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How Rural Criminology Informs Critical Thinking in Criminology

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Abstract

Over the past quarter century, a growing volume of rural-focused criminological work has emerged. In this article, the literature related to three rural criminological issues are examined and discussed in terms of their lessons for critical criminology. Research on rural communities and crime is examined as a way to criticize and challenge mainstream criminological theories and concepts like social disorganisation and collective efficacy, and to remind critical criminologists of the importance for developing critical perspectives for place-based or ecological theories of crime. Agricultural crime studies are discussed in terms of the need to develop a critical criminology of agriculture and food. Finally, criminological studies of rural 'others' is used to show the need for critical criminologists to give greater analytic attention to divisions and marginalities of peoples living in smaller and more isolated places based on gender, race, and lifestyles, among other factors.

Keywords

Rural criminology, agricultural crime.

Introduction

Over the past quarter century, criminology has witnessed a substantial growth of scholarly discourse about crime and deviance in rural places and among rural peoples. Most of this rural scholarship was developed by criminologists in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the US. All but Great Britain are settler societies with geographically vast rural expanses and histories when early settlement by Europeans was associated with frontier-styled crime and violence among the settlers themselves, and between them and the Indigenous populations they decimated and displaced (Ford 2010; Hoefle 2004). Yet, in all four societies, rurality has played

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and continues to play a key role in defining national mythologies, one of which, ironically, is that crime and disorder are mostly by-products of urbanisation, and not endemic to rural places, cultures, or peoples. Today, in the national consciousness of most advanced capitalist societies, rural is associated with concepts that stereotypically speak of social order, safety and little crime (Halfacree 1993; Hogg and Carrington 2006; Philo 1997; Weisheit, Falcone and Wells 2006).

Criminology has long held a distinctly urban bias. The same can be said about critical criminology (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2014). Despite the recent development of a more critical approach to the examination of rural criminological issues (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2014; Hogg and Carrington 2006), 'rural' remains uncommon parlance in the scholarly considerations of most critical criminologists. This is now changing, albeit slowly, in part due to the rise of green criminology and the recognition that environmental crime and justice issues are frequently rural-located and adversely affect a significant share of rural areas and rural people (Ruggiero and South 2013; South and Brisman 2013; White 2009). As well, scholarship which links rural criminological issues to larger cultural, economic and social change and their impact on rural communities has helped dispel notions that rural localities are crime free (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009; Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2008; Hogg and Carrington 2006; Barclay, Donnermeyer, Scott and Hogg 2007).

In turn, both trends have enlivened what has largely been an atheoretical approach among criminologists who examine rural crime issues (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2008). Even though there is much more progress to be made, perhaps it is time to consider the proverbial 'flip side' of the coin, which is how rural criminology can help advance critical criminology. Hence, the primary purpose of this article is to examine three areas of rural criminology in which a substantial body of empirical work has developed, and discuss how each can inform a critical criminology in particular, and the larger field of criminology in general.

We temper our purpose with two caveats, however. First, we recognise that all roads to scholarship are two way. However, the intent of this article is to remain on one side of the road: namely, how rural criminology can inform critical criminology (for a view travelling in the opposite direction, that is, how critical criminology informs rural criminology, see Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy's (2014) application of a left realist perspective and the square of crime to various rural criminology topics). Second, there is really nothing new or original in what we suggest each area can teach critical criminology. However, we do believe studies of crime in the rural context provide vivid and useful reminders for criminological scholars with a critical bent to their work about the value of what they do and why various critical perspectives are so important to sustaining a criminological imagination of the rural (Carrington and Hogg 2002; Young, 2011; Wonder 2009).

The three substantive areas we selected for this article are: (1) rural communities and crime; (2) agricultural crime; and (3) rural 'otherness'. We chose these three areas for two principal reasons. First, we are familiar with the extant rural scholarship in each. Second, and more importantly, we believe each serves a distinctive function central to the work of critical criminologists (Michalowki 2012; Winlow and Atkinson 2013; Young 2011). These are: *criticism*, that is, to point out shortcomings and fallacies in mainstream criminological concepts and theories; *problem-solving*, that is, to provide answers and insights to important questions about crime and society; and *problem analysis*, which is to construct interpretive frameworks for issues about crime and deviance. We will mostly use the discussion of rural community and crime to *criticize* mainstream criminology, apply the literature on agricultural crime for *problem-solving*, and illustrate *problem analysis* by discussing rural 'otherness'.

