

Documentary criminology: *Girl Model* as a case study

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Abstract

Visual and cultural criminology are integrated with documentary filmmaking to develop a theoretically grounded, practice-based approach called 'documentary criminology'. The first section establishes the need for documentary filmmaking in criminology and outlines methodological opportunities. The second section examines theoretically the aesthetics and substance of documentary criminology. The third section takes the film *Girl Model* (Redmon and Sabin, 2011) as a case study to demonstrate how documentary criminology embedded in lived experience (in this case, the experience of scouts that recruit young Russian girls, purportedly for the modelling industry) can depict sensuous immediacy. The final section contrasts the aesthetic and ethical consequences of documentary criminology within Carrabine's (2012, 2014) concept of 'just' images to a documentary filmmaking approach that remains interpretively open-ended. Readers can access *Girl Model* at <https://vimeo.com/29694894> with the password *industry*.

Keywords

Cultural criminology, documentary criminology, sensory criminology, sonic criminology, video ethnography, visual criminology

Criminologists engage with documentary films in many ways: they appear in documentaries about crime; they use documentaries in classes to illustrate criminological concepts; they analyse and interpret documentaries in the context of research. Yet, few criminologists are offered the infra-structural support to *produce knowledge* in documentary form. The proliferation of audiovisual technologies and software, together with the rise of an ethnographically attuned approach to researching lived sensory experience, creates the framework for introducing documentary filmmaking methodologies to the criminological discipline – a discipline that has, for far too long, relied on the spectacle of words to communicate findings. There is too much talking and writing in criminology and not enough sensuous depiction (Rafter, 2014); there is a lot of explaining and critiquing, but very little showing (Ferrell, 2011). Written interpretation of media is a staple of the

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criminological discipline (Jewkes, 2015), yet the use of audiovisual technology to *craft* criminological media for knowledge production is negligible (Frauley, 2010).

Carrabine (2012: 63) notes that 'criminology has no choice but to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the visual and confront the ways in which contemporary societies are saturated with images of crime'. Frauley (2010: 34) encourages the use of audiovisual tools to expand the methodological scope of criminology's understanding of the visual, but notes that, at this point, these tools 'are much more developed in other social sciences such as cultural studies and sociology'. Recently, however, the discipline of criminology has taken a sensory, sonic and visual turn, which has inspired the use of audiovisual tools in a burgeoning video methodology (Redmon, 2015b). During his keynote address at the University of Central Missouri, Jeff Ferrell (2008: 8) encouraged criminologists to use audiovisual methods to craft research as media:

I cannot imagine how we can be criminologists in a world that is saturated by images and nonstop communication if we do not have theories and methods that can take us inside images ... Researchers must go beyond what they learned in graduate school. We are going to have to study documentary photography and learn what it means to take photos. We are going to have to learn the theories of the visual that have been developed in film studies and elsewhere. We are going to have to imagine as we look at the world that we are looking through a viewfinder and think about how that world was constructed through images. We cannot be good criminologists and only use words. We have to go inside that world with our eyes open to visual content as well as to written and spoken content ... A camera becomes as important a tool as a notepad.

With this recent criminological interest in using documentary filmmaking to access the visible and invisible fabric of lived experience, the presentation of documentary criminology as a theoretical framework and a methodological practice becomes more and more sensible. What is documentary criminology? I define it as:

the practice of using audiovisual methods to interpretively craft lived experience as media; it riffs on and extends cultural criminology's exploration of the situated meaning of experiential crimes and transgressions in their wider context by producing experiences in the form of a documentary. (Redmon, 2015b: 425)

By interleaving cultural criminology, visual studies and documentary filmmaking, documentary criminology adds the process of *crafting media as experiential knowledge* to criminology's rich tradition of *describing* and *interpreting* media. Criminologists who integrate documentary filmmaking techniques into their existing methodological approaches can evoke fleeting traces and nuances of lived experiences over time, and thereafter craft those experiences as sensory scholarship in the form of ethnographic media. Under this methodology, the documentary itself is combined with criminological acumen and ethnographic sensibility to become the medium of interpretation and analysis. Several implications emerge for the discipline of criminology.

Criminologists are no longer limited to theorising, analysing or writing critical research articles about images of crime, harm and transgression: the development of documentary criminology expands researchers' ability to craft media, yoking the strengths of written text to the visceral

experience of audiovisual depiction. Documentary criminology draws upon the rich history of ethnography and *Verstehen* to help viewers come to grips with lived experiences of crime, harm and transgression through sensuous immediacy (Redmon, 2015b). Ferrell and Van de Voorde (2010) describe how, through the medium of film, criminologists can engage with ethnographic attentiveness:

Generally, these two dimensions of cultural criminology – its engagement with representation and the photographic image and its commitment to in-depth ethnographic research – are seen as alternative strategies within the larger cultural criminological project of critical inquiry into the contested meanings of crime. But what if the two converged? As we go about visual analysis, an ethnographic sensibility could nicely attune us to the nuances of the photographic world and to the complex human process by which visual productions are invested with cultural and political significance. (Ferrell and Van de Voorde, 2010: 37)

Documentary criminology provides opportunities for criminologists to go beyond the static methods of positivism, rational choice and standard (quantitative, qualitative, survey-based) research techniques to engage with sensory studies, visual studies and audiovisual technologies (Campbell, 2012). Today's academic environment offers a broad range of multimodal theories and methods. New digital approaches to research and the development of non-linear editing software (such as Final Cut and Adobe Premiere) reside alongside more well-established tools like SPSS and ATLAS, and emergent digital technologies provide new opportunities to re-imagine criminological theories, methods and knowledge fluidly and dynamically. Documentary criminology functions alongside written research and complements it: audiovisual techniques allow criminologists to evoke crime, harm and transgression in ways unavailable within a text-based medium, which excels primarily at producing explanation and theoretical insight statically, after the fact. When used to augment static text, documentary criminology reanimates the kinaesthetic (Vannini, 2014) and brings sensory experiences to life as vibrant encounters (Campbell, 2012, 2013).

