Chapter 7

Doing Visual Criminology: Learning from Documentary, Journalism and Sociology

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Introduction

Across the social sciences there has been a resurgence of interest in visual methods, which has been accompanied by a rise in scholarship on visual culture that has now established itself as an exciting and expanding intellectual field. In criminology while there is a rich tradition of research on 'crime and the media', specific attention to the *visual*, or indeed on the role and place of the *image* in crime, in crime control and in criminal justice, has long been lacking. This omission is particularly surprising given just how deep seated the cultural fascination with the iconography of crime and punishment is in the popular imagination. Of course, there have been some significant interventions in recent years, which would include Katherine Biber's (2007) *Captive Images*, Judith Resnick and Dennis Curtis's (2011) *Representing Justice*, Jonathan Finn's (2009) *Capturing the Criminal Image* and Alison Young's (2005) *Judging the Image* have each made ambitious attempts to understand the power of representation and bring new ways of thinking to bear in the discipline. Today images are everywhere, and they have a profound impact on our sense of ourselves as 'modern' (Jervis, 1998). Indeed, the term "ocularcentralism" was coined to describe a world saturated by visual experiences and the privileging of vision in Western philosophy and social theory (Jay, 1993).

In criminology Keith Hayward (2010:1) too has made the point that the West is 'suffused with images and increasingly images of crime' in his opening essay to an edited collection exploring the multifaceted ways in which crime is constructed visually. Yet he goes on to insist:

> It is not just a case of image proliferation – contemporary society's keen sense of the visual demands that images also be both mutable and malleable. Here the 'logic of speed' (Virilio, 1986, 1991) meets liquidity of form, as images bleed from one medium to the next. Uploaded and downloaded, copied and cross-posted, Flicker-ed, Facebook-ed and PhotoShop-ped, the image today is as much about porosity and manipulation as it is about fixity and representation. This, of course, poses a question: what does the term 'image' actually mean under contemporary conditions (Hayward, 2010:1).

This is a vital question, and he highlights how the distinction between representation and seeing has become increasingly blurred and is especially prominent in the 'spectacle' of crime and punishment as it has developed since the birth of modernity, which is indelibly tied to the rise of a mass culture of spectatorship (Carney, 2010). In this chapter I explore what it is to do visual criminology under such circumstances, which involves using images for social science purposes under these conditions of liquid modernity and opening up criminology to 'disciplinary outsiders, heretic ideas and imaginative methodologies' (Walklate and Jacobsen, 2016:2?)

The challenge then is to construct an approach that can do justice to both the power of images in social life and their place in social research, and it is so matters we now turn. There are now several accounts of how to conduct research with visual materials and they each survey the different ways images have been used to understand the world (some recent examples include Harper, 2012, Rose, 2012, and Pink, 2013). Anthropologists and sociologists, for example, have used photographs from the beginning as both disciplines began to explore societies near and afar, but they gradually fell out of favor as they were deemed too subjective, unsystematic and eccentric. As Howard Becker explains:

> Sociologists lost interest in reformist uses of photography as they shifted their attention from reform to scientific generalization…and very few photographs accompanied sociological articles and books. Anthropologists complained that their colleagues made photographs that were no different from ones tourists made of exotic places and that served no better purpose than those amateur works (Becker, 2004:193-4).

To take the example of sociology, the ties with photography were established very early on, and practitioners sought to promote social reform by exposing the injustices associated with the modern age. Crusading journalists like Jacob Riis photographed the crushing slum poverty in New York in the 1880s (an undertaking pioneered several decades earlier in British cities by a number of different urban explorers), while Lewis Hine's involvement with the sustained campaign against child labor is often said to have led to the passage of laws ending child slavery. Between 1907 and 1918 he travelled around the United States taking over five thousand photographs of children at work, often tricking the managers, to create what he termed a "photo story," where words and pictures combine to produce a powerful, non-linear narrative (Marien, 2010:207). At around the same time early editions of the *American Journal of Sociology* routinely included photographs to accompany the 'muckraking' reformist articles it

published during the first fifteen years of its existence. This tradition was much later reclaimed and reworked by Howard Becker (1974, 1995, 1982/2008) across a series of influential publications that argued for a more ambitious use of visual material to explore society.

So far I have largely been discussing visual methods as they have developed within specific academic disciplinary contexts. However, it is important to recognize how photography developed in diverse ways from the outset, not least since the emergence of criminology itself has some very close connections with these regimes of representation. Of course, Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology will be the most well-known example, to criminologists at least, of how photography was used to classify bodies into distinguishable types in the nineteenth century. Alan Sekula (1989) and John Tagg (1988) have each argued that the photographs taken for police and prison records should be understood in relation to the boom in portraiture, whereby people were encouraged to measure the respectable citizen against the criminal body and visualize social difference. They both present forceful Foucauldian understandings of the institutional power at work in police and prison photography. However, they have been criticised for not considering a broader range of photographic practices, and for ignoring the gendered dynamics at work in the collection, exchange and display of photographs in domestic settings (Smith, 1998, di Bello, 2007). As Gillian Rose (2012:234) suggests, these nineteenth century female photographers were creating images that did not 'replicate the surveillant gaze of the police mug-shot or the family studio portrait' and in doing so they 'thwart the classifying gaze by strategies such as blurred focus, collage and overexposure'. This more recent historical research presents the possibility of a richer understanding of the uses of photography and the practices that accompany it.