We begin this paper with four assertions about the relationship of rural criminology to critical criminology and to criminology in general. **First,** as already mentioned, rural criminology is

neither a neglected nor underdeveloped area of interest among criminology scholars today. Just since the turn of the century, a number of monographs, readers, journal articles, conferences, and even the founding of a rural-dedicated journal have helped provide an identity to a criminological specialisation that only a short time before was virtually neglected.[1] **Second,** despite its recent emergence, however, rural criminology is still not a 'major player' in the general field of criminology. Without a doubt, participants in various criminological conferences, such as the annual meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology, are aware of colleagues who are doing rural work, but rural criminology's impact remains minor. **Third,** rural criminology is theoretically under-developed. Most previous work lacks a clear conceptual focus of any kind, even though there are a few scholars who have consciously utilized mainstream theories, such as social disorganisation and routine activities. **Fourth,** there has been only limited cross-fertilisation of ideas, concepts and knowledge between critical criminology and rural criminology. Hence, by attempting to identify how rural criminology informs critical criminology, we hope in turn to sharpen the critical focus of rural criminology itself.

1. Criticising: The rural community and crime[2]

There is a double irony associated with studies of the rural community and crime. First, much of the research examining variations in crime by the social, cultural and economic characteristics of rural communities frequently cites work from the Chicago School of Sociology, in particular, social disorganisation theory. This is one area of rural criminology where theory has guided the research to a considerable degree, albeit a functionalist, non-critical theory which arose out of attempts in the first decades of the twentieth century to understand crime in a large city which was rapidly growing at the time due to immigration from various European countries. The second irony is that the empirical literature about the rural community and crime has great potential to critique – if not outright discard – the logic behind social disorganisation theory and its latter-day expressions, especially the concept of collective efficacy (Sampson 2012).

Social disorganisation starts with the fundamental assumption that places with high levels or expressions of cohesion and solidarity have lower rates of crime, while places which display less order and more disorganisation tend to have higher rates of crime (Kubrin 2009; Sampson 2012). The theory is an attempt to show that place affects crime beyond the demographic composition of its residents. As Kubrin (2009: 227) sums it up: 'What social disorganization theory has to offer then is a specification of the effects of neighbourhood characteristics on the capacity and ability of community residents to implement and maintain public norms'. But, as both Merton (1949) and Gans (1972) asked many decades ago, for whom are the public norms to which Kubrin (2009) refers dysfunctional, and for whom are they functional? For example, in his 1972 *American Journal of Sociology* article on the 'Functions of Poverty', Gans wrote (1972: 276):

> In discussing the functions of poverty, I shall identify functions for groups and aggregates; specifically, interest groups, socioeconomic classes, and other population aggregates, for example, those with shared values or similar statuses. This definitional approach is based on the assumption that almost every social system-and of course every society-is composed of groups or aggregates with different interests and values, so that, as Merton put it (1949, p. 51) 'items may be functional for some individuals and subgroups and dysfunctional for others.' Indeed, frequently one group's functions are another group's dysfunctions.

Despite the theory's emphasis on internal properties of place like cohesion and order, much of the research, both rural and urban, deals only with antecedent factors which stand in as 'proxies', such as the proportion of residents who have moved in and/or moved out recently, the race/ethnic heterogeneity of the population, and economic measures such as employment rates

and poverty levels (Bursik 1988). Hence, it is assumed that a higher than average amount or rate of population mobility creates disorder or disorganisation. The same can be said about race/ethnic heterogeneity, employment rates, poverty, and so on. The antecedent variables are quite popular because in part they are derived from census information and other easily accessed secondary data sources, and are readily amenable to statistical manipulation. Likewise, only a small part of the empirical literature based on social disorganisation theory uses anything other than official statistics for the dependent variable, such as crimes reported to the police or arrest rates, because of easier accessibility and isomorphism to mathematical/statistical manipulation (Kaylen and Pridemore 2011; Warner and Pierce 1993).

Recent attempts adhere more closely to the original idea behind the theory, which is to measure informal social control as a condition of localised social structure. Sometimes this is referred to as the 'systemic' version of social disorganisation theory. Hence, the work of Bursik (1988, 1999), Sampson (2012) and others have morphed social disorganisation into a series of concepts, the most popular of which is 'collective efficacy', but include other well-known variants, such as civility or civic community/society, density of acquaintanceship and social capital. Admittedly, each has its own distinctive meaning but together they form a tightly-knit cluster of concepts with similar connotations.

