

**Putting the Psyche into 'Cultural Criminology':
A psychosocial understanding of looting, masculinity, shame and violence.**

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Abstract

The widespread incidents of rioting and looting across England in August 2011 have drawn attention to debate about the links between 'consumer culture' and criminality. This association has particular theoretical resonance as there has been a detectable cultural turn in criminological theory, most clearly enunciated by the school of 'cultural criminology' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008). Despite the vibrancy of such theoretical debates there is a danger that the mistakes of previous schools of criminological thought be repeated through the exclusion of the internal psychological worlds of individuals from consideration. It is argued here that culture, and in this case particularly 'consumer culture' needs to be understood as being, at least in part, constructed by and within the internal worlds of the individuals who make up that culture. The case is made for a more psychosocial criminology (Jones 2008; Gadd and Jefferson 2007). This is one that regards the cultural as being indivisible from the sociological and psychological.

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Introduction

"They fucked up big time, the opportunists," said a 19-year-old man from Tottenham, who observed the riots but did not loot. "If they went to parliament and stood up for what they thought was correct, they could have brought down the government, man. We could have changed the whole everything, the whole government, man, but people wanted Nikes and crap on their feet." *The Guardian* "Reading the Riots." 5th December 2011

The widespread outbreaks of looting in England in August 2011 stimulated a welter of media comment on the significance of consumerism as a motivation for criminality and social disorder. Whilst the initial spark for the disturbances was community anger at the shooting by police of a local man in Tottenham in North London (Reicher and Stott 2011), a key feature of the wider disturbances as they spread throughout England, seemed to be, as the above quotation alludes, an apparently baffling mix of shopping and violence that notably featured the looting of electrical and fashion goods (Morrell, Scott, McNeish and Webster 2011). Such diverse commentators as Zygmunt Bauman and Tim Morgan (head of research at City of London stock brokers, *Tullett Preborn*) have been drawn to comment on the significance of the contemporary culture of consumerism to these events. As Bauman (2011) put it:

‘ From cradle to coffin we are trained and drilled to treat shops as pharmacies filled with drugs to cure or at least mitigate all illnesses and afflictions of our lives and lives in common. . . . Yet for defective consumers, those contemporary have-nots, non-shopping is the jarring and festering stigma of a life un-fulfilled – and of own nonentity and good-for-nothingness..’

Or as the City broker from *Tullett Preborn* more pithily suggests those without the means to enjoy the fruits of consumerism are presented with the stark message: ‘Here’s the ideal. You can’t have it’ (Morgan 2011:3). Attention to consumerism as a ‘cause’ of criminality has a long history with Merton’s seminal work from the 1930s giving a central role to the status associated with material success, achieved through whatever means, as a motivation for deviancy (Merton

1938). Hall, Winlow and Ancrum more recently went so far as to entitle their book *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture*. Writers in the refreshed school of 'cultural criminology' (Ferrell, Hayward and Young 2008) have also given considerable prominence to consumer culture. Whilst various criticisms have been made of this school of thought (Spencer 2011, for example) this paper presses the argument that whilst there are very important lines of analysis that do need to be rooted in cultural enquiry, it is also important that these cultural accounts are able to incorporate the psychological conditions that both sustain and embody such cultural phenomena. Such an analysis brings us back to the deeply entrenched social difficulties that underlay the perplexing disturbances that were so widespread across England in the summer of 2011.

The Cultural Turn and the Psychosocial

The cultural turn in criminology (Ferrell, et al. 2008: 2) already has a considerable intellectual pedigree in the humanities more generally (Jameson 1998). This particular turn is justified within the specific context of the failure of much criminological thought that had assumed that the causes of crime could be found in social conditions that were marked by poverty and disadvantage. Through, what Young (1986) referred to as, the 'aetiological crisis' in 'the West' it became apparent that during the decades of the second half of the 20th century just as incomes rose, and education, welfare and health care services expanded at unprecedented rates, so too did the crime rate. Thus it seemed that criminality could not simply be understood as a response to material hardship or even as 'simply a product of social class, ethnicity, or occupation' (Ferrell et al. 2008:2). In pursuing this, Ferrell et al. (2008: 5) suggest that it is necessary to go well beyond 'orientations in sociology and criminology', in order to 'incorporate[s] perspectives from urban studies, media studies, existential philosophy, cultural and human geography, post modern critical theory, anthropology, social movements theory – even from the historical praxis of earlier political agitators like the Wobblies and the Situationists'. It is very striking that there is apparently still no place for any kind of psychological theorisation in this otherwise apparently inclusive list. This omission is