Documentary criminology as re-wilding

What I refer to here as 'documentary criminology', Frauley (2010) has described as 'narrative criminology', or empirical storytelling. Frauley (2010: 31) notes that 'criminologists are increasingly exploring non-traditional objects, sources of information, methods of analysing this information, and explanatory frameworks to guide analysis and interpretation'. One of these 'non-traditional objects' is what Frauley calls 'fictional reality'. I would add that *non-fictional* reality has an equal place on the list of imaginative spaces evoked by documentary criminology. By extending the concepts of documentary filmmaking and sonic sensibility to criminology, we extend the current practice of *critiquing* and *interpreting* media (as outlined by Jewkes, 2015) to the *production* of criminological images and sounds from lived experience (Ferrell and Van de Voorde, 2010; Redmon, 2015b).

Frauley's (2010) expansion of criminology into a broader interpretive and epistemological literature enables researchers to produce sensory forms of knowledge with dynamic and vital characteristics. By tapping into the broader literature on visual studies, sonic studies and sensuous phenomenology (Abram, 1996; MacDougall, 2006; Merleau-Ponty, 1968), documentary

criminology can resituate and extend epistemological and methodological possibilities. In its overlap with phenomenology and hermeneutics, documentary criminology engages with video ethnography to craft lived experiences of crime and transgression as sensuous objects. The knowledge is the documentary itself; the research approach and its crafted outcome are ambiguous, dynamic and unstable, inviting a re-wilding of ethnographic practice attuned to sensory immediacy, what Ferrell and Van de Voorde (2010) call a 'decisive moment' that enables researchers to attend to flux. Re-wilding criminology promotes methodological and epistemological diversity by placing researchers in intimate, sensory proximity to phenomena of interest. When this re-wilding is accomplished through video ethnography, possibilities of intimate and uncomfortable contact with lived experience are multiplied, and vibrancy is generated.

The filmmaker-as-criminological-ethnographer does not aim to 'capture' life, but to evoke multi-sensory impressions. Vannini (2015: 3) illustrates how 'video methods are less useful for capturing reality than they are for evoking distinct, multiple, competing, and often contradictory aural and visual impressions'. Documentary criminology's methodological and epistemological advantages are not found in its ability to replicate lived experience with panoptic precision; rather, its strength lies in allowing audiences to 'see [and hear] the world differently from our habitual ways of looking and feeling' (Vannini, 2015: 3). Documentary criminology's invitational approach to re-wilding evokes 'ephemeral ambiances and atmospheres' of crime and transgression, which Vannini describes as 'by definition ungraspable, undefinable, and only perceivable as fleeting moods, diffuse feelings and evanescent sensations' (Vannini, 2015: 3).

The 'ephemeral ambiances' are evoked as moments-in-motion using audiovisual tools that serve as extensions of the criminologist's body. These material moments are then assembled as affective encounters that evoke sensations with vitality in those who experience them.

In this interpretive and sensory framework, documentary criminology is considered both a new method of presenting research *and* a new approach to crafting sensuous scholarship (MacDougall, 2006; Vannini, 2015). Documentary criminology, as sensuous scholarship, is a more-than-representational technique, attuned to sensibilities of skilled practices and attentiveness. It is less concerned with objectively *representing* its subject and more interested in attempting to:

animate rather than simply mimic, to rupture rather than merely account, to evoke rather than just report, and to reverberate instead of more modestly resonating, in this sense offering a true escape from the established academic habit of striving to uncover meanings and values that apparently await our discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation. (Vannini, 2015: 318)

Documentary criminology generates meaning and crafts sensorial knowledge that exceeds textual and representational ethnography.

In brief, documentary criminology engages the real as a radical form of empiricism to enhance and add to an ethnographic practice within an interpretive and sensuous framework. Formally, recordings of lived aesthetic experience are edited and shaped in qualitatively distinct ways and empirically rendered to engage the senses. This approach verges on radical empiricism, or an 'aesthetics of the empirical', in the sense that it radically aestheticises empirical observations as new forms of knowledge (MacDonald, 2013).

More than words: Crafting sensory images and sonic environments as documentary criminology

Carrabine (2014) suggests that cameras facilitate new ways of seeing the world and contribute to a growing archive of lived experience. Images, according to Carrabine, hold the potential to provoke unease and bring visceral immediacy to events – yet at the same time, when audiences see *too much*, an objectifying distance may be created that ultimately undermines the photographer's intentions. Carrabine distinguishes between the *visual* and the *visible* to demonstrate how the act of not-seeing violence is sometimes the most affective and ethically appropriate method of attending to acts of violence as 'instants of truth' (Carrabine, 2014: 154); however, he doesn't address the possibility of open-ended and ambiguous encounters with these instants.

Young (2014) follows up on the notion of 'instants of truth' to explore the significance of encounters with images, which permit no separation between the visual and the social world. She asks, 'How should we think about/through/with images?' (Young, 2014: 161). According to Young, in order to address criminology's resistance to image production, we must move towards a constitutive approach – i.e. the creation of images with new multimedia platforms (Brown, 2014: 185). Schept's (2014: 216–217) 'counter-visual ethnography' merges well with Young's theory and Brown's introduction of new media in criminology; together, these frameworks can be taken as a multi-ethnographic approach that wields visibility's capacity to enact alternate vantage points and narratives.