Among the first explicit adoption of social disorganisation theory to the study of communities and rural crime was an article published in *Rural Sociology* in 1993 on how off-shore oil development impacts rural parishes (equivalent to a county) in Louisiana, a state in the southern region of the United States (US) (Seydlitz, Laska, Spain, Triche and Bishop 1993). The authors describe social disorganisation theory in a way similar to Kubrin's (2009) summative statement:

> The theory proposes that massive immigration, which accompanies rapid industrialization, increases population density, which elevates suspicion, anonymity and competition for resources; reduces concern for neighbours and surveillance; contributes to poorer social relationships and poorer child care; increases the independence of individuals; and impedes informal social control. (Seydlitz et al. 1993: 97)

The authors also utilised what they called 'relative deprivation' theory, which they defined as considering the localised effects of economic inequality in order to supplement social disorganisation theory, in part because they were not completely confident that the theory was appropriate for the 'boomtown' phenomena. The authors concluded that suicide and homicide rates go up during periods of increased off-shore drilling in parishes more highly dependent on the oil industry, but that the rate of suicide and homicide is no different between parishes more oil dependent and those which are less dependent on oil. In other words, while their results were not inconsistent with social disorganisation theory, it was not particularly helpful either. For example, they note other research which found that energy workers coming into a rural community from the outside were not socially isolated, and found no connection between their arrival and a rise in crime.

The Seydlitz et al. (1993) article was the beginning of a steady parade of published studies of rural communities and crime utilizing social disorganisation theory or a closely related variant (Barnett and Mencken 2002; Bouffard and Muftić 2006; Cancino 2005; Ceccato and Dolmen 2011; Deller and Deller 2010; Donnermeyer, Jobes and Barclay 2009; Jobes 1999; Jobes Barclay, Weinand and Donnermeyer 2004; Jobes, Donnermeyer and Barclay 2005; Kaylen 2010; Kaylen and Pridemore 2011, 2012, 2013; Lee 2006, 2008; Lee and Bartkowski 2004A, 2004b; Lee, Maume and Ousey 2003; Lee and Ousey 2001; Lee and Thomas 2010; Li 2012; Mencken and Barnett 1999; Osgood and Chambers 2000; Ousey and Lee 2010; Resig and Cancino 2004; Spano and Nagy 2005; Tunnell 2006; Wells and Weisheit 2004, 2012). To a great extent, this

body of work was uniform because almost all focused on the traditionally cited and easily quantifiable antecedents of social disorganisation, or tested mediating influences of a rural locality's social and cultural context on crime as the latter is measured by official police statistics (crimes known to the police and/or arrest and conviction data).

Of significance is that Mencken and Barnett (1999) and Kaylen and Pridemore (2011) discovered no 'spatial autocorrelation' effects in an analysis of crime in rural counties of the US, using various measures derived from social disorganisation theory. In more pedestrian nomenclature, what they found was that their unit of analysis, a political subdivision in the US known as a county (of which there are more than 3,000), was viable for measuring place-based social and economic indicators that might be associated with crime. If they had found otherwise, most of the rural community and crime research might have to be thrown out because so much of it relies on county or county equivalent level measures (as indicators of neighbourhood-like characteristics) to spin both their equations and their interpretations of the statistical results.

In another study, Osgood and Chamber (2000) sought to explain variations in rural youth violence employing the tenets of social disorganisation theory. They noted a distinctive feature of nonmetropolitan counties from metropolitan counties, namely, that poverty and population mobility were negatively correlated, whereas the direction of the relationship was positive in the urban setting. Hence, these two commonly accepted features of social disorganisation theory, which were supposed to measure disorder, did not go hand-in-hand in the rural context, which was why Osgood and Chambers (2000) did not find an association between poverty and arrests rates for violent crimes by rural youth. Other rural-focused research has found this same distinctive pattern (Bouffard and Muftić 2006; Jobes et al. 2004; Kaylen and Pridemore 2013), indicating a limitation to the generalisability of social disorganisation theory.

Wells and Weisheit (2012) completed a comparative statistical analysis of violent and property crime rates for nearly 3,000 counties in the United States, using sets of independent variables traditionally adopted for testing social disorganisation theory (as measured by population instability, racial heterogeneity, poverty and family instability), plus civic community theory (as measured by owner-occupied housing, church membership, voting rates). The social disorganisation variables were better predictors than the civic community factors across all four types of US counties in their analysis, which included metropolitan counties (counties with a city of $\geq$50,000) and three kinds of non-metropolitan counties based on the size of their largest city or town, but none with a place larger than 50,000 persons. However, the amount of variance explained declined by the population size of the counties for blocks of variables associated with both theories.

