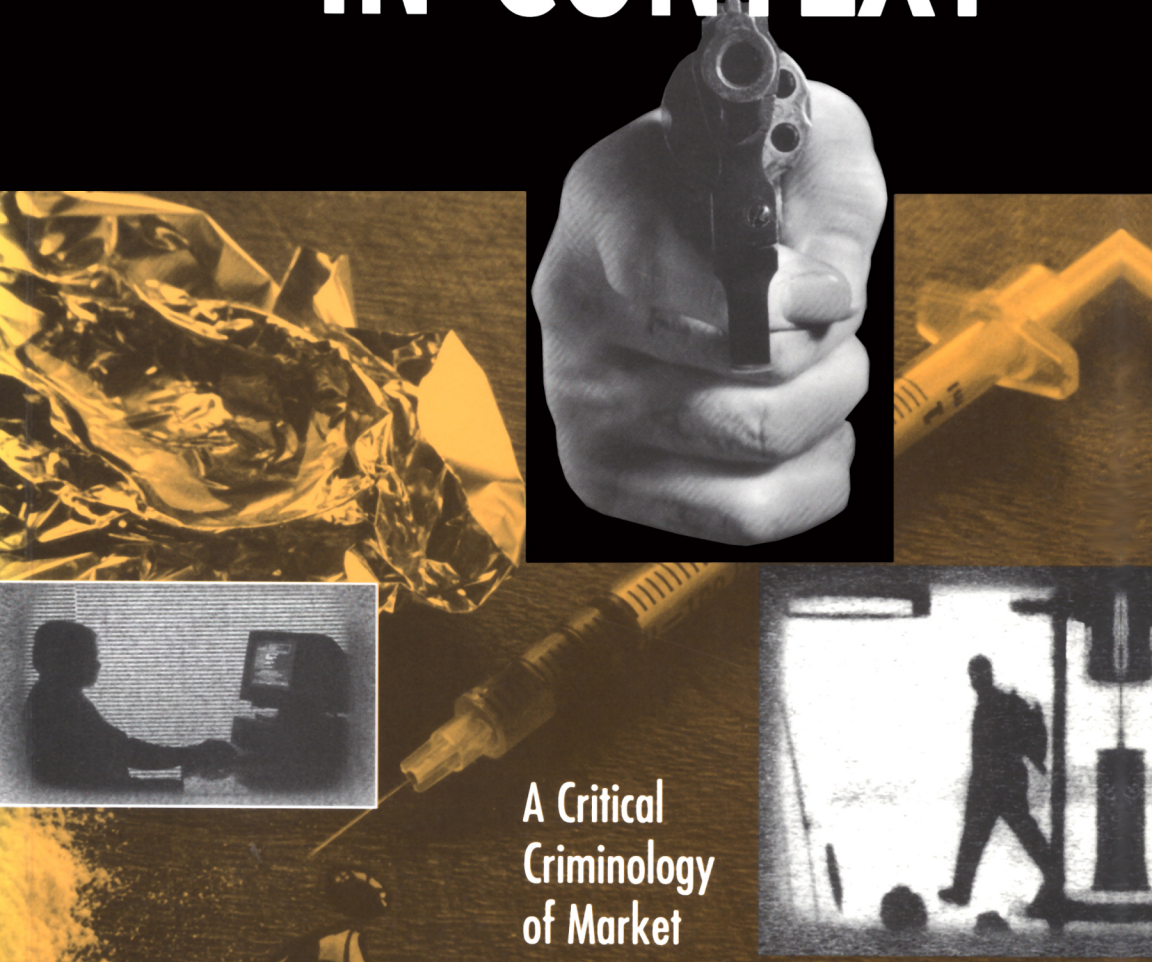
IAN TAYLOR

CRIME IN CONTEXT



A Critical Criminology of Market Societies

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the twentieth century, the bookstores are full of books on crime, though this title will certainly not find a place on the same shelves. In the massive Waterstones bookstore in the city of Manchester, England, where I lived through most of the 1990s, the ground floor display area was rearranged in 1995 so as to accommodate, right at the front of the store, several hundred new titles, on topics like Serial Murderers and Sexual Crimes of the Twentieth Century.[1] Several of these new books are companion volumes to movies on release in the city's cinemas or, in some instances, are simply the original text on which the movies are based. The movies in question – *Shallow Grave*, *Silence of the Lambs*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Natural Born Killers* and others – focus heavily on interpersonal violence and murder and also place great emphasis – in the manner of many earlier cinematic genres – on the idea of the 'criminal mind' (not least, as a way of dramatizing the detection of the originating criminal act) but also – to a significant extent, these are movies which emphasize the idea and contemporary social presence of evil. Similar moral and psychologistic preoccupations are now also widely apparent on prime-time television – most notably, in Britain, in the extraordinarily powerful *Cracker* series, produced by Granada Television in 1994 and 1995, watched by over 15 million people, and featuring, *inter alia*, the forensic investigation of serial and sexual murders, some of them extremely graphically displayed (Crace 1994).[2] The prominence of 'Gothic' themes in movies about violent death is not new in itself: there is a long history of interest in the cinema in horror and, indeed, in 'transgression' and evil. What may be definitive about the present genre of movies as well as the range of fictional and non-fictional titles in the bookstores about crime is the overwhelming focus on murder and killing represented in very contemporary and mundane, ordinary and, indeed, 'respectable' settings, and the powerful suggestion that these movies are a representation of the risks and dangers involved in everyday life at the end of the twentieth century. The bookstore display in Waterstones is straightforwardly called the 'Real Crimes' section.