symptomatic of the deep antipathy between the disciplines of criminology and psychology (Jones 2012). Whilst this ill feeling cannot be fully analysed here, the history of the schism can be understood in terms of the commitment of the academic discipline of psychology both to individualistic explanations and positivistic methodologies (Jones 2008) which were thoroughly critiqued within criminology as it took a sociological turn in the middle of the 20th century. As Garland's (2002) historical perspective emphasises, however, there is some irony in the exclusion of psychological theory from criminology as psychoanalytic thinkers were institutionally very involved in criminology in the first half of the 20th century and indeed as were clinicians in what Nicole Rafter (2004) has referred to as the pre-history of criminology in the 19th century (Rafter 2004).

This paper forms part of a wider argument for the development of criminological theory through the use of psychosocial thinking (Gadd and Jefferson 2007, Jones 2008) that is able to integrate insight from psychoanalytically inflected psychology along with social and cultural analyses. Specifically, it is argued that the analyses of consumer culture will be much stronger if they are able to engage more fully with Lasch's classic work on 'the culture of narcissism' first published in 1979. Whilst his work is often referenced by those making this cultural turn in criminology, and his outline of the corrosive effect of consumer culture noted to be seminal (Ferrel et al. 2008, for example), it is striking that the very particular psychoanalytic root of his analysis is being ignored. It will also be argued, however, that Lasch's work on narcissism can itself be strengthened by taking into account subsequent work on the differential relationship between narcissism and gender.

The first section of this paper will examine the way that 'consumer culture' has been taken up in recent criminological work. It will be argued that a better understanding of the power of consumer culture can be achieved by rooting the analysis in particular psychoanalytic models of individual development that influenced Lasch's work. The second section considers the role of the masculinity of the protagonists which also becomes far more comprehensible when individual psychology is allowed into the equation. The third section will argue that integration

of psychoanalytically informed work on the development of the capacity to reflect on feelings of shame can lead to a fuller understanding of the links between contemporary social conditions, consumption and individual acts of violence.

1. Consumer Culture, Narcissism and Crime

Hayward (2004: 165) suggests that much contemporary urban crime should be understood as 'attempts to achieve a semblance of control within ontologically insecure social worlds'.

Hayward (2004: 5) links these concerns with identity with the rise of consumerism and consumer culture. He gives credit to Lasch (1979), for a 'brilliant' analysis of the significance of consumer culture for identity in his classic book *The Culture of Narcissism*. Yet Hayward does not engage with the psychoanalytic roots of Lasch's analysis. The idea that contemporary culture is one that propagates a culture of narcissism is central to Hall et al.'s (2008) diagnosis of the debasement of the cultures at the centre of their ethnographic studies of what are now economically deprived working class areas in the North East of England. They protest that the people that they observe and interview are now obsessed with the spoils of consumerism – the designer clothes, flash cars, the hollow surface of success - as they have lost connection with any notion that more durable rewards might be won through commitment to the progress of the collective benefit. I suggest that Hall et al.'s thesis can be strengthened by rooting the analysis in the psychoanalytic theory that nurtured Lasch's formulation. With remarkable prescience Lasch warned back in 1979 against any move to divorce his model of narcissism from its foundations in psychoanalytic theory that was rooted in clinical observation:

'The refusal of recent critics of narcissism to discuss the etiology of narcissism or to pay much attention to the growing body of clinical writing on the subject probably represents a deliberate decision, stemming from the fear that the emphasis on the clinical aspects of the narcissistic syndrome would detract from the concept's usefulness in social analysis. This decision, however, has proved to be a mistake. In ignoring the psychological dimension, these authors also miss the social.' (1979 :33).