Simply put, the results from Wells and Weisheit (2012) and most of the other research cited above indicates that the theory is less than generalisable beyond the concentric circles of cities and suburbs (Jobes et al. 2004). This is significant because although it is commonly assumed that a large urban locality exhibits greater diversity in its demographic characteristics, it can be argued with equal force that there is greater diversity between rural places than between urban neighbourhoods. Since social disorganisation theory is a theory based on place, its inability to work well in the rural context brings considerable question marks to its operating assumptions.

One of the most comprehensive examinations and thorough critiques of social disorganisation theory comes from the recent rural work of Kaylen and Pridemore (2011, 2012, 2013). Their analysis is a point-by-point response to the earlier published article by Osgood and Chambers (2000), because its appearance in *Criminology* (which Osgood subsequently edited) makes it the most frequently cited article on the relationship of rural community characteristics and crime. They tried using alternative dependent variables (such as hospital admissions for assault) and switched over their analysis from US sources of data to the British Crime Survey (mimicking previous research by Sampson and Groves (1989)) to measure a full model of social

disorganisation, rather than only the antecedents. Their remarkable and rigorous scholarship addresses both conceptual and methodological shortfalls of the theory. What was their conclusion? To quote: 'The most consistent finding, thus far, is a lack of support for the generalisability of the theory, as it has been tested, to rural communities' (Kaylen and Pridemore 2012: 148).

Since almost all of the scholarship cited above uses official police data, hence defining and operationalising crime as the dependent variable in a similar way, the corpus of rural work did indeed find a different pattern in the relationship of poverty and other community characteristics with crime. One possible explanation is that many rural communities (such as in the US) may have fewer police resources and the police employed there may be less willing to recognise certain forms of violence as criminal (Weisheit, Falcone and Wells 2006). Hence, crime goes unreported.

Perhaps, however, there is a more fundamental criticism of mainstream criminology's assumption that places with low crime must always manifest high levels of social organisation or collective efficacy, while localities with high crime must inevitably display the opposite. Maybe the real issue is the logic behind the relationship of the independent variables to the dependent variables. It is quite possible that many rural communities have a social or moral order which keeps some crimes such as violence, both intimate partner violence (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009) and other forms of violence as well, in the 'dark' (Barclay, Donnermeyer and Jobes 2004: 20; Carrington, Hogg and McIntosh 2011; Carrington, McIntosh, Hogg and Scott 2013). Hence, reporting violence is suppressed, which is functional for offenders but not so functional for the victims (Gans 1972). If not suppressed, or in combination with suppression, perhaps particular kinds of rural communities (and by extension, urban localities) simply have a high tolerance for specific expressions of violence. Either way, it is social organisation and collective efficacy which is creating variations in official rates of crime, something that is not accounted for either by the mainstream variants of the theory, or by the empirical work thus far accumulated.

Rural community, crime and critical criminology

A couple of dozen quantitative studies of crime rate variations in rural communities using social disorganisation theory or a closely related variant all seem to point toward its limited utility, if not outright uselessness, as currently configured. It is unlikely that the variance in official crime rates explained by models derived from these criminological theories and concepts will increase much, even though the number of peer-reviewed journal articles and dissertations adopting these frameworks will continue to grow. How do these results inform critical criminology and, in turn, how would a critical rural criminology inform general criminology, aside from the obvious fallacies associated with using official police data and the tendency for many mainstream criminologists to engage in forms of abstracted empiricism by adopting a theory merely because its concepts are readily convertible to numbers and statistical equations (Young 2011)?

The first lesson is this: social disorganisation theory and like-minded theories/concepts view place both holistically/one dimensionally and through a simplistic lens of linearities, with indicators of disorder or disorganisation on one end of a narrow-minded continuum, and organisation or cohesion on the other end, and a presumption that there is a positive relationship with crime. A critical criminological approach would assume neither a holism to the cultural, economic, and social contexts of places nor a consistent relationship between social disorganisation and crime. *It would recognise that actors may occupy a diversity of statuses – as victims, as offenders, and as law-abiding citizens – at the same time and within the same place.* There is not a simple dichotomy representing a homogeneous aggregation of law-abiding citizens and a homogenous aggregation of law violators which can be measured through census

data and official crime statistics. Hence, there is a diversity or multiplicity of collective efficacies at the same place and in which each resident may chose to participate, if aware of them and willing to get involved. While some forms of collective efficacy constrain more than enable specific types of crime, other expressions of collective efficacy enable more than constrain.