Rafter (2014) comes closest to clearly articulating what it is that documentary criminology can provide to researchers that words cannot. Rafter advocates for a criminology that doesn't rely on words to convey lived experiences: 'Even in studies of representations, the focus has tended to fall upon words and narratives rather than visual imagery. Why this shying away?' (Rafter, 2014: 129). Rafter answers her own question by positing that, since criminologists have only recently begun to understand how images are constructed, produced and disseminated, the present turn towards the visual can cause discomfort for academics. Rafter's (2014: 130) critique can be equally applied to the creation of images and sounds as knowledge production; however, her approach remains embedded in visual interpretation and textual analysis rather than sensuous, experientially crafted media.

A primary limitation of the approaches outlined above is their tendency to reduce mediated knowledge production to *visuality*, ignoring the growing use of video methods to create nuanced multi-sensory experiences. The concept of 'visuality' reinforces the Enlightenment-era preoccupation with optical experience while eschewing other sensory inputs, including kinaesthetics, proxemics, haptics, sound, motion, colour and tactility. At present, the criminological literature does not offer robust theoretical or methodological guidance on how to produce sensory experiences as documentary research (as Hayward and Presdee (2010) perspicaciously note in their seminal book, *Framing Crime*). Documentary criminology attempts to address this limitation by articulating an audiovisual, ethnographic immediacy (Redmon, 2015b) that inflects multimodal, unplanned experiences across topographical spaces while also accounting for the possibility of drift (Ferrell, forthcoming). Filmmaking methods enhance the lived experiences of sonic and spatial environments (Campbell, 2012, 2013; Hayward, 2012; Redmon, 2015a); experiences of transgression originating in taste (Howes, 2013), touch (MacDougall, 2006; Redmon, 2015a), smell (Henshaw,

2013) and sight (Carrabine, 2012) are also integrated. Documentary criminology crafts these sensory experiences as part of a wider narrative that complements textual representation. A major goal of documentary criminology is therefore to find a way to *integrate* sensory media with textual representation rather than pitting these two methodologies against each other.

This discussion of the depiction of lived experiences of crime, harm and transgression as documentary criminology raises the following questions: What does audiovisual (sensory) knowledge production contribute to the domain of criminology that distinguishes it from written text? In general, how can text, images and sound merge? Young (2010: 85) addresses these questions by shifting the conversation away from images as analytical objects to images (and sounds) as constitutive elements of encounters. Expanding on Deleuze's notion of affects, Young asks, 'What affect arises from an encounter with crime? What affect arises with an image of crime? ... Crime as image connects bodies' (Young, 2010: 85). Although she focuses exclusively on the image-as-visual, Young crucially opens up a discussion around the possibility of merging sensuous, affective and textual knowledge at the intersection of constitutive scholarship, academia and popular culture (see Carrabine, 2008; 2012; Rafter, 2007).

Whereas written knowledge primarily lends itself to linear processing, sensory knowledge engages the viewer through non-linear encounters and indeterminate contacts (Campbell, 2012; MacDougall, 2006; Young, 2010). But what if both forms of knowledge could be combined? Young's work implies that video methods can maximise sensuous and affective knowledge to connect bodies by directly involving viewers in the experience of the documentary (Young, 2014: 161; Redmon, 2015a). As sensory conduits, documentaries offer vibrant encounters; often, the relationships that develop between audiences and documentaries exceed or circumvent the filmmaker's intentions (Young, 2014). Ultimately, documentary criminology emerges from an earlier tradition of cultural and visual criminology that works on the skin and flesh of the body (Ferrell, 1995; Marks, 2000; Young, 2010, 2014). It consists of a bundle of sensuous relationships embraced as open-ended ethnographic encounters filmed as unexpected and decisive moments (Ferrell, forthcoming).

Although Young does admirable work in expanding the ever-fluid boundaries of criminology, her analysis doesn't go far enough. In addition to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between spectator and image, criminology needs a *methodology* for crafting images and sounds from lived, sensuous experience. Hayward (2010: 2) expands the boundaries of Young's affective approach by introducing the crafting of digital images as tangible and tactile criminological experiences. Hayward contends that the blurring between representation and seeing, between image and vision, is reflected in WJT Mitchell's (2006) question: *what do images want?* Hayward addresses this question by suggesting that images and sounds of crime, harm and transgression are encountered in contemporary society as vibrant experiences that activate viewers. This visual and sonic framework shifts the central research question away from, 'Does media cause crime?' to more nuanced, probing questions such as, 'What do images and sounds of crime and harm do?' and 'How do they become crafted as digital experiences?'. These questions open up a methodological space in which criminologists can craft experiential media that connects bodies, activates senses and provokes viewers (Young, 2010, 2014).

Re-framing of visual criminology places the focus on *perception*. This shift in focus necessitates an equivalent methodological shift that attunes the researcher to the process by which images

and sounds crafted from lived experience become part of multiple embodied media flows. Hayward argues that the adoption of the audiovisual medium to record and craft sensory experiences has set in motion:

the development of a thoroughgoing visual criminology ... Instead of simply studying 'images' we need a new methodological orientation towards the visual that is capable of encompassing meaning, affect, situation, symbolic power and efficiency, and spectacle in the same frame. (Hayward, 2010: 2–3)

Putting such a methodology into practice requires criminologists, first, to understand how media is made, and second, to use media to craft experiential knowledge. Implicit in Young's assessment is the claim that we can no longer understand media 'as a thing awaiting interpretation' (Young, 2014: 161): criminologists must learn how to make media as part of the global and local flow of the images and sounds of crime. 'One of the tasks of cultural criminology is to insinuate itself into this flow ... Cultural criminologists must also work to "become the media" ... for those keen to embark on their own cultural criminological visual analysis' (Hayward, 2010: 6–9). This understanding of visual and sonic criminology paves the way for ethnographic media-making to be reinvented as experiential inquiry, as methodological practice, as a way of knowing and as multimodal documentary analysis in its own right. Still, the question of the 'material substance' of lived sensory experiences that documentary criminology should draw on remains underexplored. What is the 'materiality' of lived experience, and how can it be crafted as documentary media to connect bodies?