Consequently, it is helpful to identify three distinctive, but overlapping, genres that can help sharpen the discussion. Documentary photography, photojournalism and visual sociology each see it as 'their main business to describe what has not yet been described' and 'to tell the big news' in their respective explorations of society (Becker, 1974:3). Each have different uses and diverse histories, but the boundaries between them are occasionally blurred, so considering them as distinctive genres will help shed light on what they are trying to achieve in particular contexts. There then follows a discussion of what visual criminology can learn from each by concentrating on some contemporary projects that speak to crime, deviance and punishment in powerful ways. However, visual analysis should never be an end in, and of itself, but must always have the goal of social and political explanation firmly in sight.

Documentary Photography

One immediate difficulty facing any attempt at defining 'documentary photography' is that practically every photograph is a document of something, and from the beginning the medium itself has largely been understood through its capacity to record an objective and faithful image of events with an unprecedented authority. It has even been claimed that to most nineteenth century minds 'the very notion of documentary photography would have seemed tautological' as photography itself was regarded as 'innately and inescapably performing a documentary function' (Solomon-Godeau, 1991:170). The term 'document' means 'evidence', and has been traced to the medieval term *documentum*, which referred to an official paper providing a form of evidence 'not to be questioned' and 'a truthful account backed by the authority of the law' (Clarke, 1997:145). The particular magic of photography lay in its ability capture a moment in time and faithfully record this reality in a two-dimensional space of representation. Although all photos are documentary in the sense that they have an indexical relationship with whatever was in front of the lens when the image was made, we can make some broad distinctions between photographs intended for 'public' or 'private' viewing, and those which are 'caught' in 'candid' moments as opposed to those which are 'arranged' in some 'covertly contrived' ways (Goffman, 1979:14). A 'documentary' photograph, however, is best defined by the use to which it is put, or asked to perform, rather than by some essential or innate quality of the image itself (Snyder, 1984).

A further way out of the definitional difficulties is to situate documentary in relation to a distinctive kind of social investigation and it was this practice that John Grierson had in mind when he coined the term 'documentary' in 1926. Although he was using it to describe a form of film making that would have the power of both poetry and prophecy, replacing the escapist fantasies of Hollywood cinema with a bolder vision of what the medium could offer, the term was quickly applied to certain kinds of photography, popular literature, radio programmes, arts movements and social science writing. Indeed, the documentary movement would flourish in the 1930s and combined both physical activity (constructing a text, object, or image) and ethical task (explaining the truth of the world), which are tied together in his formulation of documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson, 1966:147). The juxtaposition between the creative (artistic license) and the actual (reality as it is) lies at the heart of the tradition and has been the cause of much controversy.

Despite being a 'genre of actuality' the main purpose of documentary, as it developed in the 1930s, was to 'educate one's feelings' as practitioners concluded that while we 'understand a historical document intellectually' we also 'understand a human document emotionally' (Stott, 1973:8) and so the affective came to be prioritised in the movement. As Roy Stryker, another leading figure, put it:

> Truth is the objective of the documentary attitude…A good documentary should tell not only what a place or a thing or a person *looks* like, but it must also tell the audience what it should *feel* like to be an actual witness to the scene (cited in Phillips, 2009:65, emphasis in original).

The tension between fact and feeling is further underlined by the didactic function of the tradition, where the combination of the claim to transcend subjective bias with a desire to convince spectators of the need for social change became an essential feature of the movement. As one of most influential critics of documentary has put it, it is 'a practice with a past' and how it came to 'represent the social conscience of liberal sensibility presented in visual imagery' (Rosler, 1981/2004:176) suggests a need to situate it in historical context. In revisiting this past it is clear that photography became bound up with social advocacy and exposing injustice in ways that have close ties with journalism and sociology almost from the outset.

All the characteristic photographic practices now associated with the documentary form are well established by the 1860s: alongside war images, historical sites, sacred places and exotic natives each became the subjects of the lens as colonial empire expanded, while other practitioners travelled into 'the abyss' to explore those dark, dangerous and ungovernable places in which the urban poor lived (Carrabine, 2012). Thomas Annan in Glasgow, John Thomson in London, and Jacob Riis in New York are examples of the latter, where explorations of slum conditions in the modern metropolis was driven by an uneasy mix of public curiosity and social concern. Their approaches differed from the sheer sensationalism of much of the journalistic attention given to immigrant neighbourhoods and street life in the burgeoning 'yellow press' of the time[1]. Instead, a sense of social injustice pervades the early documentary photographs and the images seek to expose wrongs in an effort to prompt social reform. There is a clear moral vision at work, where the poor are divided into distinct categories – the deserving and undeserving, or into typological figures of suffering. They strongly spoke to the deep seated 'worry that the ravages of poverty – crime, immorality, prostitution, disease, radicalism – would threaten the health and security of polite society, and their appeals were often meant to awaken the self-interest of the privileged' (Rosler, 1981/2004:177). In doing so they tended to depict their subjects as passive victims of social conditions, yet playing on the danger of (and the desire to know) the Other.