Second, the body of scholarship associated with rural crime and community reminds us that a critical approach should not conflate control and cohesion. While control means to limit the actions of individuals through sanctions, cohesion refers to agreements about cultural meanings and the reciprocities embedded in human relationships. Hence, some forms of cohesion may control local residents such that they do not report crime, as Barclay (2003) discovered in her work on agricultural crime in New South Wales (see next section of this paper), which in turn allows it to happen even more. As well, hegemonic patriarchy perpetuates a localised context in which violence against women can occur repeatedly, even though it may constrain other crimes, such as burglary or a robbery (DeKeseredy, Donnermeyer and Schwartz 2009).

Third, critical criminology can highlight relations of power in rural contexts and how such power relations inform the definition of crime and reactions to crime in a rural context. Aside from Hogg and Carrington's (2006) work on the 'architecture of rural life', there has been little exploration of how ideology and myth operate to produce a specific criminogenic order at rural places. Reaction to crime in both rural and urban places is always about more than just law breaking (Lee 2007). It has symbolic dimensions as expressed through a collective consciousness; hence, the collective efficacy of a place should be viewed as simultaneously reducing the likelihood of some forms of crime even as it creates conditions under which others forms of crime can occur through selective citizen vigilance, uneven enforcement of criminal laws, and variable prosecution of criminal cases. By working from images of places, which are, to quote Liepins (2000a: 30), 'temporally and locationally specific terrains of power and discourse', we recognise that the simultaneity of social organisation to constrain and enable varieties of crime in the same localities and among the same actors can be conceptualised as an embedded expression of localised forms of economic, political, and other social structural inequalities and segmentation/divisions in a population. Far from being disordered and disorganized, crime is ordered and organized through place-based expressions of collective efficacy that reinforce and are consistent with these inequalities and segmentation.

The bottom line on what rural criminology can teach critical criminology is this: any ecological or place-based perspective will almost always be part of criminology, but to endow it with a more critical ecological view, it must recognise the diversity of cultures and networks within the same places; in other words – as Merton and Gans asked long ago – functional for whom/dysfunctional for whom?

2. Problem solving: Agricultural crime

Even though agriculture in many parts of the world continues to rely mostly on human and animal power to produce food, it is also true that agriculture has transformed into a high-tech, capital-intensive, multi-billion dollar industry. Either way, agriculture for the most part has defied a common feature of capitalism because the vast majority of operations, even the largest and most mechanised, are still family (not stockholder) owned (Lobao and Meyer 2001). As well, agriculture itself remains part of the rural idyll (Philo 1997), especially in the collective psychic of advanced capitalist countries, evoking pastoral images of peaceful living and tight-knit communities. Despite the family-basis of farming and the nostalgic views which with it is endowed, agriculture today is as 'business' in its orientation as can be found among businesses within any other economic sector.

Based on a number of victimisation studies conducted in Australia, England, Scotland, and the US over the past 30 years, Donnermeyer, Barclay and Mears (2011) concluded that farm crime

is both extensive and expensive. Theft of machinery, equipment, supplies, livestock and other inputs necessary to run a farm business is experienced by over 25 per cent of farms each year. Furthermore, break and enter offences are committed at about 8 per cent of farms on an annual basis. Barclay and Donnermeyer (2011) note that this exceeds the rate of burglary for urban neighbourhoods in countries like the US, as estimated by national level victimisation surveys. In addition to theft and burglary, illegal trespassing offences, often by hunters – which, by themselves, are costly – are also frequently committed on farms. As well, because of their size and the difficulty of detection by owners (and some even operated by owners), farms and ranches may be the location for clandestine drug production, especially marijuana and methamphetamines (Barclay and Donnermeyer 2011; Donnermeyer and Tunnell 2007; Garriott 2011; Weisheit and Fuller 2004).

From a critical perspective, these rates of victimisation should be viewed as normal, not exceptional, and the changing ecology of farm crime associated with its industrialisation is vital for making this link (DeKeseredy and Donnermeyer 2013). For example, the location of a break and enter into a farm building, usually for the purposes of stealing valuable equipment and supplies, is directly related to the location of a storage structure, such as a barn or shed, to the farm homestead. When the building is more distant and/or not easily observed by members of a farm family from the place where they live, it is much more likely to be the site of a burglary (Donnermeyer, Barclay and Mears 2011; Hedayati 2008). Agricultural operations located near public roads are more accessible and more likely to experience various forms of theft, illegal dumping, vandalism, and trespassing (Barclay and Donnermeyer 2011). Plus, many agricultural areas are subject to forms of urbanisation brought about by the consumption of rural landscapes by tourists and recreationalists (Krannich and Petrzelka 2003; Lichter and Brown 2011), suburban and industrial developments, and a host of other economic and cultural factors that increasingly tie together the rural and urban sectors of many societies (Brown and Schafft 2011). Farms and ranches no longer are, and really never have been, isolated and autonomous – physically, culturally, socially and economically – and they certainly are not today as capitalism and modernity penetrate into every nock and cranny of the world. Hence, from a critical criminology point of view, farms and ranches are not merely simple producers of food commodities. They are industrialists who produce food through capital intensive production methods, embedded within globalised marketing systems.