Recent consumers of Lasch's theories have indeed missed 'the social', on the one hand because they ignore the more general symptoms and manifestations of narcissism (clinical accounts describe the rage, the difficulties in maintaining anything other than superficial relationships, for example, which are highly significant to understanding the significance of narcissism to crime) but also because they ignore the root of narcissism that is embedded in the quality of early relationships; within 'object relations' (Bollas 1992, Kernberg 1975, Klein 1957). Lasch argued that the 'narcissistic' personality disorders were becoming the personality types of modern times shaped by the conditions of late capitalism that encourage fleeting, contingent and superficial relationships. The personality types were characterised by individuals who have grown up with little sense of inner worth, who require the constant admiration of others in order to experience any impression that they are of some value. They unconsciously develop false selves, or 'identities' that they present to the world in order to muster some signal of this approval. The false self is covering up hopeless and very angry feelings of fear, loneliness and worthlessness. Hall et al.'s (2008) 'ethnographic' descriptions of the lives of the men they observe and interview are undoubtedly stark characterisations of narcissistic personalities that are highly consistent with those found in clinical literature. There is 'Billy' (2008:78) who craves infinite supplies of consumer durables including 'the champagne, the cars, . . . a big house and a swimming pool' and crucially; 'should it happen he wants everyone to know about it'. Aside from these aspirations his life is 'chaotic'. He has no fixed home, he moves from one unsatisfying relationship to another, whilst pursuing the next hedonistic hit that might involve petty crime, dealing and consuming drugs, and minor acts of violence. He presents the researcher with the visible evidence of a suicide attempt (2008:67) that not only completes a dismal portrait, but is also entirely consistent with the clinical picture of narcissism (Cartwright 2002, Glasser 1992).

Whilst Hall et al. (2008) do refer to psychoanalytic notions to try and understand the lives of those they observed, they use the work of Lacan, rather than the object relations work upon which Lasch founded his work. The difficulty with this Lacanian perspective is, as Minsky

(1998:61) pithily put it: 'Lacan transfers all Freud's major concepts away from the family and bodily experiences into culture'. This leads to a certain irony in the use of Lacan to critique cultures of narcissism, as Lacan throws into doubt the whole idea that there can ever be anything more solid that can underpin identity than identification with the swirl of symbols, images and metaphors that surround² us (see Frosh 1991 for an extended discussion of Lacan and narcissism, also Rustin 1991 for critical discussion of the attractions and pitfalls of Lacanian theory). The post-modern states of mind that Lasch, and Hall et al. (2008) rail against are according to Lacan, simply reflections of the human condition that consumer culture does not create, but slips inside like a hand into a glove. Lasch, with his feet firmly in the object relations work of Klein (1957), and Kernberg (1975) argued that progressive social agendas needed individuals with sufficient ego strength, and sense of who they are and who they are not, to love and work in our immediate 'real worlds' (see Rustin 1991). According to object relations theorists, such individuals are nurtured within family relationships that are close, caring and yet marked by authoritative clearly bounded generational relationships.

The bleak and disrupted family lives of Hall et al.'s case studies stand in contrast. Many of the people they studied had 'turbulent childhoods blighted by family break-up, physical abuse, the death of close family members, and spells in local authority care.' (2008:31). 'Billy', for example, whose chaotic, and crime and consumption focused life is described in some detail, had a number of spells in local authority care after his mother committed suicide. According to Lasch's formulation of the relationship between narcissism and consumer culture; Billy's childhood experiences are highly relevant. To Lasch, consumer culture cannot be understood as something that simply floats in the air affecting us all equally; instead it needs to be understood as something that is also a part of the psychic fabric of individuals who might stand in very different relation to the pressures created by consumerism. Whilst it is important to understand how differences in individual's relationships to consumerism can be linked to

²As Stavrikas (1999p. 34-35) puts it on the dilemma of using Lacan to think about identity '...both imaginary and symbolic identification fail to provide us with a stable identity. A lack is continuously re-emerging where identity should be consolidated. All our attempts to cover over this lack of the subject through identifications that promise to offer us a stable identity fail, this failure brings to the fore the irreducible character of this lack which in turn reinforces our attempts to fill it. This is the circular play between lack and identification which is marking the human condition . . .'

childhood experiences, it is also important to understand the gendered differences in the relationship between narcissism and culture. Lasch (1984) did, controversially (Layton 1998, Richards 1985), address the relationship between feminist political perspectives and narcissism in *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times*. There was no engagement with how gender differences might impact on the relationship between individual narcissism and consumerism. It will be argued next that there is much to be gained by thinking about object relations work on narcissism in relation to gender.