Other than this, however, the murder movies and the Real Crime literature are distinctive for their insistent representation of the criminal in terms of one or other individualistic account – that is, of the *individual criminal*. Lurking not very far below the surface of these different representations of crime as 'a form of behaviour' are two themes of enormously long vintage in the analysis of crime, both in industrial and pre-industrial society – on the one hand, some version or other of an individual as being under the influence of evil ('possessed' by 'the Devil' or some other malign influence from outside society as we know it), and, on the other, some explanation of that crime in terms of the individualistic analysis of pathology or species underdevelopment as mobilized within evolutionary biology. In this respect, the violent crime movies and the Real Crime books are an expression of a search that has also been being encouraged throughout the 1980s and 1990s in some parts of the academy, especially on the part of clinical psychiatrists and behavioural psychologists, in North America. In the mid-1980s, for example, as David Kelley observed, there was a sudden explosion of such texts of widely differing quality released in the United States, 'stalking the criminal mind' (Kelley 1985). Kelley paid particular attention to the massive tome by Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow, *The Criminal Personality*, which somehow managed to construct psychopathy as a general paradigm for the analysis of all criminal violence, whilst also wanting to insist on such violence as a voluntary and freely willed act for which all perpetrators should be held personally responsible. In the same year, Yochelson and Samenow's text was to be superseded in many quarters by the publication of James Q. Wilson and Richard Herrnstein's *Crime and Human Nature*, and, in the 1990s, in North America and Britain, the analytically individualistic behavioural interpretation of crime has seen the development of 'offender-profiling' by forensic psychiatrists, specifically in its application to police detection (Cantor and Alison 1997), and also the attempt to use the framework of socio-biology to explain apparently social phenomena (like crime) in terms of measurable variations in the age, sex, intelligence and personality-formation of individuals (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990).[3]

It is impossible to ignore the way in which these cinematic and televisual representations, and the accompanying forensic and socio-biological literature, are helping to construct and legitimize a form of commonsense and populist criminology, with a much more influential social presence in many societies (certainly in Britain – for example, in daily newspaper crime reports) than at any time since the 1950s. It is a form of commonsense criminology organized around 'the criminal' and, particularly, 'the criminal mind' as an 'object of analysis', and also complicit in the task of identification, prevention and containment of the individual criminal. It is closely associated, in what sociologists would call 'a discourse', with a new penological project that is concerned with the identification and incapacitation of the 'dangerous offender' as well as with new ways of surveillance – social insurance, the minimization of the personal risk arising from the sudden emergence of dangerous individuals in the broader society (Feeley and Simon 1992). It is also a kind of individualistic and 'commonsensical',

practical criminological discourse which is winning the attention of vast cohorts of students enrolled on undergraduate and graduate programmes in criminal justice in North America, as well as, increasingly, in Britain, Australia and elsewhere.

The advance of these various forms of 'analytically individualist' criminology has occurred almost without comment or response, so far as many well-established figures in the criminological and social scientific academy based in Western universities are concerned.[4] In the United States, throughout much of the last twenty years, the social scientific study of crime has been conducted under the influence of the 'symbolic interactionist' and 'social constructionist' traditions, focusing, *not* on 'the crime' itself (whose reality is sometimes denied or ignored) so much as on the processes which construct certain behaviours as crime, and the social reactions which such behaviours and crimes provoke (Becker 1963; Lemert 1967). In other parts of the social science academy, influenced by more critical traditions (especially, in the early 1970s, by some form of Marxism) the concern was to locate such crimes as an expression of the contradictions (and especially the rank inequalities) inherent in a capitalist political economy, and to see any or all attempts to control such forms of primitive rebellion and resistance as confirming evidence of the real oppression at the heart of 'liberal' capitalist democracy (Center for Research on Criminal Justice 1975; Quinney 1969, 1970, 1973, 1974). The influence of North American labelling theory and symbolic interactionism, and, to a lesser extent, the particular versions of Marxism and conflict theory which were developed in North America, was high in the 1970s, both within North America and elsewhere in the Western academy – but, in the subsequent twenty-five years, this intellectual tradition has withered on the vine or, alternatively, merely been institutionalized within the academy as a part of the catechism of 'political correctness'.

