

CHAPTER 10

Integrating Criminological Knowledges: A 'Post' Postmodern Synthesis

OVERVIEW

Barak outlines his ideas for a post-postmodern synthesis for criminology that is analogous to Zetetic studies, which attempts to map and systematize all knowledge. Before discussing the synthesis, this chapter discusses postmodernism, including its desire to make sense of situated pleasures and its critique of modernism, rationality, progress and totalizing control. Constitutive criminology furnishes a model for this synthesis because of its open-ended framework, understanding of dialectical causation, and the replacement discourses that seek to include sensual knowledges and transform both crime control and the broader social relations.

Ultimately, modern and postmodern thought are less opposites than dialectically interdependent views whose overlapping areas can be explored through 'textuality' that views social science and society as texts. The author discusses research methodology less in terms of qualitative/quantitative than as relating to four equally important and interdependent levels of investigation that include frames of meaning, consciousness, knowledgeability, and institutional orders. The paradigm of including all disciplines in an interdisciplinary narrative about crime and crime control focuses on the overlapping spaces between environmental relations, relations of social control, and personal and community histories.

OUTLINE

I Introduction

- A. Postmodern project - trying to make sense of crime in an interconnected, but alienated and fragmented world

* The Instructor's Manual for *Integrating Criminologies* is available as a downloadable Adobe .pdf file by chapter or in complete form through <http://paulsjusticepage.com/IntegratingCrim/index.htm>. The author's website is <http://greggbarak.com>. The website for [Amazon.com](#) has additional information about the book, and the [publisher's website](#) accepts requests for academic desk copies.

1. interest in shared excitement, adrenaline rushes, style, and resistance
- B. Zetetic studies: approach to integrating human knowledge as a whole
 1. Zetetics of criminology: open-ended, 'being built while building'
- C. Constitutive criminology
 1. Assumption that people actively constructing their world and imposing order on chaos
 2. Crime is indeterminable, interactional, interrelational, dynamic and dialectical; these active subjects are in turn objects of domination by criminal justice system and discourse
 - a. 'Causation' does not exist in positivistic sense; speak of influences rather than causes
 3. Replacement discourses to add sensuous elements back in and transform crime policy and social relations

II Modernist v Postmodernist Thought: Dueling Paradigms and the Need for Synthesis

- A. Modernism: normal science, belief in universals, scientific method, language is a credible means to access reality, increasing control over nature and society is progress
- B. Postmodernism: problematizes language as product of dominating discourse that seeks to naturalize (universalize) itself, seeks to interrogate modernist 'progress' by pointing out contradictions and disillusionment
- C. Barak contends two overlap as much as oppose, and can be cross fertilized to invigorate each other and create fullest possible explanation of crime and crime control
 1. language as historical practice rather than reflection of the world or product of the mind
 2. View society and social science as text

III The Case for Knowledge Synthesis: Textuality and Society

- A. Textualist understanding emphasizes constitutive social practices and critiques their reification; sees modern and postmodern as 'dialectically interdependent views of knowledge, self and society'
- B Examples
 1. Sampson and Laub's 'pathways and turning points through life'
 2. Bryan Vila's 'general paradigm for understanding criminal behavior'
 3. Arrigo: integrate in non-totalizing, non-homeostatic model that appreciates ever-changing meaning

IV Research Forms as kinds of Knowledge: Integrating Methods

- A. Four levels of study necessary to understand crime or human behavior
 1. Hermeneutic Elucidation of Frames of Meaning: part of all social science, but often suppressed in quantitative research

2. Investigation of Context and Form of Practical Consciousness: need to add to 'rational' and 'repressed' criminals through ethnomethodology
 3. Identification of Bounds of Knowledgeability: study unintended consequences and unacknowledged condition of action
 4. Specification of Institutional Orders: analysis of macro components that reproduce structural principles
- B. Replace qualitative/quantitative dualism with appreciation that each is necessary for understanding the other
- C. Social structure as 'medium' and 'outcome' of the conduct it recursively organizes

V Integrating Knowledges: Toward a 'Post' Postmodern Synthesis

- A. Indefensible not to bring together all knowledges and wealth of criminological contributions.
- B. Interdisciplinary narratives is the way to do it
1. Classical, positive and critical schools
 2. Modern and Postmodern
- C. No real 'dividing lines'; free flow of ideas
- D. Look to convergence of environmental relations, social control and personal and community history
- E. Stop 'internecine' warfare between theories that will not predict individual criminality anyway

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1] Extend postmodern critiques of society, rationality and knowledge
- 2] Outline structure of integrated modern/postmodern paradigm, with attention to (a) textuality and (b) epistemological frameworks/methodology

IDEAS FOR LECTURES & DISCUSSION

While Barak does not pursue it in depth, the issue of sensuality and the phenomenology of crime is an important aspect of understanding criminal behavior. Katz is quite clear in his book that: "Although his economic status, peer group relations, Oedipal conflicts, genetic makeup, internalized machismo, history of child abuse, and the like remains the same, he must suddenly become propelled to commit the crime" (1988:4). Because factors that are constant cannot cause a change (from non violent behavior to violence), Katz argues for a phenomenological study that looks at situated transactions. His theory examines how humiliation can become transformed into a righteous rages and how people empower the world to seduce them into crime.

This understanding is the mental aspect – the interpretation of a situation as being appropriate for fight, flight or diplomacy. Katz says little about social structure, but other theories can be integrated into his to explain gender differences (humiliation transformed into guilt or blame) or class differences in what we record as homicide [Braithwaite introduces the idea of structural humiliation (1992)]. Individual differences would also be expected from variations in impulse control, verbal expression, learning, routine behaviors that may involve frequent alcohol use, etc. Katz's theory also reminds us that the pursuit of pleasure and sensuousness may not always be rational (a notion familiar to many who have made poor choices of sexual partners at late night parties, but which seems to have escaped criminologists).

Not all postmodern thinking is critical theory, but Barak seems to use it as such. Poster's explanation thus captures much of what Barak argues postmodernism needs to do in this synthesis:

"It represents an attitude of antagonism and critique in the face of deeply problematic contemporary social formation. It sustains an effort to theorize the present as a moment between the past and the future, thus holding up a historicizing mirror to society, one that compels recognition of the transitory and fallible nature of society, one that insists that what is can be disassembled and improved considerably. Critical theory goes against the grain of a legitimating process endemic to power formations, a discursive mechanism through which the finitude of institutions is naturalized and universalized. Critical theory is a disruptive counterforce to the inscription on the face of social practices which says, 'Do not tamper with me for I am good, just and eternal'" (1989: 3)

By not explicating many assumptions, social structure is naturalized and reproduced. Poster's critique of modernity also points out that rationality created the atom bomb, Napalm, and Nazi concentration camps in addition to all the improvements that are more frequently touted. Further, rationally organized systems like bureaucracies produce irrationalities, such as Ritzer discusses in *The MacDonalidization of Society* (1996). How does the increasingly sterile, administered and homogeneous nature of the world (evidenced in bureaucracies, strip malls and endless franchises) affect the dynamic of crime that is associated with pleasure, adrenaline and self -identity as an individual?

REFERENCES

Katz, Jack. *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attraction of Doing Evil*. N.Y.: Basic Books.

Poster, Mark. 1989. *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ritzer, George. 1996. *The MacDonalidization of Society*, revised edition. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.