The substance of criminological documentaries

In her work expanding the theoretical underpinnings of choreographic inquiry, Campbell (2012, 2013) comes perhaps the closest to articulating what the material substance of documentary criminology might look, feel and sound like. Campbell (2012: 407) suggests that a strictly visual approach is reductive and 'fails to capture the experiential, organic and fluid relations of the spatialities of crime'. She advocates instead for more nuanced performative methods – including multiple sensory experiences – in her cinematic analysis of what she calls 'choreographies of crime'. Campbell's choreographic approach takes viewers into the sensory nuances of photographic and audiovisual narratives.

A cultural criminological approach emphasises the subjective, affective, embodied, aesthetic, material, performative, textual, symbolic, and visual relations of space, while recognising that the settings of crime are neither fixed nor inevitable but are relational, improvised, contingent, constructed, and contested through an array of creative and dynamic cultural practices, made meaningful within and mediated by wider processes of social transformation. (Campbell, 2012: 401)

Next, Campbell outlines one of the most imaginative and compelling cinematic and sonic approaches in criminology to date by repositioning the emergence of ecological spaces as *performance with material consequences*. Here, she sets the stage for an emerging documentary

criminology that can access the 'flow of experience' through an immersive recording of lived sensory dynamics. Campbell (2013: 27) evocatively writes:

[T]he echo of footsteps in the underpass; an approaching police siren; the sound of breaking glass; floral tributes at the roadside; raised angry voices; the screech of a car braking. The idea of performance as an emergent, spontaneous, improvised, almost ephemeral flow of practice is somewhat different from the formulations of performance found within the wider sociological and cultural studies scholarship.

Campbell's vivacious description and adept analysis present a foundation for documentary criminology as a practice that records and embraces dynamic depictions of intersecting sensory components – and, in doing so, stretches the ontological domain of criminology to include *depicted performances*. Thus, documentary criminology provides a unique opportunity to record, render and depict the choreographies of 'embodied performativities ... experiential immediacy and affective energies' (Campbell, 2012: 414) as the substance of crime, harm and transgression.

Campbell makes great strides in opening up our understanding of how contingent material experiences can be intricately intertwined with performative facets like settings, acts and sounds. However, like Young, she stops short of embracing filmic depiction as a potential *research practice*. Campbell's analysis necessarily remains confined to the domain of textual and interpretive criminology – as opposed to documentary criminology, which integrates, enacts and depicts the sensory substance she so eloquently describes. Campbell offers the first clear analytical, theoretical and material vision of *what* documentary criminologists can craft, along with some possibilities for *how* to render and craft narratives from the materialities of lived sensory experiences.

Feral sensibilities: Documentary criminology's value

From fact to fiction (Frauley, 2010), the real to the reel (Campbell, 2012), analogue to digital (Hayward and Presdee, 2010), oral to aural (Redmon, 2015a) and aesthetics to ethics (Carrabine, 2014), documentary criminology borrows from cultural and visual criminology to construct new theoretical and methodological sensibilities to depicting crime and harm. Documentary criminology's mobile approach is improvisational – able to adapt to fluctuating circumstances, traverse dynamic situations and depict the fluidity of routine and vibrant activities through a lens of expressive immediacy (Campbell, 2012). Such an approach contrasts directly with traditional, static research methods. Consider, for instance, how criminologists are often taught to *plan* and *control* their research in clean and precise ways: subjects are siphoned into delimited, domesticated spaces where they fill out surveys, respond to interviews, react to images and have their thoughts, attitudes and observations coded. This approach, while well respected and in some ways highly effective, is sanitised, divorced from the experiential textures of actual criminal, harmful and transgressive activities in all their sensory richness (Campbell, 2013).

The phenomena pursued by criminologists are often by their very nature pre-reflective and immediate – qualities that render these phenomena unamenable to quantitative methods and static qualitative verbal accounts. Stationary methods omit dynamic activities (although they may include them to capture routine activities), eliminate sensuous substance and discard the fluctuating energy of 'doing' crime, harm and transgression. To participate and engage with flux requires

an agile, adaptable and feral methodological approach that can reinvent itself 'on the go' during the research process. Documentary criminology, when conducted with ethnographic sensibility, offers a mobile approach to engage with such dynamic lived experience. Rather than going 'native', documentary criminology goes feral.

I am interested in the process by which ethnography can be coaxed away from the controlled contours of academic domestication: rationalisation and standardisation of research buttressed under the rubric of science. Feral research relies on messiness and experimentation in order to open up a space to do the unexpected. Feral methods grow beyond the methodology's intention: they must become self-willed in order to avoid reproducing dominant ways of doing research. By embracing a wild, feral and unexpected methodological sensibility based on attuned practices rather than prescriptive instruction, documentary criminology can achieve unexpected results and craft nuanced experiential knowledge. A feral, fluid and improvised audiovisual criminology can enmesh itself interstitially within spaces of situational dynamics to depict aural, tactile and sensory moments of transgression over the course of time.