2. Masculinity, Sensuality and Risk

It would be very difficult to argue that men and women were not equally prone to the temptations, pleasures and ravages of consumerism. Yet it is young men who are far more likely to become involved in serious criminality and violence, and it is young men who have been appearing in courts charged with looting offences following the disturbances in England during the summer of 2011 (MoJ 2011). Theoretical work on the sensual pleasures of risk and criminality (Katz 1988) provides a useful way of thinking about links between masculinity and crime. Jock Young poetically echoed Katz's work on the *sensual attractions* of criminality in summoning up the heady mix of desire and sensuality to be observed in the criminal subcultures of contemporary London that has a distinctly masculine quality:

Just go to any club in Dalston, East London or Brixton in the South, look at the gold, the jewellery, watch how the action mixes with the ragga and the jungle, look at the swagger, listen to the patois: the guns are not just instruments they are sexy, his is not a job, it is excitement, this is not an alternative to work, it is a sensual riposte to labour. (Young 2003:409; see also 2007:56)

Katz had previously indicated this 'sensual riposte to labour' and theorized it as an attempt (in this case by habitual robbers) to create 'a more fully embodied life' (Katz 1991:292) that rejected the demands of conventional lifestyle that necessitated the partition of experience

through the demands of 'work, family, recreation, entertainment, and other respectable institutions that allocate different 'roles' to distinct units of time and place'. Whilst Katz (1988) fully acknowledges the masculinity of the perpetrators of much street crime he also, like much mainstream criminology, vehemently argued that psychological theories had little to offer in strengthening the analysis (Katz 1991:302-303). It will be argued here that whilst analysis of the immediate sensual experience of the protagonists is indeed important, a psychological dimension to the analysis, particularly one that is located within the entangled notions, obliquely raised in the quotation above; of gender, emotion and identity is useful. No doubt the identity work that may be going on through the swaggering flirtation with danger does indeed need to be understood in terms of the sensual, embodied experiences of the participants. It is also helpful to contextualize those experiences within the gendered biographies and affective lives of the individuals.

Young (2007) refers to the work of Lyng (1990) to understand more about the sensuality of risk. Lyng originally explored the involvement of people in risky activities such as sky-diving and rock climbing and argued that through these activities people were discovering the boundaries or the edges of the self (hence he uses the term 'edgework'). The visceral excitement gave people not only a pure 'and magnified sense of self', but it allowed them to avoid the more prosaic, yet often complex and threatening tasks of engaging with the social world around them (Lyng 1990:881). Lyng (2004) deployed this theory to criminal activity and argued that by becoming involved in the thrills and excitement inherent to offending, individuals are seeking a sense of selfhood and fulfillment that can transcend that which is otherwise achievable within their social circumstances. It can also be argued that these individuals involved in such 'edgework', are manifesting a concern with selfhood that betrays significant insecurity about the viability of their sense of self (O'Malley and Mugford 1994). Taking risks with the body is an activity through which people can experience the boundaries of themselves and seek evidence that they consist of a sturdy self. Perhaps even more crucially they are presenting themselves to others as strong and powerful. There is certainly good evidence that for some social groups involvement in street crime and violence are outlets for a felt need to present a strong and

'invincible' identity (Fagan and Wilkinson 1998, Butler 2008). Despite acknowledgement that young men largely make up the ranks of sky-divers, rock climbers and street robbers, gender is absent from Lyng's analysis. O'Malley and Mugford (1994) attempt to defend Lyng (and indeed Katz) from the charge that they ignore gender (see also Miller 2002). They argue that there is evidence that women do seek excitement in the way that Lyng describes and that consumerism and globalisation are leading towards more androgynous repertoires. Such a defence simply does not survive engagement with crime statistics that still emphasise how crime, and violent crime in particular, is a male dominated activity, despite shifts in the social roles of gender in recent decades (Steffensmeier et al. 2005). Therefore the question of why should it be *men*, particularly young adolescent men, who are so drawn to such literal sensual experiences of risk is highly pertinent.

