likely [...] to yield to true beliefs'; iii) gathering 'information in an amount that is optimal in light of the agent´s desires and the expected costs of gathering more information' (Elster 2015:54). Emotions can affect rationality i) altering desires, ii) affecting directly beliefs by generating biased beliefs, iii) or indirectly, affecting the collection of information, generating low quality beliefs (Elster, 2009). Discussion of failures of rationality in criminology has generally focused on the cognitive dimension: problems of perception, sources of information, processing of information, etc. (Pogarsky & Piquero, 2003; Kleck et al., 2005; Matsueda et al., 2006), dismissing the distorting role of emotions.[12] CC also has paid little attention to the emotions distorting role of rationality, except from some isolated references in Hayward (2007) to: Exum´s work on alcohol and anger; consumer research referring to short term emotions and its effect on consumers' choices; and Hoch and

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emotions filter, select, and process information in order to evaluate more effectively available alternatives (e.g. Damasio, 1996; Slovic et al., 2002).
[12] Two exceptions are Bouffard et al (2002) and Exum´s (2002).

Lowenstein's claim of integrating psychological and economical literatures on emotions (2007:237, 241).

CC correctly censures the lack of emotions in criminological theorizing. However, it has not provided an adequate alternative solution. It relies excessively on an instrumental and transcendent perspective, fails to offer a more detailed account of specific emotions, and does not incorporate the deterrent and the motivational causal influence of emotions. There is a lack of dialogue with literature on emotions, notably in the psychological tradition. If emotions are to be incorporated in CC, a more interdisciplinary, plural and less restricted emotional approach needs to be assumed.

V. Conclusions

CC has correctly claimed that emotional components are relevant for explaining crime and deviance and have been underestimated in criminological theory. Although CC has not provided a satisfactory alternative, its internal contradictions are as not as serious as some critics have argued. Cultural criminologists and their critics assume questionable epistemological dualisms. On the one hand, the opposition between understanding and causal explanation is unnecessary. The idea of explanation as the search for causal antecedents is present in CC and can and should be explicitly assumed and developed, rather than rhetorically rejected. The key difference is the inclusion of cultural motivational states as causal antecedents in the explanation of crime. On the other hand, and against O´Brien (2005) argument, cultural explanations of crime can avoid abstract nomothetic models, by assuming a 'social mechanism approach' which emphasizes the contingent, specific and retrospective nature

of causal explanations and abandons predictive goals and universal explanatory claims. A second issue refers to several problems in one of the main components of CC's explanation of crime: emotions. There is a tendency to rely on an intuitive and vague approach which not only incorrectly associates emotion with irrationality, norms, identity, etc., but it also too general and insensitive to differences among specific emotions. There is also a strong reliance on Katz´s (1999) idea of emotions as intentional, instrumental and outcome-oriented, which ends being too close to rational choice approaches. This restricted view of emotions underestimates its irrational and uncontrolled components, assumes a transcendent role and threatens its empirical evaluation. Finally, there is a dismissal of both emotions' deterring effect over crime and its role as motivational antecedent.

CC rejects a criminology based on a 'dehumanized' representation of crime which ignores the complexities of real experiences of offenders (Hayward & Young, 2004; Young, 2011). More generally, approaches emphasizing formalization, parsimony and prediction so removed from real world become a '*social* science fiction' (Elster, 2015:461). However, CC´s project of acknowledging greater levels of complexity through culture and emotions needs to: avoid rhetorical oppositions with vague antagonists such as mainstream criminology; not exaggerate its epistemological singularity and explicitly assume causal explanation; and improve and refine the conceptualization of its explanatory categories, in order to provide more reliable explanations. In fact, why not assuming a more open dialogue with quantitative criminology and perhaps enable the possibility of extending the empirical assessment of some CC's hypotheses? Strongly based on qualitative methods and extremely

cautious with the application and interpretation of quantitative data is one thing;

rejecting any possibility of using numbers is another (see for example, Garland,

2012; Moran, 2014; Hough, 2014). Recent developments in CC and Cultural

Realism have emphasized the need for a more causality – sensitive approach

to social explanation and a more nuanced position regarding quantitative

methodologies (Matthews, 2014a; Hayward, 2016). As Maruna claimed once:

'How might criminology be different if Jock Young's work was also to become

the basis for this level of sustained, empirical research? Can we imagine the

armies of number crunchers at the American Society of Criminology even

reading Vertigo, let alone using hierarchical linear models to understand the

etiology of bulimia in society? If not, why not?' (2008:538).

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