Social, economic and cultural developments in Western societies since the late 1960s have been momentous, though it is fair to say that the direction of change has not been that which was emblazoned on the banners of '1968', other than for those for whom 'the cause' was simply that of enhancement of personal liberties (the free market society which is the subject of this book certainly advances a version of this 'libertarianism', no matter how much it withdraws the personal liberty of material security from large numbers of people). Inasmuch as the objectives of '1968' were anti-capitalist, then the developments since then have violently contradicted the aspirations of that generation. 'Socialism' itself as a utopian alternative to capitalism (in both its master definitions – the achievement of greater equality in the distribution of goods and of life-chances, and a planned economy dominated by the State acting for the general public interest) is dead, not least because of the collapse of the only existing experiment with that form of societal organization, the Soviet Union. In the last years of the twentieth century, no serious political or social commentator speaks of an alternative to living with 'a free market', which seems to be well entrenched as the only conceivable model of economic survival and/or development. In these 'new times' – dominated by what I will be calling a post-Fordist market society – the issue which is then

posed for social commentators (including those in the academy who conceive of themselves as having a special position from which to advance some kind of critique) can be expressed in very familiar terms: 'What is to be done (or said)?'

One very popular option in the academy in recent years has been that of close description – particularly, I would argue, the close description of 'the discourses' – the cultural signs and languages of 'the texts' of the form of fast-changing society of consumption which has emerged in the wake of the demise of more long-established and (in retrospect) rather unchanging societies based on the priorities and demands of mass industrial production. For many academicians, it has been attractive to describe the changes that have so quickly occurred through the language of 'postmodernism'. There has been continuing ambiguity in much of the social scientific debate as to whether 'postmodernism', as a term, should be understood as a reference to the form of analysis of social science itself (that is, an epistemological argument, about what is said to be the impossibility of any kind of 'foundational' analysis, analysis constructed on what are seen to be redundant 'modernist' foundations, like class, gender and race) or whether postmodernism is simply a description of the condition of the culture (as in the work of Fredric Jameson or Zygmunt Bauman) for systematic analysis according to clear principles (which do not themselves simply 'melt into air').[5] As several commentators have observed, the pursuit of forms of social and cultural analysis in which there are no agreed foundations may be akin to the pursuit of a personal life within which there are no a-priori limits, or no clear moral basis from which to proceed. So, in the sphere of sexuality, for example – an explosive consumer item in the contemporary international market place – the postmodern analyst may choose simply to record and/or 'deconstruct' the fast-moving new images and enticements. But, of course, as Ian Hacking (1997) observes in a recently published lecture, this kind of postmodernist social (de)constructionism leaves the analyst with no position on child sexual abuse or other forms of sexual cruelty or coercion.

The concern in this text is to explore one of the most obvious areas of discontent in post-Fordist societies – those established, 'developed' societies which have been so fundamentally transformed by the demise of mass manufacturing industry over the last quarter-century – the ever-intrusive fear and reality of crime. I want, on the one hand, to advance an analysis that makes sense of, or explains, many of the varieties of actually occurring behaviours (burglaries, car theft, the use of guns, the sale of drugs) which certainly are very firmly defined by their victims (as well as by an anxious media) as crime. But I want to locate my analysis against the background of the rapidly transformed social and economic relations of the emergent post-Fordist society. I *will* be concerned to understand these new social relations, in significant measure, as a product of the competitive individualism that has been widely identified (on a broad canvas – from the problem of 'road rage', so pressing an area of popular concern in the late 1990s in Britain – through to the widely feared emergence of 'in-your-face' incivility in many other public encounters – in the United States as well as in other market societies)

as an essential feature of 'market culture' itself. I will also want to register the way in which the advance of the logic of market competition insinuates new systems of social classification and evaluation into just about every workplace as well as into the biographies of just about every working citizen – namely, through the measurement of performance within particular markets, the classification of individuals as 'winners' and 'losers' – a process which, as Oliver James (1995) has shown in respect of the struggles of young people in Britain in the mid-1990s, is at the core of the defensive/aggressive individualism which many young people exhibit in a 'winner–loser culture'. Taken alongside Edward Luttwak's (1995) analyses of the constant turmoil and change that the liberalized markets (or 'turbo-charged capitalism', in Luttwak's own memorable phrase) impose on workplaces and workers alike, we begin to get closer to an understanding of the cultural conditions of violent crime and property crime alike. The theoretical argument I want to develop will take 'the post-Fordist market' as a vital and, indeed, hegemonic feature of modern-day experience, especially for young people confronting the challenge of transition into 'adulthood' and 'independence' – that is, as a *social fact* that is inescapable for young people. Given the fact of 'post-Fordism', indeed, those same young people constitute the first youthful generation of the entire post-Second World War period with a *declining* set of material expectations (in respect of employment and remuneration), by comparison with those of their own parents and the cohorts of young people who immediately preceded them in the crucial period of adolescence. It is in no sense my argument that this truth constitutes the rationale *per se* for the explosion in the rise of crime that is reported in societies like Britain, where an experiment in free market economics has been in full flow since 1979. The unfolding of the post-Fordist transformation in each of the hitherto Fordist societies has occurred alongside the development of a set of other 'crises' or fundamental transitions, moving at different speeds and with different priorities, along many other dimensions in these different social formations (for example, the relations of the sexes, and especially the gender-order in the home and in the workplace), and in respect of the broader cultural universe through which individuals in each society have interpreted the fundamental and deep transformation of the forms of organization (of those households, workplaces, and broader social relations) that occurred, in the 1980s and 1990s, in most Fordist societies.[6] I will begin the analysis, in chapters 1 and 2, with an extended summary account of nine discrete transitions in the forms of social life that were definitive under Fordist conditions in the earlier twentieth century – intending to show how these different transitions, though always interconnected in the personal experience of any one individual and the 'shared culture' of specific social groups, also have a definite autonomy, with their own logic of ongoing development and change.