One explanation for this state of affairs is through the differential impact of social and employment factors on men and women. Young (1999) for example notes how the changes in labour markets have impacted on working class men in particular (see also Hall et al. 2008). The disappearance of the relatively well paid jobs in heavy industry has meant that their structurally provided roles as breadwinners and heads of households have largely vanished. Women who are unwilling or unable to find fulfilment in the labour market might still have the role of motherhood through which to gain esteem. It is men who are more likely to be left isolated on these post-industrial landscapes with little prospect of the conventional markers of success:

Young men facing such denial of recognition turn, everywhere in the world, in what must be almost a universal criminological law, to the creation of cultures of machismo, to the mobilization of one of their only resources, physical strength, to the formation of gangs, and to the defence of their own 'turf'. Being denied the respect of others they create a subculture that revolves around masculine powers and 'respect'. (Young 1999: 12)

The reliance of this analysis on the association of 'masculinity' with physical strength, gangs and 'respect' is problematic (a point that Jefferson 1997 makes in relation to Messerschmidt's

1993 thesis on criminality as a way of 'doing masculinity'). The question of what masculinity might be is answered by recourse to something like an 'almost universal law'. Hall (2002) set out an overtly historized account of this kind of masculinity; arguing that the needs of heavy industry required identities that valued strength has left lots of men with those values and identities but with little place to put them – other than in criminal careers (or perhaps careers on the borders of criminality, such as security work) . Such an account still leaves space for a fuller understanding of the mechanism of the transmission of these masculinities across generations.

The final section of the paper takes up the theme of trying to understand how cultural ideals of masculinity penetrate and construct individuals whose relationship to those ideals will be shaped by their individual experiences. It will be argued that narcissism that has been theorised to be integral to our understanding of the power of cultures of consumerism can manifest rather differently according to gender. Although Lasch (1979) uses the psychoanalytic work of both Kernberg and Kohut on narcissism, they have subsequently become associated with rather different, arguably gendered, perspectives on narcissism (Heiserman and Cook 1998, Layton 1998). These gender differences can be understood in terms of developmental pathways that are characterised by diverse responses to the emotion of shame that have their roots in, and thus draw their power from, infantile experience. It is here that we may understand the seeds of differences in people's relationship to shame that can impact directly on individual's experiences of their identities and thereby their relationship to the world around them.

The particular, and sometimes problematic, relationship between masculinity and shame within contemporary social conditions will be explored in the final section. There are good reasons to believe that contemporary conditions have the capacity to nurture high levels of shame that may well impact on individual men who might thus be more prone to violence.

3. Identity, Humiliation and Violence: The Developmental roots of Shame.

Katz's (1988: 25) examination of the sensuality of criminality led him to explore the significance of humiliation as a trigger for violence. In a similar vein Gilligan (1997, 2003) argued that what he described as an epidemic of violence in the USA can be understood in terms of the perpetrators' demands for 'respect' (2003:1149). Studies of homicide, which are useful as case-studies of violence as the details of the offence tend to be carefully recorded during processes of investigation and prosecution, suggest that both Katz' and Gilligan's observations are valid. Over several decades studies have drawn attention to how many homicides have roots in emotion and expressivity rather than instrumentality (Luckenbill 1977, Wolfgang 1958, Polk 1994, Povey, Coleman, and Kaiza 2009). The most common scenarios of homicide are either men killing other men over rather trivial disputes (Polk 1994 refers to these as 'confrontational homicides') or men killing their current or ex-sexual partners who have already left them, or are about to leave them. In both cases the preservation of face or reputation seems crucial (Polk 1994 provides particularly meticulous analyses).