Agricultural crime, when seen as a product of a food producer's location in the complex webs of economic, political and social class relations of a society, can blur the distinction between victim and offender. For example, a combined quantitative-qualitative study in Australia discovered a pattern which indicated a surprising degree of neighbour-to-neighbour victimisation among farmers that was enabled precisely by the type of *gemeinschaft* relations that many mainstream criminologists presume to be expressions of collective efficacy and that supposedly describe neighbourhoods with relatively little crime (Barclay 2003; Donnermeyer 2007; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997). Farmers as victims considered the impact of reporting a crime, especially stock theft, allegedly committed by a farmer-neighbour in small agricultural communities where norms may create forms of ostracisation against those who 'dob in' or snitch to the police. In turn, the police practiced considerable discretion about responding to reports of stock theft based on the relative social standings of both the victim and the suspected offender within the community (Barclay, Donnermeyer and Jobes 2004). These place-based dynamics are not unlike those documented by DeKeseredy and associates in their examination of intimate partner violence, even though the two types of crimes are completely different (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, Fagen and Hall 2006; DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009). As well, Carrington et al. (2013) link traditional definitions of masculinities in farming communities with changing market conditions to highlight an increased potential for violence against women on agricultural operations in Australia.

Not only are agriculturalists the victims, they are also the offenders. Some are illustrative of the phrase 'crimes of the powerful'. See, for example, Basran, Gill and MacLean's (1995) research conducted on violence against Punjabi farm workers and their children in British Columbia, Canada. As well, studies in other countries note the exploitative characteristics of farm owner/farm worker relations, especially with migrant labour (Bunei, Rono and Chessa 2013; Rothenberg 1998; Rye and Andrejewska 2010).

The phrase 'food regimes' was created by sociologists who study agriculture to describe the place of food producers within internationalised forms of complex commodity production that extend beyond the means of the State to regulate in terms of environmental policies, labour laws, and the price/distribution of food (Buttel and Goodman 1989; Friedman 1993; McMichael 2012). It can also be used to relocate agriculturalists as offenders.

There are two potential forms of offending among those who grow or raise food for consumption. First, agriculturalists can be simultaneously engaged in both legitimate and illegal activities. This is called 'pluriactivity' (McElwee, Smith and Somerville 2011 Smith 2004) and refers to agriculturalists who grow crops and raise livestock for the marketplace, but who are likewise involved in various types of criminal activities. One example is farmers who steal from other farmers, such as described in the work by Barclay (2003). Another set of pluriactivities includes food producers who use their land and resources for the production of illicit substances (Donnermeyer and Tunnell 2007; Weisheit 1992). Still other activities encompass violations of government regulations related to both flora and fauna. Previously, these might have been described as a type of 'folk crime' (Gibbons 1972); that is, as localised expressions of oppositional behaviours by agriculturalists in response to State imposed gaming/hunting and other laws (Weisheit et al. 2006). Although this is sometimes the case, it is also true that farmers and ranchers can be integrated into complex networks engaged in various forms of transnational crimes (White 2011). In essence, studies of farmers as offenders illustrate in a different way how actors participate in multiple forms of collective efficacy. As residents living in rural places with many other agriculturalists as their neighbours, they participate in localised social structures which constrain crime while, at the same time, engaging in illegal activities which involve their participation in networks which enable crime (Barclay 2003).

A critical criminology approach would see pluriactivity as a rationalized form (Mooney 1988) of exploitative behaviour, and would seek to link the specific or micro expressions of crime committed by agriculturalists to broader, structural characteristics of societies. Further, most farmers are not simply autonomous producers of food who act on their own to make a living for their family. They are often members of a privileged capitalist class of landowners who approach profit and efficiency in much the same way as any other business firm would (Lobao and Meyer 2001). Often, they are the local elites who react to economic, social and political pressures that extend well beyond their home communities (Lichter and Brown 2011; McMichael 2008).