I do *not* want to suggest that any one of these logics of development can be reduced, in a straightforward social scientific model, to 'the basic' facts of the economy itself: I do not think that 'unemployment' causes (*sic*) 'crime' in some mechanical and deterministic fashion. What I *do* want to argue, however, is that there has been an absolutely fundamental transformation in

the organization of economic life in most Western societies over the last quarter-century (very often summarized as the move from economies organized around production to economies organized around consumption) and that this transformation has had absolutely fundamental effects on the forms and the substance of social life. The effects of this transformation on 'crime' itself – including, here, the actually occurring behaviours that the victims of such behaviours certainly define as real crime (burglary, theft, assaults, use of guns, trading in drugs, and many other behaviours which also find their way into the sets of criminal statistics produced every year by local and national police forces) will be one of the main areas of concern of this text. But I should add that it is in no sense my concern to advance the argument that the regulated mixed economies of the Fordist period (which I will discuss, in chapter 1, as a particular historic form of 'market society') were free of 'crime': what matters is *the kinds of crime* with which they were associated – in reality as well as in the popular imagination – and the *real probabilities* of criminal victimization in such societies. So I also will be concerned in this text to examine the ways in which the culture of the new post-Fordist societies (including, indeed, the 'postmodern' cultural market place itself), articulated around the sovereignty of the individual as a consumer of private goods, plays into the spiralling sense of anxiety and of danger that is a feature of everyday life in most newly marketized post-Fordist societies. Once again, it will not be my concern to argue, like some contemporary social scientists of great renown, that the facts of 'risk' and uncertainty about the future shape and direction of social order are entirely new – it makes good sense to see here the return of many aspects of life in late medieval Europe (like the widespread demands, in effect, for the reintroduction of the nightwatchman) – but it will be my concern to try and capture the specificity of the configuration of risks and uncertainties that are so central a feature of the culture of the new post-Fordist market societies. As a graphic illustration of this argument, I include a specific and detailed discussion in chapter 6 of the phenomenon of firearms crime, and the heightened anxieties which are produced amongst citizens of market society with respect to the perceived increase in prevalence of this form of violent crime in different market societies. Not least of my concerns is to encourage a way of thinking the issue of some forms of contemporary crime themselves as 'market phenomena': as being complicit (as firearms crime in the United States clearly is) with the more or less unregulated marketing of particular products (cheap handguns and a ready supply of willing salespeople) in particular market societies at particular times, but also with the kind of competitive individualism which the culture of market societies encourages.

I see this text as a contribution to the continuing debate amongst social scientists as to the character of the transformation that has so fundamentally unsettled the Grand Compromise that was the Keynesian welfare-state mixed economies in the mid-twentieth century. But I also hope the eight connected essays here will constitute a kind of textbook for any student of criminology who wants some kind of resource through which to make sense of the 'crimes' that are so staple a feature of the everyday news of post-

Fordist societies, without wanting to reduce all such media reports simply to 'a moral panic' or alternatively falling back on those moralistic and clinical populist criminologies of our time, contemplating, on the one hand, the unexplained explosion of pathologies or the Devil himself. At the end of one century and the beginning of another, we might all hope for a better and more sophisticated explanation of the specific relationship between the explosive development of market society and the problem of social order itself.

1

Social Transitions of the Late Twentieth Century: 'Crime' and 'Fear' in Context

The idea of 'social crisis' is uncomfortable territory for the professional field of criminology. It is also a messy area for those journalists, politicians and other contemporary 'soothsayers' who, in modern Western society, are given the responsibility of interpreting the outbreak of individual or collective instances of crime. The usual preference of these commentators, in most Western societies in the 1990s, is for the 'blaming' of individuals. In British crime reportage, there is very often also a resort to some kind of cultural nostalgia.[1] Professional criminologists often spend any time they have in the public sphere of television, radio or newspapers trying to deny the reality of people's fears or, alternatively, reduced into the recital of vulgar forms of nineteenth-century statistical positivism. Taking seriously the idea of a *social* crisis would involve engaging in some kind of analysis of historical processes and logics – the kind of analysis which, as Roland Barthes explained, is beyond the imagination (and the practical mandate) of journalists employed in the unending everyday production – against fast-approaching deadlines – of readable and immediate, newsworthy material for the next edition. Far easier to draw on that body of individualistic, largely psychologistic, but sometimes theological 'mythologies' (Barthes 1973) that is now constituted as 'criminology' in the popular mind. In most Western societies at the end of the twentieth century, the mass of audiences for newspapers, television and cinema are bombarded by the day with an essentially theological, medieval criminology, with a gallery of insane or evil individuals, devils and witches, and a range of theories of individual possession, through which they are asked to make sense of a fast-breaking story about 'crime'.