The 1930s saw large-scale documentary projects like the Farm Security Administration's (FSA) Information Division, which eventually produced over 80,000 images of the human suffering endured in the Great Depression in the US. The photographers include Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Arthur Rothstein and Ben Shahn, among many others,

who strove for advocacy and reform in an effort to engender support for New Deal relief policies. As commentators subsequently noted, 'it was images of the "worthy" as opposed to the "unworthy" poor that were promoted' (Solomon-Godeau, 1991:179). The dominant tone is that the victims of the Depression are ordinary people, who have fallen on hard times, where poverty and misfortune are personalised and individualised, rather than the structural product of a breakdown in economic, political and social relations. A view put in the following way:

> In the liberal documentary, poverty and oppression are almost invariably equated with misfortunes caused by natural disasters: Causality is vague, blame is not assigned, fate cannot be overcome…Like photos of children in pleas for donations to international charity organizations, liberal documentary implores us to look in the face of deprivation and weep (and maybe send money...) (Rosler, 1981/2004:179).

This critique of the politics of representation at work in documentary is an important one, and has been repeated often since the 1970s, yet the work of the FSA has endured because it sought to not only inform, but also to move us through a dramatic visual language.

Lewis Hine is arguably the quintessential socially concerned documentary photographer, and his work from the end of the nineteenth century up to the 1930s embodies the achievements, limitations and contradictions of using images in the pursuit of social reform. His work rejected fine art photography and he declared himself a 'sociological' photographer, with considerable care taken to preserve his subjects' dignity, in well-crafted images conveying the complexities of working-class life (Clarke, 1997:147). Much has been made of how his images never exploit, but always speak to the exploitative conditions in which the poor live. Becker (1994:7), for example, notes how in a classic 'image of "Leo, 48 inches high, 8 years old picks up bobbins at fifteen cents a day," in which a young boy stands next to the machines which have, we almost surely conclude, stunted his growth'. It was while working for social welfare organisations that Hines perfected his technique of the 'photo story', which combined word and pictures in arresting non-linear narratives published in journals and magazines read by professional and volunteer social workers.

Photojournalism

The images Hine produced were similar to those made by journalists, but were less preoccupied with narrating current events or illustrating news stories, and instead the approach anticipates the 'golden age' of photojournalism (1930s-1950s) when 'reportage' became a staple of newspaper and magazine coverage. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the market during this pe-

riod, when magazines like *Look* and *Life* in the USA, *Illustrated* and *Picture Post* in Britain and *Vu* in France, gave outlets for influential photographers, like W. Eugene Smith, Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson, to have their work commissioned and published. These mass circulation picture magazines emerged between the wars, initially in Germany, and then quickly spread to other countries, using innovative juxtapositions of image and text the term 'photojournalism' came to describe the new practice. Yet it is important to note that photography has a long and troubled history in western journalism and Karin Becker (1990/2003) has charted some of these dynamics across distinct types of publication. She highlights how it was in the tabloid newspapers of the 1920s that large, eye-catching photographs of crime, violence, disaster and society scandals came to prominence – telling stories quickly, through sensational pictures and short captions. Press historians see this as a nadir for journalism and the 'abundant use of pictorial material' was regarded 'as conclusive proof both of declining literary standards and a nefarious plan to exploit hopelessly naïve and illiterate people' (Carlebach, 1997:145). If the tabloid press undermined the credibility of the photograph as a medium for serious news, then it was the simultaneous rise of picture magazines that established the genre of the photo essay – where images and text could be spread out as running narratives across several pages.

Assignments from these publications were especially coveted and the magazines became a global phenomenon. With their distinctive styles and expert photography they underlined the importance of the 'camera as witness', where the photojournalist takes pictures to fulfill an editorial requirement and 'answer the essential journalistic questions: who, what, where, when, and why' (Gefter, 2009:123). By the 1970s their popularity had fallen, with the likes of *Life* and *Look* closing, partly as a result of the rise of television and changes in press ownership, while new kinds of colour newspaper supplement appeared, which were mainly led by advertising and lifestyle features. As the business of journalism has changed so photojournalists have had to adapt to new constraints and find fresh outlets to pursue their practice. Indeed, a case can be made that socially conscious photojournalism has flourished independently of the print media for decades now, where the pictures are more likely to be seen on the walls of galleries, museum exhibitions and elegant books than in newspapers and magazines. Photojournalism retains a somewhat elevated status and there are a number of elements contributing to this:

> the formal structural properties of the ideal photo essay; the determination of the single photograph as an idealized moment – fetishized as "the decisive moment" either alone or at the centre of the essay; and the reconstruction of the photojournalist as artist (Becker, 1990/2003:297).