Hence, for the agriculturalist as offender, behaviour is not situated within local norms, but is embedded in the imperatives of world-wide markets for goods and services and associated State-sponsored regulatory features of these systems. The work of Walters (2004, 2006), for example, demonstrates how a critical criminology study of agricultural crime can situate certain farms as specific places where forms of corporate crime related to the control of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the monopolisation of seeds are carried out. Walters (2004, 2006) has stressed the geo-political forces that threaten family-based farming systems in many countries, and the resultant growth of international corporations who are able to monopolise systems of raising crops and animals. Within these battles over the control of seed and living organisms, and concerns over the biological and environmental impacts of GMOs, are family-based food producers themselves. Taking the side of firms that seek monopolisation of food production places many family farms squarely in a complex web of exploitative capitalism

because they are the local agents of internationalised and corporatized forms of agro-biological crime; that is, crimes of the powerful within the context of food production.

Further, the vested interests of farm operators (and agricultural industries) to achieve efficiency and profit at the expense of the environment should become part of a critical discourse on crime (Donnermeyer, Barclay and Mears 2011; White 2011). Various practices, both neglectful and purposeful, can result in an array of environmental harms, from the use (and over-use) of farm chemicals and unethical abusive practices against animals, to the pollution of water or wetlands with effluent from dairies, irrigated pastures and grazing livestock.

Agricultural crime and critical criminology

There are two fundamental lessons which rural criminology can teach critical criminology. First, rural criminology's relative lack of theory is most apparent in previous studies of agricultural crime. To a great extent, the work is descriptive, especially the research conducted in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States. Only one study, by Mears, Scott and Bhati (2007), explicitly utilises theory; specifically, a variant of routine activities theory to examine factors associated with farm crime in central California. Like every other issue of interest to criminologists, agricultural victimisation should remind the critical criminology community that without a theory which contextualises farm crime within the structures of a society, abstracted empiricism reigns (Young 2011).

Agricultural operations are capitalistic enterprises embedded in complex, globalised commodity chains, and farmers themselves are situated in localised expressions of their respective country's social class structure. As Henry (2011) points out, farmers are a significant part of a 'productivist landscape'. Henry (2011: 207) quotes Lowe, Murdoch, Marsden, Munton and Flynn (1993: 221) who defined productivism as 'a commitment to an intensive, industrially driven and expansionist agriculture with state support and based primarily on output and increased productivity'. Without an understanding of the way agriculture has transformed into a Fordist model of production, agricultural crime research will remain mired in low-level empirical studies which estimate victimisation rates and statistically discover various geographical features of farm crime hotspots, but little more. This familiar lesson about the hindrance to scholarship when data are uninformed by theory should never be lost on criminologists who apply a critical perspective to the understanding of crime (Young 2011).

Fortunately, there are several agricultural crime studies which hint at the potential of rural criminology to begin the development of a critical criminology of food and agriculture. The first (Armstong 2005) is a study of agricultural crime in a county of Northern Ireland which borders on Ireland, and the experiences of agriculturalists before and after the peace accords were signed and security forces on the border were closed down. Bunie, Rono, and Chessa (2013) examined farm crime in Kenya, noting the relationship of farm owners and farm labourers to understand levels of theft to agricultural operations. The authors observed that, when farm workers are not paid on time or paid less than they were promised by the farm owners because of the pinch in prices to owners for their commodities based on globalised market conditions, these labourers looked to the theft of farm property as an opportunity to make money, albeit illegally. Fafchamps and Moser's (2003) examination of agricultural crime in Madagascar discovered that crime increased with the isolation of rural areas and rural-based gangs who operated beyond the reach of the police as an apparatus of the State. And Smith, Barrett and Box (2001) linked cultural definitions of masculinity and inter-ethnic tensions to cattle theft among semi-nomadic pastoralists in Kenya and Ethiopia. Finally, Carrington et al. (2013) describe structural level changes in farming with challenges to traditional definitions of masculinity among Australian farm households, increasing the potential for domestic violence.

The work of these authors is a reminder that farmers are not simple food producers, isolated from political strife, ethnic tensions, labour relations and repercussions of the marketplace. Even though they did not explicitly employ a critical criminology approach (with the exception of Carrington et al. 2013), their recognition of factors larger than the characteristics of the farm operation itself shows graphically what is missing from past studies of agricultural crime and why critical criminologists should address agricultural crime issues as indicative of the ways various structural arrangements within a capitalist mode of production create criminogenic conditions within the food production and distribution systems of societies around the world.