The notion of crisis *has* probably been overdone in most post-war Western societies. The analysis of capitalist crisis developed by Marxists and other oppositional voices in the turbulent – but relatively affluent – 'full-employment' 1960s now looks strained indeed. But in the last years of the twentieth century, a number of important commentators, of different persuasions,

on the economic, cultural and social realities in North America, Europe or other late-capitalist societies are speaking in such terms. In his magisterial historical retrospect on 'the short twentieth century' Eric Hobsbawm identified three major logics of social transformation which, in these last decades, have begun to exhibit 'crisis tendencies'. I vary the order in which Hobsbawm identified these dimensions of change in order to highlight, first, what so many different authors refer to as the phenomenon of globalization:

> Between 1914 and the early 1990s, the globe has become far more of a single operational unit, as it was not, and could not have been, in 1914. In fact, for many purposes, notably in economic affairs, the globe is now the primary operational unit and older units such as the 'national economies', defined by the politics of territorial states, are reduced to complications of transnational activities. (Hobsbawm 1994: 15)

This particular engine of change, globalization, is accelerating so fast, Hobsbawm suggests, as to problematize the capacity of any existing set of 'public institutions' in any one nation – or, indeed, he adds, the 'collective behaviour' of human beings – 'to come to terms with it' (1994: 15).

Closely associated with this acceleration of economic transformation, according to Hobsbawm, is 'a disintegration of the old patterns of human social relations' and, in particular, 'the snapping of links between generations, that is to say, between past and present'. Hobsbawm sees this process of 'disintegration' of 'old patterns' as having a global, rather than merely Western, importance:

> [It] has been particularly evident in the most developed countries of the Western version of capitalism, in which the values of an absolute a-social individualism have been dominant, both in official and unofficial ideologies ... Nevertheless, the tendencies [are] to be found elsewhere, reinforced by the erosion of traditional societies and religions, as well as by the destruction, or autodestruction, of the societies of 'real socialism'. (1994: 15)

Finally, by comparison with the early years of the century, the world is no longer 'Eurocentric':

> Europeans and their descendants were now reduced from perhaps one third of humanity to at most one sixth, a diminishing minority living in countries which barely, if at all, reproduced their populations, surrounding themselves by, and in most cases – with some shining exceptions such as the USA (until the 1960s) – barricading themselves against the pressures of immigration from the countries of the poor. The industries Europe had pioneered were migrating elsewhere. The countries which had once looked across the ocean to Europe were looking elsewhere. Australia, New Zealand, even the bi-oceanic USA, saw the future in the Pacific. (1994: 14)

There are, in truth, many other formulations available with which we can try and account for the kind of fundamental social and economic transformation

currently occurring in Western 'late-capitalist societies' – not least, within sociology, the analysis offered by Scott Lash and John Urry of a transnational, 'disorganized', post-industrial capitalism, now committed to the non-stop, competitive search for new products for sale, and therefore new sources of profit and accumulation, within what they call the 'economies of signs and space', and endlessly competing across the globe for new markets and also for new ways of savings on human labour and investment (Lash and Urry 1987: 1994). In Britain, Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques follow the example of many scholars in political economy in wanting to identify the economic motor driving the transformation as the collapse of the 'Fordist' system of mass, factory-based, production resulting from the exhaustion of demand in the West for the kind of consumables these factories produced (Hall and Jacques 1990). Ash Amin (1994) has provided a useful summary account of these changes, especially in respect of their effects within the sphere of work, employment and productive activity, which is set out schematically in table 1.

This emergent post-Fordist market society is discussed in more detail in chapter 2; for the moment, the need is to situate the recurrent panics about crime that are so obvious a feature of contemporary experience in the context of this broader framework of fundamental social transition (rather than within some individualistic psychology or theology of individual amorality or depravation). The stances adopted by different social scientists and social commentators towards these changes vary – for example, as between, on the one hand, sympathetic enquiries by Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash into 'de-traditionalization' as a social and economic process which creates the conditions for 'reflexive' re-negotiation of personal identity (not least amongst enquiring social scientists in the academy themselves), and, on the other, the veritable dislocation of life of particular social groups (the homeless and the long-term unemployed) and communities (the 'sink estates', mining communities) offered by enquiring journalists (N. Davies 1994; Danziger 1997), as well as by people in the psychiatric and social work professions (James 1995). So there is significant variation in the analysis being attempted – as between Hobsbawm's generalizations about the 'disintegration' – simply – of 'old patterns', on the one hand, and Giddens's attentive hermeneutic interpretation of the different ways in which people are creatively making use of past understandings and immediate contingencies of everyday life in order to construct new personal languages and assumptions for practical, everyday purposes in the 'new times' of 'High Modernity'.