In many respects Margaret Bourke-White is the prime example of the photojournalist, chronicling rural poverty in *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) and those excluded from the 'American Dream', during World War II she photographed the German bombing of Moscow, was the first woman to fly in an air raid, and sent back harrowing pictures of the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald. In addition, she insisted on documenting the "buffalo soldiers", so called military units composed of all-black soldiers during combat in Italy (Marien, 2003:287).

War is a major subject for photographers and World War II effaced the distinction between civilian and combatant to the extent that since then those caught up in the conflict have received as much attention as the soldiers themselves. Indeed, it is often said that the stream of horrific images from Vietnam provided normative criticism of the war. The 1972 photograph of a naked Vietnamese girl running away from a village just napalmed by US planes is one of the most distressing images of the era and brought home the terror of the indiscriminate killing. Robert Capa's statement that 'if your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough' (cited in Marien, 2003:303) has long been the credo of the war photographer rushing off to battle to capture the death and destruction. It was the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) that was the first to be covered by corps of professional photographers from the frontline and Capa's photograph of a Republican soldier 'shot' by his camera at the same time as bullets rip through his crumpling body is one of the defining images of the war. As Sontag (2003:20) explains – it 'is a shocking image, and that is the point'. Or as Peter Howe, a former picture editor at *Life* put it, 'the job of the photojournalist is to witness those things that people don't want to think about. When they're doing the job right, they are taking photographs that people don't want to publish by their very nature' (cited in Lowe, 2014:211). Alongside this socially concerned photography[2], which is dedicated to bearing witness and political critique, there remained a mass market for sensationalized images of working-class life and the urban condition. Indeed, the picturing of 'news' was absolutely central to the development of a global visual economy and one that shows no sign of diminishing in today's digital age.

Among the most infamous photographers exploiting this appetite was Arthur Fellig, more well known by his nickname Weegee, who in graphic black-and-white photography captured the gruesome detail of gang executions, car crashes and tenement fires that he then sold to the New York City tabloid editors. Such brutal pictures became the staple images of the mass circulation press in the 1930s and effectively changed journalistic practices overnight (Lee and Meyer, 2008). His bestselling book *Naked City* (1945/2002) was the first collection of his tabloid photography and was published in the same year that the Museum of

Modern Art held an exhibition of his work. It has been noted how his images 'may appear as realistic representations of the underside of New York urban life' they also 'convey complex ideas of guilt and voyeurism' (Blinder, 2009:9).

In a nuanced essay Phil Carney (2010:26) situates Weegee in a broader account exploring the relationships between photographic spectacle, predation and paparazzi, suggesting he was 'the first photographer to stalk and ensnare his prey with stealth and speed', establishing practices that would become increasingly popular as a market devoted to publishing candid images of celebrities' unguarded moments came to prominence. These 'stolen images' undermined what a 'good' photograph should look like, with their 'awkward composition, harsh contrasts and uncertain focus' (Becker, 1990/2003:301) and are now an integral feature of tabloid, celebrity culture. Weegee provides an important bridge from the conventional topics of documentary photography into the new directions taken in the post-war period, when the 'new' documentarists began exploring more 'subjective' approaches to image making, which reopened important questions about photography's complex relationship with reality (Carrabine, 2012). Yet it is important to note that crime photographers are rarely able to capture the criminal act itself and represent the act by focusing on its 'after-effects and constituent parts' so that 'weapons, suspects, victims, locations, accomplices, and bloody crime sites are usually photographed separately, often at some remove in time and space from the crime itself' (Straw, 2015:139). The resulting visual coverage then is fragmented, and overlaps to an extent with official forensic photography, but tends to draw from a fairly stable repertoire of disparate images with varying degrees of documentary credibility and journalistic value.

Visual Sociology

For much of the twentieth century sociology has shown little interest in the use of images, and remains dominated by words and figures. Yet, visual illustration was a central feature of the investigations of urban life pioneered in the work of nineteenth century social commentators like Henry Mayhew in his studies of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851-62), while Cesare Lombroso famously used images to highlight the criminal nature of certain bodies, and social reformers used photographs as both illustration and evidence. It has been noted that the *American Journal of Sociology* routinely published images in articles pressing for 'social amelioration' from the beginning, but once Albion Small took over the editorship of the journal in 1914 photographs disappeared from its pages and were replaced by 'causal analysis, high-level generalisations and statistical reports' (Stasz, 1979:133). The clear implication is that images are too unscientific and undermine the intellectual credibility of the discipline, which is bound up with a more general disdain for mixing advocacy with scholarly objectivity

as academic sociology took shape in American universities in the early twentieth century (Turner, 2014). It is this attempt to make sociology a science that would come to define the discipline, and was the target of C Wright Mills (1959) in his famous indictment of the positivist methods and functionalist theorizing then dominant.