Gilligan uses the infant observational work carried out by Schore (1994, 1998) to explain the power of shame. Schore suggests that shame needs to be understood as a very 'primitive' experience of alarm over the fear of abandonment that is first discernible either at the end of the first, or beginning of the second, year of life (Draghi-Lorenz, Reddy and Cosall 2001) when young children are first becoming mobile and will inevitably meet adults' disapproval. Schore argues that the need to feel approval and love is essential as infants are weak and helpless, they 'know' at some level that they need to be cared for and loved in order to survive. With mobility comes the opportunity to behave in ways that will be met not with smiles, but with censure that raises the anxiety that we are not lovable and thus face the threat of deadly abandonment. Schore emphasises shame in young children is highly visible being marked by the child's 'facial display, postural collapse and gaze aversion' which act 'as non-verbal signals of his or her internal distress state' (1998: 65) which will usually provoke reaction in others. If the adult carer is responsive, and sympathetic, they will provide reassurance that the child is still loved; 'shame is metabolized and regulated, and the attachment bond is re-established' (Schore

1998: 65). Thus Schore suggests that is through relationship with a caring adult that the child learns that feelings of shame are tolerable and can actually lead to re-engagement and a strengthening of bonds rather than abandonment. If the child is not helped to develop this ability to metabolize feelings of shame they may be prone to pathological narcissism (Schore 1991), including shame-rage cycles because their only way to defeat the threat to identity posed by shame is to attack the object that is providing that threat of deadly abandonment (Cartwright 2002).

To understand why it is men, and perhaps some men in particular, who are vulnerable to feelings of shame that trigger violence; we need to not only go back to the clinical work that Lasch had urged us not to stray too far from, but to do so whilst paying particular attention to gender differences in relation to shame and narcissism that have arisen frequently in clinical literature (O'Leary and Wright 1986). Kernberg and Kohut's somewhat different formulations of the aetiology of narcissism have particular implications for the relationship between narcissism, shame, gender and violence. Kohut (1971) suggests that shame prone responses in adults are due to the early experience of the overly powerful puncturing of infantile fantasies of omnipotence. This will result in feelings of emptiness, depression and fear of separation. Alternatively, Kernberg (1975) suggested that shame proneness in adults results from failure to modify the infantile internalised ego-ideal in the light of experience – resulting in a wide gap between the fantasied self and lived reality. A number of authors point out that these rather different developmental paths separate roughly along gendered lines (Heiserman and Cook, 1998; see also Layton 2011). Kohut's model fits better with more typically feminine narcissistic difficulties that are more likely to be associated with the awareness of shame and internalised aggression and feelings of depression (see also Motz 1991). Kernberg's model is more consistent with certain masculine defences of a grandiose self protected by high levels of aggression that are used to effectively deny feelings of shame. It is this latter typically masculine version of narcissism that is more associated with aggression and violence (Lewis 1987, Cartwright 2002). There are accounts of masculine development influenced by Chodorow's (1978) feminist reading of Freudian theory that suggests that modern social

conditions present particular developmental problems for boys (Diamond, 2004; Hayslett-McCall and Bernard 2002, Minsky 1998) that might well result in difficulties in coping with feelings of shame that can underpin the kind of narcissistic disorders described Kernberg (1975). Firstly, because boys are encouraged to 'disidentify' with their mothers, but secondly they are often left without a close, caring relationship with an adult with whom they can identify as they grow up. Lacking real relationships on which to construct their identities boys are more likely to be left to identify with the images of masculinity (including those associated with cultures of consumerism brought by 'Hollywood' and corporate advertising) they find around them. They may have little defence against the bombardment of images that tell them that strong, autonomous and potentially violent identities have the most social value; and that weakness, or indeed any intimation of characteristics that could be labelled as 'feminine' will leave them open to ridicule and abandonment. Thus typically masculine narcissism is more likely to be that described by Kernberg (1975); marked by rigid defence of the idealised self which is itself likely to be shaped by identification with the hyper-masculine ideals presented by a mediated culture of consumerism.