A feral method, then, is breaking away from domesticity and cultivation, a deliberate departure from the planned. Feral methods are unexpected, wild and highly adaptable to dynamic situations as well as routine activities. Documentary criminology 'goes feral' in its integration of audiovisual recording technology into ethnographic methodology to evoke pre-reflective aspects of criminological phenomena. Documentary criminology's vibrancy springs from its engagement with audiovisual technologies and new media software to generate aesthetic knowledge as experiential encounter; it invites the viewer to understand and engage with knowledge physically, beyond the force of written words.

The benefits of documentary filmmaking to the discipline of criminology are many: it expands the capacity of visual criminology and extends it into the sonic realm; it increases criminology's theoretical sophistication, methodological diversity and epistemological possibilities; it takes an open-ended stance on interpretation that allows for a nuanced, fluid ethical and aesthetic outcome. Documentary criminology adds value to scholarship by helping to disseminate research to popular audiences via digital and theatrical platforms (e.g. iTunes, Netflix, documentary distribution companies, film festivals, television, Vimeo and more). To illustrate the re-wilding and feral characteristics of documentary criminology embraced through audiovisual methodology, I now turn to a detailed examination of a single case study: the criminological documentary *Girl Model*.

***Girl Model* as a case study in documentary criminology**

Girl Model presents an effective demonstration of how audiovisual technologies can be integrated into ethnographic sensibilities to help us access and inflect the fluctuating sensory experiences of crime, harm and transgression over time. *Girl Model* traces an extended encounter between Ashley, a 31-year-old model scout, and Nadya, a 13-year-old aspiring model in Siberia, and captures their interactions as part of an experiential story that engages audiences with sensory immediacy. *Girl Model* merges the dynamics of documentary filmmaking, the sensibilities of cultural, sonic and visual criminology and the methodology of trans-mobile ethnography to interconnect seemingly disparate transgressive practices in different regions of the world within a political economy of human trafficking. It integrates image and sound to provide a cinematic explanation of how and why young Russian teenagers seek fame, notoriety and income through

modelling, and how modelling and fashion companies recruit, transport and exploit these teenage girls. It also demonstrates how lives can be irrevocably impacted by encounters that initially seem insignificant; the audience is drawn into an experiential narrative that confronts the everyday realities of human trafficking (Ferrell and Sanders, 1995: 316). Brief encounters between young girls and model scouts become transgressive turning points that significantly redirect childhood trajectories and deliberately entrap youth within a well-organised, international trafficking industry built on predation. *Girl Model's* substance – its 'experiential data', in the terms of Campbell (2012) – is the lived sensations of crime, harm and transgression played out as performance and choreography over time.

Girl Model, as a case study, demonstrates how documentary filmmaking can expand criminologists' methodological scope and broaden opportunities for knowledge production within current ethical and aesthetic discussions (Carrabine, 2012, 2014). The ethics of the documentary's narrative help frame and situate Russian modelling culture within a political economy that exploits 'relations of sociocultural norms, values, and relations of power' (Campbell, 2012: 400) to foster the development of a predatory industry built on the sexual and labour exploitation of young girls. These political-economic circumstances, in turn, shape the lived experiences of teenage girls and inform their decision to enter this murky industry.

While *Girl Model's* primary function is to thematically depict the lived experiences of recruitment, transport and exploitation as aesthetic knowledge within an empirical and sensory narrative, it also highlights the ambiguous ethical and aesthetic consequences of these experiences. According to Carrabine (2012):

The cultural turn in criminology has meant a greater attentiveness to issues of representation and the issues posed are not just restricted to images that evidence criminal acts, but also figure in any act of representation that transforms traumatic experience into visual art where the question of how to bear witness takes prominence. The crucial point is that human misery should not be reduced to a set of aesthetic concerns, but is fundamentally bound up with the politics of testimony and memory. (Carrabine, 2012: 467)

In this quote, Carrabine deliberately merges aesthetics with ethics and politics with authorial intention. Carrabine's (2012: 469) suggestion that 'visual interpretation should never be an end in and of itself, but must always have the goal of social and political explanation firmly in sight' can be in tension with audiences' open-ended festive interpretations of films, which may exceed the ethnographic filmmaker's intentions (Carney, 2010). Given documentary filmmaking's role in providing open-ended, organic depictions of crime, harm and transgression, the sensorial knowledge this methodology depicts may produce unintended outcomes (Campbell, 2013; Carrabine, 2012, 2014). *Girl Model* offers a clear example of an emerging documentary filmmaking method-of-attunement embedded within audiovisual criminology (Campbell, 2012, 2013; Carrabine, 2012; Ferrell and Van de Voorde, 2010; Hayward, 2010; Rafter, 2014; Rafter and Brown, 2011; Young, 2010, 2015).

Below, I explore how *Girl Model* attempts to engage with this tension by focusing on the aesthetic and ethical consequences of doing documentary criminology with open-ended imperatives. In doing so, I frame my discussion around Carrabine's (2012) discussion of 'just images' with an opposing open-ended approach riddled with interpretive ambiguity.