Although the use of visual material has remained a marginal activity in the discipline, there have been some significant interventions that have looked at photographs for their sociological value. One important example is Pierre Bourdieu's (1965/1990) collaborative work on photography which he sees as an ordinary, 'middlebrow art form' through which class taste is pictured in family snapshots, holiday souvenirs and wedding portraits. In Bourdieu it is a practice that is sociologically important because it both *portrays* the social world and it *betrays* the choices made by the photographer. He explains:

> while everything would lead one to expect that this activity, which has no traditions and makes no demands, would be delivered over to the anarchy of individual improvization, it appears that there is nothing more regulated and conventional than photographic practice and amateur photographs: in the occasions which give rise to photography, such as the objects, places and people photographed or the very composition of the pictures, everything seems to obey implicit canons which are very generally imposed and which informed amateurs or aesthetes notice as such, but only to denounce them as examples of poor taste or technical clumsiness (Bourdieu, 1965/1990:7).

The book demonstrated how a cultural practice like photography, which in principle was open to almost everyone and had not yet acquired an elaborate set of aesthetic judgment criteria, could still sustain social hierarchies and class divisions. The work opened up the questions of what can be learned from analyzing the photographs people take and what is it that people do with them—revealing how taste is far from being an inimitable personal faculty, but is instead an essentially social phenomenon structuring perceptions of the world. Recent research has focused on how class, gender, place and identity shape amateur photographic practice (Rose, 2004), while the conventions informing the 'digital turn' in distinctive communities and their legitimation has become the focus of attention as photography has become ever more ubiquitous in everyday life (Murray, 2008, Hand, 2012).

Few sociologists have done more than Howard Becker to rework and reclaim the importance of the visual in the discipline. His essay on 'Photography and Sociology' (Becker, 1974) highlights how both are interested in social problems and exotic subcultures, while many photographers have been drawn to capturing the ambience of urban life in ways that parallel the sociological thinking of Simmel and his subsequent followers. These arguments

are developed in his edited collection *Exploring Society Photographically* (Becker, 1981), which originally accompanied an exhibition of twelve distinctive projects exploring social worlds. It begins with Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead's (1942) study of *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis,* which is now regarded as a key intervention in anthropology, as it moved well beyond what were the conventional ethnographic uses of visual material. By presenting the images in large, detailed sequences the intention was to capture those aspects of a culture that words could not. Other examples include the photographer Euan Duff's exploration of the 'Working World', which examines how the nature of work impacts on other aspects of life, and builds on his earlier collaborative work with the sociologist Dennis Marsden in their study of the unemployed in *Workless* (Marsden and Duff, 1975). Also included is a selection of images from Bruce Jackson's (1977) *Killing Time* taken from Cummins Prison Farm in Arkansas. A Professor of English he has been documenting prison life[3] across various media since the early 1960s, and his other work includes *A Thief's Primer* (1969), *Portraits from a Drawer* (2009), and most recently *In This Timeless Time: Living and Dying on Death Row in America* (with Diane Christian, 2012), which clearly speaks to criminological issues in compelling and provocative ways. Indeed, imprisonment has proved to be a particularly important site for photographers and the website and blog at www.prisonphotography.org lists some 120 professional practitioners who have sought to convey the pains of confinement in visually striking ways. In a subsequent essay Becker (1995:9) maintained there is much to be gained from reading photographs against their generic grain to explore how 'context gives images meaning'.

The last foundational text I want to discuss is Erving Goffman's (1979) *Gender Advertisements*, which reproduces a large number of commercial advertisements and uses them as visual data. As the title suggests the book addresses how gender relations are displayed in them and he explains they work by exploiting a specific set of social conventions:

> The magical ability of the advertiser to use a few models and props to evoke a life-like scene of his [sic] own choosing is not primarily due to the art and technology of commercial photography; it is due primarily to those institutionalized arrangements in social life which allow strangers to glimpse the lives of persons they pass, and to the readiness of all of us to switch at any moment from dealing with the real world to participating in make-believe ones (Goffman, 1979:23)

His discussion draws on his previous work deploying dramaturgical metaphors to examine social interaction and he suggests that advertisements can be productively compared to stage scenes, where the ritual displays in them tell us much about gendered social relations in socie-

ty at large. Much of the book is organised to indicate the various ways gender inequalities are enacted through the sheer attention to detail. The section on the 'ritualization of subordination', for example, has an account of how 'Women frequently, men very infrequently, are posed in a display of the "bashful knee bend"' (Goffman, 1979:45) and the accompanying array of visual evidence featuring this form of deferent gesture gives a social scientific understanding of how gender differences are expressed. The book provides both a nuanced study of the gender politics displayed in print advertisements and an exploration of the interaction rituals governing conduct in everyday life, and is justly regarded as one of the best examples of visual sociology.