The purposes in this text on crime are not to adjudicate, abstractly, on the merits or limitations of these particular theoretical accounts. It surely is clear, however, to all but the most uncompromising moral conservative and behavioural psychologist, that the analysis of crime itself (the object of analysis of any serious 'criminological' project) must be located in relation to the fundamental transformation of social formation that is currently in progress (resulting from a deep crisis in the pre-existing configurations of social and economic organization). This text, in part informed by Eric Hobsbawm, tries to follow through the unfolding of a set of different crises – or fundamental

Table 1 Fordist and post-Fordist cultures of work

	Fordism	Post-Fordism
Social character of work	Masculinist domination, muscularity, male bonding	Increasingly feminine
Organized forms of work	'Production lines', workgroups, shifts	'Decentred' in shops, offices, small enterprises
Objectives of work	Production	Distribution and sale
Induction into work/ training/	Informal (exc. apprenticeship for craft positions)	Qualifications, accreditation
Regulation of the worker	Contractual and corporate through trade unions	Individual agreements, withdrawal of contractual guarantees
Working prospects, careers	Lifetime employment	Short-term 'full-time' contracts; part-time and temporary employments; return of 'sweatshops'
Domestic sphere	Sphere of social reproduction, dominated by matriarch	Families in work: increase in two-career households, 'family speed-up', and a range of ad-hoc arrangements for routine social reproduction (childcare, shopping etc.) Families out of work: imaginary re-invention of Fordist divisions of labour
'Leisure'	Male dominated: drinking, participant/ spectator sport/ Sunday family time	Increasingly individualist and consumerist, but also related to relief of stress and maintenance of physical and mental fitness and competivity in a competitive market

Source: developed from Amin 1994

transitions – occurring at the end of the twentieth century. However, where Hobsbawm speaks of three crises, I want to provide separate but focused discussion, of *nine* discrete and fundamental transitions – nearly all of which appear, but with uneven power and influence, in different Western capitalist societies at the end of 'the Fordist period'. My concern in recommending the separate treatment of these nine dimensions is not merely narrative convenience and clarity. In contrast to some of the generalizing cultural social commentaries of our time (for example, within the postmodernist canon), this device will enable us more clearly and carefully to *identify*, analytically, the discrete social strains which may be being experienced by any one individual. Against the apparently chaotic whole of contemporary change

glimpsed in postmodern theory (for example, 'chaos theory'), with its promise to extinguish sociology, I want to examine the analytic and social-political purchase of a sociological analysis of different logics of social change running in parallel, overdetermined by the economic crisis of Fordist society. These nine different 'transitions' will each have real effects – sometimes in a singular fashion but usually in combination with other elements – on the lived biography of individual actors. In contrast to the metaphysicians of 'free market' economics, I recognize and understand that people are born and are raised into adulthood *from particular positions (of advantage and disadvantage)* in an 'imperatively coordinated' social order: that is, to recognize that every human actor is socially, economically and culturally situated in historical time and place. In the Fordist period, only a proportion of any one new cohort of youthful social actors can escape the 'destinies' which these situated processes of social reproduction inscribe for them in adult life.[2] So this book follows the example of a host of writers and scholars – from James Agee, Daniel Bertaux, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, to the criminologist David Matza – in recognizing that we all only live once. Today's youthful generations will have to live their lives, not with the certainties of the Fordist period (including the near-certainties of High Modern Capitalism) but with the manifold uncertainties of life in societies which are in constant process of 'restructuring' and change. Thinking forward from the work of Ulrich Beck, in his analysis of the emergence of a set of different 'risk-positions' in risk society, I suggest that the emergence of a post-Fordist world, or a set of different 'market societies', carries with it the production of a new set of 'market-positions' within market societies themselves, with profound effects on the life-chances and possibilities of individuals located in these specific positions. It is becoming more and more clear by the year, especially to the young, that the prospects for paid employment for life (and, with it, the security, status and means to self-advancement taken for granted in earlier periods) are in steep decline. The 1990s generation is one of the first generations in the post-war period to confront the prospect of a reduction in overall material prospects in the employment market, by comparison with preceding generations. For a large proportion of these youthful cohorts, therefore, the experience of 'post-Fordist society' will involve new and different forms of inequality and subordination, on a temporary or long-term basis – in the casual labour markets of fast-changing economies or in the underclasses, the 'new poor', being left behind by the motor of change. The factors which will inform young people's recruitment into these new positions of opportunity within market society will be far more complex and variable than the social processes which 'determined' the reproduction of the labour force or the 'bourgeois class' in the era of mass manufacturing capitalism. The relationship between the legitimate labour markets and the illegitimate, alternative economies (including, in particular, the 'economies of crime') seems likely to be far more contingent and uncertain than in earlier periods – for example, as discussed in chapter 4, in the developing night-time economies of post-industrial cities. In developing discussion of the nine transitions of the late twentieth century, it must be remembered, all the while, after the

example of Daniel Bertaux (1981), that these transitions are not only abstractions helping analysis, but also a part of the turmoil of any individual's biographical experience in a particular moment of historical change (a particular 'time'). Eight of these transitions are dealt with in this first chapter, leaving focused discussion of the definitive transition to a post-Fordist market society for separate discussion in chapter 2.