Problematic ethics and aesthetics of documentary criminology

The opening series of images in *Girl Model* capture the reflections and refractions of teenage Russian girls on display for scouts to scrutinise, measure and recruit. The winter setting is Novosibirsk, a large metropolitan city in the Siberian region of Russia. Hallways and rooms of mirrors reflect infinite images of teenage girls, preparing the audience for the refracted story they are about to enter and visually and sonically establishing the documentary's larger pattern: exploration of the fusion between flesh, image and sonic environment. This sequence attempts to bring viewers inside the setting, echoing Ferrell's call to substitute a criminology of correlation with an immersive criminology of the skin and a phenomenology of the flesh (Ferrell, 1997). The scene gives literal life to Ferrell's metaphorical statement: 'In every case, as cultural criminologists, we study not only images, but images of images, an infinite hall of mediated mirrors' (Ferrell and Sanders, 1995: 30). Images upon images bleed into each other, blurring the boundaries between real and refracted, fake and original, fiction and non-fiction. The audience is placed inside a simulacrum of images as they are challenged to interpretatively navigate and encounter the uncomfortable experiential narrative presented through ethnographic methods and cinematic techniques.

As the scouts evaluate more than 200 bikini-clad girls, criticising in their presence the size of their hips, the pimples on their adolescent faces and their weight, the scene transitions to the main scout, Ashley, who is eyeing and photographically examining the main character, smiling 13-year-old Nadya. Photographic images are reproduced not only in the documentary, but also by the scouts, who photograph hundreds of teenage girls' bodies and faces to enter into their databases. These images and sounds endlessly repeat themselves throughout the documentary, creating a spectacle of disembodiment.

Young (2014) suggests that such scenes of disembodiment draw an affective connection to audience members' own bodies. Rather than decoding the meaning of the image, however, the documentary relies on criminological and cinematic *Verstehen* to craft sounds and images into extended sensory analysis. Viewers experience the composition of images, colours, tactile interactions and sounds as a narrative. The documentary combines aesthetical and ethical elements to analyse and explain the recruitment, transport and exploitation of teenage girls in the Russian modelling industry.

Girl Model eschews surveys and quantitative analyses in favour of experiential immersion. This choice may be seen as a response to Back and Puwar's (2012: 6) question, 'What are the opportunities afforded to researchers where our primary tools are no longer confined to the survey or the tape recorder?'. Documentary criminology answers that new digital recording technologies, when combined with ethnographic sensibilities and cinematic *Verstehen*, can bring to life dynamic and uncomfortable lived encounters – in this case, encounters between teenage girls and adult scouts. *Girl Model's* crafting of aesthetic knowledge immerses the audience in these uncomfortable situations of sensuousness and spectacle (Redmon, 2015a). The film practices documentary and cinematic *Verstehen* by immersing viewers directly within the troublesome encounters faced by young girls; this immersion, in turn, allows viewers to perceive and sense the situation from the models' perspective. The audience's understanding of the scene is thus situated within an ethics that creates a direct connection between audience empathy and the social and political conditions that give rise to harm (see Carrabine, 2012, 2014; Ferrell, 1997).

Ethics and aesthetics of documentary criminology

It is precisely within the social, political and personal situations described above that *Girl Model* engages with Carrabine's notion of 'just images' to address the larger ethical and aesthetical themes of documentary criminology. Carrabine's (2014: 486) 'difficult subjectivities' delicately play out alongside relationships between photographer, criminal, victim, spectator, torturer and artist in this, and upcoming, scenes. Quoting Levi Strauss (2003: 8), Carrabine poses the question, "'What right have I to represent you?'" In doing so, the relationship between photographer, suffering subject, and the very act of looking are put at the centre of debate' (Carrabine, 2014: 486). Aware that the fragmented images it captures will eventually appear in the public domain, *Girl Model* not only bears witness to these processes of dehumanisation and exploitation, but takes things a step further by visually exposing the political and economic conditions that perpetuate the situation. Ashley's enjoyment at recruiting Russian teenagers, taking their images without consent and putting them in vulnerable situations is cast within this broader social light. *Girl Model*, as documentary criminology, utilises audiovisual methods to ethically and aesthetically re-frame Ashley's photos by showing the wider networks of organised power that facilitate and encourage her actions. Whether the filmmaker's 'intention' meets the audience's 'reception' is ambiguous, however. Does an audience see, hear and interpret the film in the manner the filmmaker intended?

Here, the role of the audience's subjectivity – viewers' ability to interpret film idiosyncratically – is crucial. Dai Vaughan (1999) labels this interpretive process as 'ambiguous' in line with an open-ended, immediate and 'decisive moment' approach (Ferrell and Van de Voorde, 2010). Open-ended interpretations complicate attempts to ethically frame photos in just ways. Sniadecki (2014: 29) suggests that ambiguity breaks down the binary relationships between ethics/aesthetics and objective/subjective interpretations. Sniadecki cites Vaughan (1999: 115): 'just as the ethics of the filmmakers are experienced as aesthetics by the viewer, so the [researcher's] objectivity translates into ambiguity, and the "real-life" density commonly attributed by the viewer to such film is our experience of active engagement in the generation of meaning'.

Sniadecki and Vaughan's argument is open-ended in that images and sounds are festive, unruly, dynamic, ambiguous, lacking in linear meaning (Carney, 2010). In Sniadecki and Vaughan's account, the audience is active rather than passive – a participant in the interpretive creation of the experience, rather than the deferential recipient of a predetermined meaning framed and intended by the filmmaker. The open-endedness of images and sounds opens them up to excessive and indeterminate understandings and interpretations. If open-ended approaches widen and broaden interpretation, then any attempt by the filmmaker to aesthetically and ethically frame images and sounds in just ways become deeply problematic: at any point, the audience can simply strip and re-interpret those intentions. In addition to (or in place of) the stable interpretation intended by the filmmaker, the audience of a documentary film may generate ambiguity, festivity and liminality as surplus products. In this sense, images and sounds 'offer too much' (Sniadecki, 2014: 29), and in doing so, may confound efforts to create ethical depictions. Consequently, the filmmaker's intention will always be superseded by the viewer's interpretation.