Some of these issues have been imaginatively taken up the photographer and documentary filmmaker Lauren Greenfield (2002) who has explored the various 'body projects' young women pursue in light of the exhibitionist tendencies of contemporary American femininity and the difficulties of living up to the expectations posed by popular culture in their daily grooming rituals. In some respects this is indicative of a postfeminist sensibility based, on sexual confidence and autonomy, where 'raunch culture' is understood as a shift 'from an external, male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze' in a new sexualised culture that is changing the boundaries between public and private spheres (Gill, 2010:103). Here new forms of 'public intimacy' are developing in a 'striptease culture', which is preoccupied with self-revelation and confessional exposure in ever louder and more mediatised ways (McNair, 2002). Indeed, the phrase 'oversharing' has come to describe the phenomenon where 'too' much is revealed about ourselves on social media through the constant documenting and display of private lives to others (Agger, 2015). Of course much of this is taking place in 'acts of visual communication on a scale that is unprecedented' (Hand, 2012:194) and the full implications of this transformation have yet to be addressed. However, I want to now turn to some recent work exploring similar avenues as Greenfield, which uses a photographic project to dissect consumer society, but focuses on explicitly criminological themes and topics.

Doing Visual Criminology

There is a long and influential line of critique on photographic representation that is deeply suspicious of how the camera aestheticizes all that it pictures. It features in the writing of Allan Sekula, Martha Rosler, Susan Sontag and can be traced back to Walter Benjamin's (1934/1982) dire warnings on photography's ability to beautify suffering. What each thinker shares is the conviction that 'aestheticizing suffering is inherently both artistically and politically reactionary, a way of mistreating the subject and inviting passive consumption, narcis-

sistic appropriation, condescension, or even sadism on the part of viewers' (Reinhardt, 2007:14). Elsewhere I have described how some contemporary practitioners have responded to the complaint that much photojournalism and social documentary exploits the other and reinforces the differences between the superior and inferior (Carrabine, 2012, 2014, 2015). During the 1970s and 1980s the very practice of documentary critique came under sustained critique, when the movement was charged with exploiting the other and the 'truth claims' debunked as stage managed fictions. Under these, and other criticisms, documentary fell out of fashion but more recently there has been a resurgence of interest in the genre. Contemporary practitioners seem to be less troubled by terms like 'truth', 'evidence' and 'reality', which is not to say they are blind to the way photographs are constructed, but are more attuned to them as 'carefully fabricated cultural objects' (Price, 2009:107).

One recent development has been the turn to making documentary-style pictures that appear devoid of 'any significant or identifiable subject matter' (Batchen, 2012:233). An example of such an approach is the work of the French photographer Sophie Ristelhueber who has paid particular attention to the ruins and traces left by war and the scars it leaves on the landscape. In her series WB (West Bank) she 'refused to photograph the great separation wall that embodies the policy of a state and the media icon of the "Middle Eastern problem,"' rather she took photographs of the small roadblocks the Israelis had built on 'country roads with whatever means available' and from such an elevated 'viewpoint that transforms the blocks of the barriers into elements of the landscape' (Rancière, 2011:104). This more allusive approach is also exemplified in the Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar, who has produced several works on the Rwandan genocide of 1994, none of which depict a single instant of the carnage. Across a series of pieces he has explored the limits of representation, exposing media culture's inability to see and stop the slaughter. Likewise the failure of Western governments to intervene in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia is a theme explored in Simon Norfolk's (2005) *Bleed*, which revisits the frozen landscapes of eastern Bosnia where thousands were massacred and the almost abstract images become powerful allegories for the secrets buried beneath the ice. For Norfolk it was crucial to know the exact location of the gravesites, to give the work a forensic credibility and visual power. As he explains, 'it's even more important when the picture uses metaphors; if the detective work was poor then the whole project would unravel quickly. The only way you can come at it in such a symbolic way is if you are one hundred percent sure that here are the locations – otherwise it's a weak, feeble approach' (cited in Lowe, 2014:225). The tension between the arresting beauty of the images and the fact that something terrible is contained in them enables him to make a strong moral argument about the nature of guilt.

A rather different exponent of the method is Bruno Serralongue who in his *Fait Divers* series traced crime and accident scenes as they were described in the regional newspaper, *Nice-Matin*. Working between late 1993 and April 1995 he would take pictures of the deserted scene in and around Nice, France, where only very recently something terrible had happened. Although the photos 'look too suspiciously banal' on their own, once they are accompanied by text below the image, the effect is disconcerting and is an ironic comment on the 'role of the photographer-as-detective' albeit 'one who always arrives at the scene too late' (Van Gelder & West, 2011:159). Others too have become preoccupied with conveying traumatic events that for various reasons have left hardly any visual traces. This is especially the case in Antonio Olmos's (2013) efforts to photograph all the sites where murders occurred in London, England, between January 1, 2011, and December 31, 2012, which are collected in his profoundly moving book *Landscape of Murder*. The sites were visited within a few days of the crime, and the images not only capture fleeting moments of grief (huddled friends, wilting flowers, messages of condolence), remnants of forensic investigation (fluttering police tape, scattered traffic cones), but occasionally nothing at all remains to indicate that a life has ended violently at the site. The book is not so much about violence and death, but rather a way of seeing place and giving memory to mostly forgotten events, and in doing so it presents a very different portrait of the city. In this it shares much with the genre of 'aftermath photography' and the 'forensic turn' where there is an acknowledgement that the camera is a 'secondary witness' that does not depict the trauma itself, but rather the spaces in which it occurred and the traces left behind, so that the 'act of secondary witnessing takes on an overly moral character as the witness is actively choosing to make their statement about the past rather than passively being there at the time of the occurrence' (Lowe, 2014:217).