Masculinity, Shame and High Modernity

A great deal has been written on the significance of modernity for individuals' experiences of themselves (Elias 1939/1994, Frosh 1991, Giddens 1991). There is some consensus within a varied body of literature that modern social conditions have resulted in far greater emphasis on the individual as an apparently isolated unit which leaves far greater scope for the experience of ontological insecurity. If shame is understood as the experience of alarm at the danger of isolation and abandonment, as Schore (1998) and Gilligan (2003) suggest that it should, it would be predicted that there would be an increasing number of people in conditions of high modernity who are vulnerable to the more toxic impact of shame. As we are less embedded in the certainties and ties of class, religion, community and family we are constantly in danger of

exposure and isolation which entails the threat of shaming abandonment. Shame has become less a matter of the manipulation of social bonds, as work on restorative justice inspired by Braithwaite's (1989) theorisation suggests, but instead has become something that individuals have to manage themselves, as they conduct their relationships and attachments to others. Individuals without the ability to manage their own emotions, of which shame is conspicuously powerful and significant, can be left to drift, problematically free to try and construct a secure sense of self by building a carapace of strength and autonomy. It is feasible that far from there being too little shame, we in 'the west' are now drenched in it.

Children, Shame and Street Culture

In drawing attention to the paradoxical vicissitudes of the social conditions of high modernity and their impact on criminality, Young (2004, 2007) makes striking use of Nightingale's (1993) ethnographic study of young people and children growing up as part of a poor urban 'ghetto' in Philadelphia. Young draws attention to Nightingale's observations of how deeply embedded the community is in the values of mainstream American culture, despite its considerable social and economic exclusion:

New pairs of sneakers every month, Mickey-Mouse T-shirts, glorified caricatures, 'racial-obsession', 'patriotism' and 'law and order' ideas, and long lines of African-American people outside showings of *Terminator* or *Nightmare on Elm Street* are all important to the inner city story (Nightingale 1993: 11)

The point that these are people that are thoroughly culturally 'included', in spite of the social and economic exclusion, is important. Despite being described as 'brilliant ethnography' (Young 2007: 25; Ferrell, et al. 2008:41), however, major and highly significant aspects of the lives of the young people observed and described in considerable detail by Nightingale are left out of Young's account. Firstly, there are the forlorn emotional lives of the young children. Secondly, Nightingale suggests that boys were often singled out for particularly harsh treatment by

parents as very rigid ideas of what is deemed as acceptable masculine behaviour are enforced. Nightingale's ethnography explains the means by which these individuals are being so successfully 'culturally included'. It reads as a 'Laschean' nightmare with children brought up with little guidance or protection from the worst excesses of late capitalism's consumptive dominance. Children receive little attention or love from parents, who themselves are ill equipped for the emotional demands of parenthood. They have often had children very young in the mistaken belief, Nightingale suggests, that such children will fill the yearnings for love and care not otherwise being met. Thus, as Lasch (1979) emphasised, one of the fundamental conditions for the development of narcissism is provided; parents who do not love children for themselves but only for what they might supply for their own needs. The real children with needs and dependencies themselves are virtually intolerable, even crying babies are slapped or told to 'shut up' (Nightingale 1993: 104). By the time they can toddle, the children are on the streets growing up amongst their peers. Nightingale describes plaintive scenes of young children seeking affection:

Infants, toddlers and kids under about eight or nine usually have not yet shed universal, nonaggressive expressions of emotional vulnerability, like crying and open calls for hugs, . . . Whole groups of little kids who are playing together in [the] neighbourhood will drop whatever they are doing whenever an adult who has a reputation for being affectionate drives up the street, and they will race each other to be the one to open the car door, or be the first to be picked up or given a hug. (Nightingale 1993:47)

There is little sign of affection within the homes. Punishments are harsh, and Nightingale suggests that boys are most likely to encounter their parents' anger. This is driven, not only by a belief that boys need harsh discipline in order to be controlled, but also by the belief that severe physical treatment is necessary to inculcate an acceptable version of masculinity. Boys, according to Nightingale's description, are given the message that any notion of physical or emotional vulnerability or indeed much emotional expression is unacceptable. And so with little adult supervision, let alone affection, the boys are left 'alone' amongst their peers to cover

themselves in the cultural attires of masculinity so readily available in a media dominated environment as they construct an acceptable face to meet the expectations around them:

Even at age two or three, before male restrictions on emotional expression begin to constrict their behaviour, boys already begin to practice many of the basic poses and rules of masculine self-expression they will later perfect in adolescence. By the fifth or sixth grade [age 9-11], inner-city elementary schoolteachers regularly report, the bright eyes of their boy students start to glaze over in preparation for assuming a 'tough look'. And at about the same age, boys . . . start to control crying or even smiling in public as they begin to spurn affection. (Nightingale 1993: 47)

Thus the boys are left with a social identity that is built to communicate strength, autonomy and toughness; whilst being left ashamed of any feelings that suggest vulnerability and weakness. The only hope of 'love' is through the admiration of others. Such qualitative evidence can be backed up by clinical observation about the importance of close intimate relationships with carers to the development of the capacity to manage emotions like shame (Fonagy 1999, Fonagy et al. 2004). Such findings are entirely consistent with a wealth of data from longitudinal studies that points to the significance of early experience (Jones 2008).