The Job Crisis

In the course of the last fifteen years, during what Piore and Sabel refer to as 'the crisis of mass manufacturing', and Hall and Jacques call 'the crisis of Fordism', there has been a massive haemorrhaging of full-time employment in most Western societies, particularly in heavy or manufacturing industries. At the beginning of 1997, some 12 per cent of all people officially registering for work across the European Community (20 million people) were unable to find any employment – an increase of 2 million people on 1995 (*The Economist*, 14–20 June 1997: 50). This ongoing process of 'job loss' had gathered pace throughout the early 1990s – in 1981 EEC unemployment totalled just 9.1 million (Massey and Meegan, 1982: 3) – in a process described by a leading Gaullist politician in France, Philippe Séguin, as 'a social Munich', a million and half Europeans having just lost their job in the twelve months before November 1993.[3] In the mid-1990s the crisis appeared still more severe in statistical and political terms in Spain than in most other large European societies: unemployment in Spain was still being measured officially in February 1997 at 21.7 per cent, by comparison with official rates of 7.1 per cent in Britain and 6 per cent in the Netherlands.[4] But European anxieties focused, in particular, on France, where unemployment, on official measures, continued to creep upwards (reaching 12.5 per cent in 1997).[5] The presidential election campaign of 1995 had been fought between Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin around competing programmes for job-creation, and in 1997 Lionel Jospin's persistence was repaid with an election victory. In Germany, the survival of Helmut Kohl in the Presidency was clearly threatened by unemployment rates reaching 9.5 per cent in 1997, up 3.1 per cent from 1992.

The telling contrast was with the 1960s: the average unemployment rate in France, on the official measures then adopted, was less than 1.8 per cent throughout that decade. In Germany over the same period, unemployment averaged about 0.6 per cent; in Britain some 2.7 per cent (adjusted to US concepts) and in Italy 3.2 per cent (Sinfield 1981: 15). The changes in the official definitions used to measure unemployment since the 1960s make direct comparison precarious – and it *is* also important, as official spokespeople often insist, to recognize the increase in the absolute number of people in paid employment in the 1970s and 1980s. For these and other reasons, any direct and one-dimensional comparison between the 'mass unemployment' of the 1990s and that of the inter-war Depression is also potentially misleading. At the peak of this great 'Slump', in 1935, some 11.4

per cent of 'the civilian workforce' (i.e. of those, largely male, citizens registering for work) in the United Kingdom was unemployed, and some 17.5 per cent in the United States (Jordan 1982: 2). The highest levels of unemployment, as officially measured, in the year after the oil shocks of 1982 were 14.3 per cent in the United Kingdom and 9.5 per cent in the United States (Kemp 1990: 155). From another perspective, however, the comparison with the 1930s *is* illuminating. The total number of officially unemployed people in the United Kingdom in July 1936 was measured at 1,717,000 (Stevenson and Cook 1977: 56). About one-tenth of these had been unemployed for more than a year, and of these over two-thirds were aged between forty-five and sixty-five (1977: 60). In April 1997 the official unemployment total for the United Kingdom was 'only' 8 per cent of the workforce, but this amounted to an absolute number of 1,748,000 (on official measures[6]). Within this overall total, 887,400 men and 183,000 women had been unsuccessful in their search for employment for more than a year.[7] More than 60 per cent of those looking for work were under forty years of age. The unemployment of the 1980s and 1990s, in other words, in absolute terms involved significantly more people actively looking for work than the unemployment of the 1930s, and involved long periods of unemployment. It also was having significantly more impact on younger people, including many who had never worked.

In the early 1990s, in the meantime, across much of Western Europe and North America, there was increasing recognition that such new employment opportunities as were being created (whether by newly enterprising individuals or multinational companies) were largely part-time or short-term contract-based types of employment, and therefore essentially insecure forms of employment. In the early 1990s some commentators, especially those based in the United States – paying close attention to the logic of the much-vaunted 'economic recovery' in that society – had begun to speak of an economic recovery *without* serious new job-creation – a new phenomenon of 'jobless growth' – made possible by the labour-saving capacities of the new (computer and other) technologies ceaselessly being developed and improved in the new, competitive circumstances (Currie 1990, 1993a; Aronowitz and DiFazio 1994).[8] More classically Keynesian-minded social commentators, like Britain's Will Hutton and America's J. K. Galbraith, were anxious that these new forms of employment were so poorly paid that they undermined the possibility of a new surge of demand-led recovery within Western economies, and so guaranteed, once again, the famous 'crisis of over-production' that gave rise to the last Great Depression (Hutton 1995; Galbraith 1992). This was 'a recession' of a very new kind, in which the long-awaited 'recovery' constructed few long-awaited jobs, and in which the evidence of significant increases in personal poverty, homelessness and destitution was increasingly visible on the streets – a 'return of the repressed truth' about capitalism for an older generation which had believed that it had advanced to a higher stage (of post-unemployment, post-scarcity capitalism), but a taken-for-granted reality for young people who had had no personal experience of the 'high point' of post-war Fordism. In France, by the mid-1990s (and in many other 'advanced' European societies), many young

people had begun to identify themselves, politically and culturally, as young people in Britain (the 'Punks') had done in the mid-1980s, as a generation with 'No Future'.