The question of photography's roles as a credible eyewitness is taken up by Taryn Simon (2003) in her work with the Innocence Project in the US, which was established in 1992 and primarily uses DNA testing to overturn wrongful convictions. As she explains:

> The primary cause of wrongful conviction was mistaken identification. A victim or eyewitness identifies a suspect perpetrator through law enforcement's use of photographs and lineups. These identifications rely on the assumption of precise visual memory. But through exposure to composite sketches, mugshots, Polaroids, and lineups, eyewitness memory can change. Police officers and prosecutors influence memory both unintentionally and intentionally – through the ways in which they conduct the identification process. They can shape, and even generate, what comes to be known as eyewitness testimony (Simon, Neufeld and Scheck, 2003:7).

Images in these cases were deeply implicated in transforming innocent citizens into violent criminals and securing their convictions. In 2002 Simon photographed a number of these men

at locations that had profound significance in their wrongful imprisonment, often the scene of crime. This particular place is both arbitrary and crucial – it is somewhere they had never been, yet changed their lives forever. The haunting narrative portraits she produced highlights photography's ability to blur truth and fiction and the devastating consequences this can have. Each photograph is accompanied by commentary from the two lawyers who co-founded the Innocence Project, Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck (who both also worked on the O.J. Simpson defence team in 1995), and it quickly becomes apparent that there remain many still falsely imprisoned because of failings in the legal system. Her images directly confront the contradiction between truth and justice, and in them we see a 'mixture of anger, resignation, and fear in the photographed images of the innocents forged by the unimaginable horror of spending a decade or more in prison because they happened to be a person of the wrong color or class, in the wrong place, at the wrong time' (Courtney and Lyng, 2007:189).

A different example of this more reflexive approach can be seen in the collaboration between anthropologist Phillipe Bourgois and photographer Jeff Schonberg (2009) compelling visual ethnography of homelessness and drug addiction in San Francisco. *Righteous Dopefiends* is the result of a ten year project chronicling the suffering, friendships and betrayal that characterizes survival among the destitute, while also analyzing the structural forces and institutions (police, welfare and hospital) that they negotiate in their daily lives. The role of the photos is described in the following way:

> The composition of the images recognizes the politics within aesthetics; they are closely linked to contextual and theoretical analysis. Some photographs provide detailed documentation of material life and the environment. Others were selected primarily to convey mood or to evoke the pains and pleasures of life on the street. Most refer to specific moments described in the surrounding pages, but at times they stand in tension with the text to reveal the messiness of real life and the complexity of analytical generalizations (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009:11).

The tension between text and image comes especially to the fore as Bourgois theorizes how forms of institutional violence further weaken the vulnerable, while the photos suggest different kinds of relationship between homeless addicts and those who appear devoted to their care (in public health work and emergency hospital services) via a detailed critique of the dysfunctional US medical system. These leave open the question of which interpretive framework to follow. As Douglas Harper (2012:54) suggests, this might be because the 'theory best describes the reality of the addicts' world and this cannot be visualized,' or perhaps the 'theorist and photographer experienced a different social world,' or maybe 'the essences of the culture is a partly contradictory combination of the two.' In any case, the work stands as one of the best recent examples of visual ethnography on explicitly criminological themes and is a clear

attempt to represent intimate suffering in ways that acknowledges the politics of representation at work in and across their text.

Other contemporary documentary projects that confront criminological issues in striking visual ways include Richard Ross's (2012) *Juvenile in Justice*, which combines powerful imagery with excerpts from life stories the young people in custody shared with him (for further details see the website http://www.juvenile-in-justice.com). The work builds on his earlier *Architecture of Authority* (Ross, 2007), a book capturing carceral spaces ranging from the innocuous to the notorious, but in such a way that the oppressive structures look strangely inviting and even seductive to unsettling effect. The pictures encountered include a Montessori preschool environment through diverse civic spaces (including a Swedish courtroom, the Iraqi National Assembly hall, the United Nations) to more ominous manifestations of authority: an interrogation room at Guantánamo, segregation cells at Abu Ghraib, and finally, a capital-punishment death chamber. A less epic examination of confinement is Jürgen Chill's (2007) study of German prison cells, which are largely unexplored as living spaces. His distinctive approach deploys a central overhead view of what initially looks like a budget hotel room, or a university hall of residence, but it slowly becomes apparent that we are looking into a different kind of institutional space. Chill has explained his method was to 'talk to prisoners to get to know them a little and explain his project. Then, and only with their permission, he took a series of overhead photographs' that were then digitally collaged back in his studio to create the final image with a single view (from Confined web site http://issuu.com/mikecarney/docs/confined_singles). On one level the photographs provide an intimate insight into how dehumanised spaces are individualised by prisoners, but on another the absence of the inhabitants themselves speaks to the largely anonymous lives prisoners lead.