A few implications arise for documentary criminology in light of this discussion. Carrabine (2014) frames his discussion of 'just images' from the point of view of *humility*, asking whether the documentary seeks to protect the fragility and vulnerability of human relations. I suggest that documentaries such as *Girl Model* can depict conditions of vulnerability while simultaneously performing open-ended ambiguity. *Girl Model's* circulation on iTunes, Netflix, the BBC, PBS,

ARTE, news stations and numerous other outlets has amplified the ambiguities inherent in the film's perspective: is it marking, holding accountable or promoting the activities depicted? In as much as *Girl Model* functions as excess, irreducible to pre-given 'meanings' intended by the filmmaker (or imbued by the criminologist), it might do all or none of the following: fascinate and humiliate, punish and shame, fetishise and create fascist desire in a field of power. The interpretive possibilities and reactions available to audiences are endless, *in spite of the filmmaker's intentions and the criminologist's interpretation*.

The excessive and festive characteristics of documentary criminology suggest that audiences are multi-dimensional in their interpretations of images and sounds. Upon encountering *Girl Model*, will an audience interpret the film as an explanation of how scouts and the modelling industry exploit the vulnerability of young girls? Will the documentary trouble the conscience and provoke an ethical response? Or will the fragmented images of young girls be seen as aesthetic art that creates affective, fascist and/or predatory desire, thereby reinforcing the very troublesome behaviours the documentary attempts to critique and highlight? An open-ended framework provides no clear answer to these questions – *unless text is written to help frame the documentary*. Yet by including text to frame the documentary, the researcher necessarily closes off the film from creative possibilities – fossilising interpretation through textual exposition.

Carrabine (2011: 9) provides a bit more direction to this quandary when he suggests, 'there is much evidence to suggest that these violations of humanity scarcely trouble consciences'. Carrabine's own pessimistic illustration of this claim can be fruitfully compared to *Girl Model*: just as the guards at Abu Ghraib appear happy when taking their photos of victims, Ashley appears proud and satisfied by what she's done to the young girl models with her camera. Even as the documentary attempts to transform her aesthetics into questionable ethical practices, Ashley's own perspective may shine through. She is 'not doing these things to fellow human beings, but to those who are no longer quite human' (Carrabine, 2011: 17). Ashley's collection of images is displayed in front of the documentary filmmaker 'as if they were just another sight to be captured along the foreign adventure' (Carrabine, 2011: 9).

Whether the documentary seizes on this gesture as a decisive moment (Ferrell and Van de Voorde, 2010) or positions the gesture as a milder commentary on ethics, fascination or crude sensationalism is influenced by the subjectivity of the viewer, the excessive ambiguity of the images and sounds and the framework of intentions constructed by the documentarian. Analysis of such factors is at the heart of cultural, visual and sonic criminology, with its focus on the nuances of interpretation mediated through culture, lived experience, subjectivity and normative approaches. The documentary doesn't explicitly identify the industry's actions, or Ashley's, as criminal, but it does frame them as ethically transgressive, harmful and possibly illegal. It raises questions without providing answers: are the girls victims of cultural crimes? Are the photographs visual evidence of vulnerability, abuse of power and criminal behaviour? *Girl Model* resides in the messy aesthetics of festive excess rather than the more comfortable realm of stable interpretations with definite ethical answers. Audiences can easily interpret evidence as aesthetics, and aesthetics as evidence.

Framing the scene

Of particular interest here is one scene that serves as an illustration of the ethical and aesthetic themes outlined by Carrabine (2012). Ashley, the main scout, is shown wearing her bikini and

walking into a bathroom, where she reveals her curious 'favourite little spot'. She opens a little white rectangular container and spreads before the camera hundreds of photos of young girls' bodies, feet and other body parts. Ashley's images are anonymous, cut up, dissected, separated, violated. The apathy in Ashley's discussion of the photos, and her indifference when she claims to have taken the photos without the girls' consent, reflects her own disconnection from the modelling world in which she works. Ashley's photography raises not only ethical and aesthetic issues, but legal ones, too. Ashley comments on the process by which she obtained her photos:

So this is my favourite little spot. I had these boxes made for these little mini prints. Stockings. See the hands, gestures. See. I'm trying to hide my camera under the table so they don't know that I am photographing. Sometimes I wouldn't photograph a girl's face, I would just photograph her feet or her hands.

Ashley continues to place photographs of young girls' body parts on the floor. She picks up two separate photographs of two different girls and tries to connect the two fragments as a whole body. She comments on her efforts.

Sometimes I would try to find the legs. Which legs went with which body? Hey, does that work? That works. Doesn't it? Wait. Oh no, it doesn't work. Wait almost works. This is the same bathing suit though, look. That fits that. I just didn't ... if I had it on a tripod then I could ...

As her words trail off, the scene transitions into Ashley's admission and explanation of how teenage girls come to be facilitated into prostitution.

What makes the scene ethically ambiguous is how Ashley admits to consciously hiding her camera under tables to photograph up girls' skirts, capturing images of their bodies without permission. As she displays fragmented images of young girls' arms, feet, legs, thighs and mid-sections, it becomes clear to the viewer that not one single photograph shows a young person as a whole body. This scene appeals to documentary and cinematic *Verstehen* to interpretively frame and understand how and why Ashley photographs teenage girls without their consent, why she sifts through hundreds of images of teenage girls and how she surreptitiously collects images of their body parts as mementos that she stores in a small hidden chest. Yet, the documentary also frames and depicts Ashley's aesthetic actions as ethically ambiguous by demonstrating how her personal behaviour as a scout might be indicative of the broader industry's behaviour (as a corrupt institution that attempts to craft a clean image of itself). *Girl Model* cracks that shiny facade by revealing the hairline fractures through which objectification, recruitment, transport and exploitation occur. Audiences *feel, hear* and see the substance of these concepts inductively emerging from the narrative of lived experience.