The Crisis of Material Poverty and Social Inequality

Closely linked to the increase in registered and unregistered unemployment that has occurred in many (though not all) Western societies, especially since the late 1970s, has been an unmistakable increase in poverty, whether measured in absolute or relative terms, and inequality. The two-volume report released by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Inquiry into Income and Wealth, released in 1995, outlined a steady shift in the distribution of wealth away from the poorest sections of the population towards the better-off in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Sweden, the United States, Japan and West Germany, with a sharp 1 per cent shift per year in New Zealand, and 0.75 per cent in the UK. In the UK the bottom 10 per cent of the population, born after 1960, were actually earning wages that were in real terms significantly below those earned by their predecessors. Real incomes for the poorest 10 per cent of the population in the United Kingdom fell by some 17 per cent between 1979 and 1991–2.[9] A further 25 per cent, if in work, were struggling to earn anything more than their parents. It was only the middle and upper fractions of the working population who were earning more in absolute terms than earlier generations (Rowntree 1995). Looked at in relative terms, in terms of the distribution of wealth and income, the picture looks even more dramatic, especially in the United Kingdom, where there has been a faster increase in income inequality than in any comparable industrial country. In the period since 1977, the proportion of the population with less than half the national income has trebled.[10] The Commission on Social Justice, in its major report released in 1994, confirmed, firstly, that 'the bottom half of the population, who received a third of our national income in 1979, now receive only a quarter' (Commission on Social Justice, 1994: 29) and also that 'the gap between the earnings of the highest-paid and those of the lowest-paid workers is greater than at any time since records were first kept in 1886' (1994: 28).

Three features of this re-emergence of absolute and relative poverty need further emphasis here. First, as further statistical survey work has revealed, this 'new poverty' has been having a major impact on the lives of the very young and the youthful during the 1980s and 1990s – to an extent not experienced by the young in the earlier post-war period. In the United Kingdom, in particular, in 1991–2 some 32 per cent of all children under the age of eighteen (4.1 million young people) were living in households whose incomes placed them below the official poverty line, compared to only 10 per cent of under-eighteens in 1979.[11] At no time in the earlier post-war period was there any such statistically identifiable discrete population of the youthful poor: the visible evidence on the streets of Britain is no deceit.

Secondly, what little research has been conducted into this new poverty

confirms a close link with the return of a cluster of other serious individual and social problems – thought previously to have been consigned to the past, notably the inter-war Depression. The most visible expression of these old problems, beginning in the 1980s, was the return of homelessness and public begging. These developments were not confined to Britain, being also very high in France and Germany – but, despite a number of emergency campaigns to deal with the problem of homelessness in Britain, over a third of a million households were still registered as homeless in 1992 (Commission on Social Justice 1994: 48). Very closely linked to the increase in poverty was a significant increase in different measures of poor health and early mortality. Richard Wilkinson's research, quoted in the Commission on Social Justice report, suggests a strong correlation between increases in mortality and increases in the levels of inequality across different European societies (Wilkinson 1994). Overall, in Britain, the picture with regard to the health of the poor is unambiguous:

> In some poorest parts of Britain, death rates are now as high as they were forty years ago ... The damage done by unemployment is [particularly] clear. Not only are unemployed people much more likely to suffer a chronic illness or disability, but a middle-aged man made redundant or taking early retirement is twice as likely to die within five years as a man who stays in work ... According to studies in Edinburgh and Oxford, unemployed men are between ten and fifteen times more likely to attempt suicide. Most horrifying is the fact that the suicide rate amongst young men doubled between 1983 and 1990. (Commission on Social Justice 1994: 45)

The evidence on health in Britain – deep in the thrall of a prolonged experiment in the application of a particularly pure version of free market theory – is particularly striking: the United Kingdom slipped from tenth to seventeenth position in the 'life-expectancy' league of OECD countries in the period between 1983 and 1990. So also, some commentators have argued, there is a compelling case for understanding the extraordinary increases in recorded crime in Britain, which were in the 1980s and early 1990s without parallel in any developed country, as being a dramatic and more or less direct expression of the return of poverty and the intensification of absolute and relative inequalities. Will Hutton puts the case in a characteristically succinct fashion:

> Britain in the 1980s had the most rapid crime growth in Europe and it was also a country where the top 20 per cent had six times the disposable incomes of the bottom 20 per cent, at the beginning of the decade. They ended it with nine times more. More telling still is that the growth of inequality is associated with the growth of crime. Britain topped the crime growth table of the European Big Four, with Italy second, France third and Germany fourth; and between 1980 and 1985 the rankings in income inequality growth were exactly the same ... The more inequality grows, the more crime grows.[12]

But the third feature of this return of poverty is perhaps the most important of all in sociological and cultural terms – namely, its *being unexpected*, a shock to generations of adults and young people attuned, in school and in popular