A somewhat different example of a visual study of prison as a cultural site is Bruce Jackson's (2009) *Pictures from a Drawer*, which uses around 200 discarded prison identification photographs, likely dating from 1915 up to 1940, given to him in 1975 to provide a remarkable account of prisons, portraiture and US social history. As Jackson argues the function of these photos was not portraiture, rather their function was to 'fold a person into the controlled space of a dossier'. Here, freed from their prison "jackets" and printed at sizes far larger than their originals, these one-time ID photos have now become portraits. Jackson's restoration transforms what were small bureaucratic artifacts into moving images of real men and women. As he suggests these photographs are second only to 'coroners' photographs of the newly dead, prisoner identification portraits are perhaps the least merciful, the most disinterested, the most democratic, and the most anonymous portraits of all' (Jackson, 2009:11).

Neither the sitters nor the photographers who took them have any interest in the photographs they are making, and they strive only for the literal. Unlike arrest identification photographs, or 'mugshots' as they are known, the people having their picture taken in the police station face an uncertain future. But in prisoner identification photographs all possibility is foreclosed, the individuals sitting for them have already been through gaol, through trial and have been unambiguously removed from ordinary life.

By moving from the still life genre to portraiture we can how contemporary practitioners are attempting say something visually new about imprisonment using both 'made' and 'found' images. This brief discussion of a handful of recent examples should demonstrate that the documentary tradition is not only flourishing, but has much to offer a visually informed criminology. Although the genre can be condemned and dismissed for its morbid fascination with human suffering, it also offers new ways of seeing social practices. Despite all the contradictions running through the tradition, the desire to bear witness to the suffering and violence of the age remains paramount, and requires of us to learn new ways of seeing, especially in those places where seeing is not simple and is often hidden from view. Indeed, it is also clear that accompanying this resurgence of interest in using images to tell stories about social worlds there has also been an emergence of a formidable body of theoretical writing focusing on the ethical and political implications of the visual, working within, around and against the traditions described in this chapter.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a substantial wave of theoretical writing on photography by Ariella Azoulay, Judith Butler, Georges Didi-Huberman, Susie Linfield, Jacques Rancière and many others (see Stallybrass, 2013, for a collection of this work) that sees fresh roles and revaluations of the medium in new social and political situations. Each of these thinkers can help us make sense of contemporary media landscapes and the dynamics of ethical responsibility in them. Azoulay (2008), for example, has made much of the citizenship of photography in her discussion of how the camera is an instrument of considerable political power, arguing that we need to transform our relationship to images from one of passivity and complaint to one of creativity and collaboration. Rancière (2007:22-31) has drawn an important distinction between three different kinds of image: 'naked', 'ostensive' and 'metaphoric' in an effort to query the radicalism of art and its emancipatory powers. Elsewhere I have described how Didi-Huberman's (2008) controversial analysis of the few pictures taken from inside the Holocaust provide evidence of the 'crime of crimes' (Carrabine, 2014), also reminds us that the attempt to destroy all that documented it – was an integral part of the extermination.

Despite their differences it is clear that Azoulay, Rancière and Didi-Huberman are each striving to enlarge the political imagination and each emphasise that images, when used critically and inventively, can enable 'us to think through the essential questions of our time' (Lübecker, 2013:405). A rich strain of theoretical writing has emerged that has taken issue with some of the orthodox positions taken in the debates surrounding the politics of representation and it is from them we have much yet to learn. Although visual social science is nearly as old as photography, it is hard to dispute the view that 'we are really still at the beginning, with a lot of work yet to do' (Becker, 2004:). The material covered in this chapter should be seen then as offering a few starting points from where the journey can commence, but it promises to be one that opens up exciting, new possibilities for the discipline.

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Notes

[1] The term 'yellow press' was coined in the 1890s to describe the sensationalist journalism associated with two New York papers, Joseh Pulitzer's *World* and William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*, which were caught up in an intense rivalry and in their efforts to increase circulation included scare headlines, bold layouts, graphic pictures, comic strips and distinctive use of yellow ink to attract readers.

[2] Cornell Capa, younger brother of Robert, coined the term 'concerned photographer' in 1968 to describe work that passionately sought to enlarge understanding and was committed to social justice by producing 'images in which genuine human feeling predominates over commercial cynicism or disinterested formalism' (cited in Gefter, 2009:144).

[3] A similar project was at work in Danny Lyon's (1971) extraordinary visual portrait of the Texas prison system in his *Conversations with the Dead*, which alongside photographs of the dehumanizing conditions includes text taken from prison records, convict letters and inmate artwork. Lyon had also worked in the civil rights movement, and the book can be seen as contributing to that activism, while also continuing his interest in outlaw biker subcultures from earlier in the decade (Lyon, 1967).