Conclusion: Invitation to the vitality of re-wilding criminology

At least three conclusions can be drawn from the process of integrating documentary criminology into experiential inquiry. First, images and sounds of crime, harm and transgression play out in real time as active moments, and this very fluidity facilitates their ability to exist alongside static forms

of written communication. Documentary criminology includes images, videos, archival footage and sounds of lived experiences that vibrantly bring to life crime, harm and transgression from several angles. In the case of *Girl Model*, these angles are many and diverse, encompassing the experiences of the scouts, the teenage girls, the filmmakers, the owners of the modelling companies, the audiences who encounter these experiences and the readers who encounter textual communiques on the topic of the film. Audiences are brought into experiential scenes of transgression and encouraged to connect those scenes as interdependent events rather than isolated actions in fixed time. Audiences, in turn, add their own interpretation to the meanings and experiences of the sensory narrative through their embodied encounters with it.

Second, documentary criminology expands cultural and visual criminology's interest in audio-visual methods into the realm of *depiction* as criminological analysis. In performing this task, documentary criminology strives to depict everyday textures of lived experience by combining 'traditional practices of careful documentation and analysis with the skills of storytelling ...' (Ferrell et al., 2008: 206). For example, *Girl Model* uses video methods to analyse and depict the process by which aspiring Russian models are recruited, transported and exploited – the foundational criteria of human trafficking. In this way, the film employs what Ferrell et al. (2008: 189) call 'methodological sensibility: a sensitivity to subtleties of meaning, an openness to the orientations of others' to craft an experientially vibrant object, brought to life through the colours, sounds, shapes and movements of transgression.

This position overlaps with Jefferies' (2013: 315) explanation that documentary filmmaking in criminology functions as an aesthetic intervention that

evokes a central question for artists and filmmakers trying to intervene politically in sites of collective anguish: what can art *do* and what can it *become* in its relation with the lived experience of traumatic events? [Documentary's] aesthetic strategy, together with its inventive approach to exhibition and circulation, aims to provoke a public reckoning with the confusion and pain wrought by both the crimes and the dominant narratives of responsabilization and individualization.

Jefferies (2013) discusses how the documentary *Senorita Extraviada* re-appropriates representational space from state and commercial media; in a similar fashion, *Girl Model* re-appropriates representational space from the modelling and fashion realm, standardly delivered through reality television shows such as *America's Next Top Model*, *Models, Inc.*, *Top Model*, *I Wanna Be a Model*, *The Face*, *Make Me a Supermodel* and others. Because the methods of dissemination and the stylistic approaches used in documentary criminology are quite different from those used in traditional written scholarly work, documentary criminology offers the opportunity for scholars to access modes of popular expression and thus augment the distributional territory covered by textual forms of communication.

Third, documentary criminology, as an extension of cultural and visual criminology, expands criminologists' ability to depict sensory experiences by encouraging the crafting of images and sounds out of lived experiences – what MacDougall calls the 'production of experiences as knowledge' (see MacDougall, 2006; Sniadecki, 2014). The crafting of sensory experience encourages audiences to utilise their interpretive skills to understand and make sense of lived experience – just as the filmmaker attempts to make sense of lived experience from the characters' perspectives

while also highlighting the wider political and economic circumstances in which crime, harm and transgression unfold. Crafting and depicting sensory experience encourages audiences to immerse themselves in the sonic and visual elements of the narrative (Frauley, 2012). Documentary criminology re-imagines 'findings' in the form of sounds, colours, textures, gestures, images and words. Documentary criminologists, therefore, must rely on interpretive understanding to make sense of these sensory experiences; this process is often complicated by audiences themselves, who bring their own understandings and interpretations to the narrative and add to its complicated meaning.

Ethnographic audiovisual methods (video methods) bring a vitality of interpretation to criminology, reflecting Rafter and Brown's (2011) contention that film draws out the emotive intensity, subjective experience and multi-dimensionality of crime stories in a way that traditional academic criminological literature cannot accomplish. A documentary criminology approach draws on cultural criminology, visual studies, documentary filmmaking and sensory studies to explore the intersection of cultural texts, sociopolitical context and lived experience (Jefferies, 2013: 306). By integrating audiovisual recording technology with documentary filmmaking techniques and written text, documentary criminology creates a novel approach to understanding and analysing the lived experiences of crime, harm and transgression. An implication of this methodological transition is a shift in the way that knowledge is crafted, disseminated and shared: in the 20th century, knowledge was most often communicated verbally, or in written form; in the 21st century, knowledge depiction is taking a sensory, iconic and sonic turn that focuses on digital transmission through and to the senses. As Carrabine (2014) says of visual criminology, documentary criminology, too, is still in its infancy in this new sonic, iconic and sensory space.

This article has addressed some of the ethical and aesthetic issues raised by cultural and visual criminologists by articulating a coherent theoretical and methodological approach to documentary criminology. Rather than providing imperatives or answers to ethical issues of aesthetic depiction, I have situated documentary criminology in a space of tension between festive approaches and ethical sensibilities. Whether documentary criminology can enact a normative vision of 'just images' – and whether it should try to do so – remains to be seen. At present, this question resides in an unexplored academic territory that hasn't yet normalised its feral and festive tendencies.

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