Questions might be raised about how relevant Nightingale's bleak picture of narcissistic 'ghetto' masculinities is to places such as the UK. Unfortunately, it can certainly be plausibly argued that desperately constricted versions of masculinity are now becoming apparent on the streets of the UK. Wright, Brookman and Bennet (2006) argue that some of the cultural dynamics of criminal street culture that have been studied in the US (see Fagan and Wilkinson 1998, for example) are now detectable in their interviews with convicted robbers in the UK. They, like the proponents of cultural criminology, locate contemporary concerns firmly within culture; the UK is viewed as importing elements of 'street culture' from the US. Their interview data, however, very clearly indicate how those cultural turns have to be understood as acting on and within individuals and their bodies. Despite the reluctance to

engage analytically with gender, the issues of masculine identities and sexuality were articulated, however inadvertently, by the interviews with offenders. 'Jonathon' for example, indicates very clearly that his relationship with money is not based on need, as such, but desire inextricably linked to identity and sexuality:

Lads always have the money. Always have to cash on 'em like. Even when we don't need it, got to have a ready supply. We were all addicted to money like at one time, saving it all up. We all sit around and look at our piles, count our stashes of cash, innit . . . Just to show off to the girls like. (Wright et al. 2006: 8)

'Karl', involved in armed robbery, makes a particularly articulate statement about the fragility of his own sense of self and the very sensual way that money can make him feel secure:

'I just love money, it's like, I feel big when I got money, like when I haven't got money, it feels like shit . . . I like to have money, it's like secure . . . having money, I love, I love money, I love money (Wright et al. 2006:9)

Conclusion

Consumer culture has been identified by a number of criminologists as making a significant contribution to contemporary criminality. The issue has been taken up by those taking a turn towards 'cultural criminology'. The problem with much of these analyses is the notion that culture can somehow float free of the individuals who make up that culture. Instead it has been argued here that culture needs to be understood as being at least in part constructed by and within the internal worlds of the individuals who make up that culture. Lasch's work on narcissism directs us to the significance of childhood experience for nurturing the conditions likely to lead to 'pathological' allegiance to consumption. Since Lasch's

formulation, the development of clinical work on narcissism points to significant gender differences that help explain why men may be more vulnerable to the pitfalls of a consumer culture.

There is a danger that the recent invigoration of cultural criminology may follow in the footsteps of other criminological schools and resist engagement with the psychological theorisation of human experience. It is emblematic that Nightingale's (1993) ethnographic study of life in a Philadelphia 'ghetto' is used very selectively by authors working in cultural criminology (Ferrell, et al. 2008; Young 2007); Nightingale's observations of the brutalised childhoods, most particularly those of young boys are studiously ignored. This points not only to a deep antipathy towards the role of psychological theory, but also perhaps to a reluctance to engage with the vulnerability of many of the protagonists of contemporary criminality. Part of the antipathy is of course related to a reluctance to pathologise individuals and communities. Whilst there might be danger in that, the psychosocial approach proposed here emphasizes how the psyche and the social are forever interacting. As Scanlon and Adlam put it, the 'antisocial' behaviour of those on the margins has to be understood as 'a state of mind based on their experience of being 'psychosocially dis-membered and un-housed as a result of the complex reciprocal relationship played out between 'us' and 'them' within the psychosocial organizations that are 'our' families, communities and societies' (2008: 539). Seen in such light, any political message of the urban riots and disturbances occurring across England in summer 2011 might appear confused thanks to the widespread looting. This outbreak of disordered consuming needs to be understood as a symptom of a malaise that is attacking 'our' poorer communities. There is after all a profoundly political message.

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