The second lesson which rural criminology can teach critical criminology comes from research by Barclay (2003), Basran, Gill and MacLean (1995), Bunei, Rono and Chessa (2013), McElwee et al. (2011), Smith (2004), Walters (2004, 2006) and White (2011), among others. These studies should serve as a reminder that food producers themselves can be the offenders, participating in multiple forms of collective efficacy. They steal, they violate environmental regulations, they exploit labour, and they engage in other clandestine, illegal operations. Furthermore, some of the illegal behaviours of farmers are illustrative of 'crimes of the powerful'. Larger, corporate (both non-family owned and family owned) agricultural operations not only displace smaller, family-based farms in much the same way franchises (that is, Wal-marting) are accused of under-cutting family-owned businesses in rural communities, they may also maximize profit at the expense of the environment, their neighbours, and their workers. Even smaller, family owned farm operations can be examined from the perspective that they are the local representatives or agents of a capitalist system which is exploiting and causing harm (White 2011) to both labour and land. Regardless of farm size and other circumstances, there has been little attention paid to agricultural crime by critical criminologists, and there should be much more.

3. Problem anlalysis: Rural 'otherness'

Philo (1997) has pleaded with rural social scientists to engage with neglected rural 'others' who have been painted out of the rural landscape. In a similar vein, Murdoch and Pratt (1997) have drawn attention to 'strange ruralities' in order to highlight difference and division in the countryside. In the past, urban studies of crime and deviance have drawn heavily from Tőnnies ([1887] 1955) distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft.* By doing so, they greatly skewed the way early studies of rural crime were framed, which misinterpreted crime in the rural context as either exceptional or a lagged effect of urbanisation, but never endemic or internal to rural culture and society (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2008).

Grounded in this distinction, two discourses haunt popular and scholarly accounts of rural crime. They may seem to be opposites, and indeed they are in many respects, but they are best seen as the proverbial opposite sides of the same coin, albeit, a coin which is altogether counterfeit. The first is the 'rural idyll' and the second is the rural as a place of 'dread and horror'.

Gemeinschaft renderings of rural space draw on what Bell (2006) has described as the 'rural idyll'. We have already discussed how variants of this condescending and dichotomous view of the rural, as expressed through the theory of social disorganisation and the concept of collective efficacy, are theoretically flawed. Further, it enforces an ideology that obfuscates depictions of both the rural and the urban for criminological scholarship. The idyll represents the rural as consisting of simple, harmonious, cohesive and homogeneous communities surrounded by a hinterland of farmers and graziers/ranchers, which are largely free of social conflict (Lockie and Bourke 2001). However, the stereotype, which has become a rich resource for nationalistic mythology in countries from Australia to the US, is both highly gendered and racialised.

Referring primarily to the European experience, Bell (2006) argues the rural idyll to be a symbolic landscape into which various meanings of rurality are condensed. 'Idyllisation' involves processes which produce stylised representations of the countryside, while simultaneously rendering certain aspects of rurality marginalised and even invisible. The idyll is symbolically and materially an exclusive and exclusionary space. With respect to this, idyllisation tends to obscure aspects of difference and division in the countryside. In this way, it is ideological.

Idyllisation is often a symptom of urbanisation, the idyll being produced in the city about the rural. The idyll sources nostalgic urban yearnings for an imagined *gemienschaft* community, remembered as purer, simpler, more natural and more stable. It provides an escape from city life and the problems considered to manifest it (Short 2005: 134). In these idealised narratives of landscape, nature is a repository of everything civilisation is not: pure uninhibited, non-rational and free of intent. Rural space is presented as a space of bucolic tranquillity and communion with nature: an authentic place of retreat from pace of city life (Bell 2006: 152; DuPuis 2006: 126). In such representations the rural landscape may be devoid of abject figures such as out-of-control teenagers who are disrespectful of all authority (in contrast to courteous, conforming young people), homosexuals, the homeless and women working the land (DuPuis 2006: 127; Short 2005: 145). Notably here, the rural landscape is also devoid of criminals and crime. If such things exist, they are a product of an invasive urban influence and of modernity's penetration into so-called 'folk' societies and Indigenous cultures.

In Australia, the bush became a place in which traditional virtues can thrive. And so, while the bush also signified danger in terms of marauding bushrangers, these dangers were balanced against a belief that the bush brought men back to their natural state. A bushranger like the Australian outlaw, Ned Kelly, was a criminal. Yet he possessed (masculine) qualities both admired and lauded. The cities did not produce an equivalent mythology. Less admired than bushrangers are the Aborigines. There were no Aboriginal folk heroes. Like city men, Aborigines were pacified, emasculated. Indigenous women, on the other hand, became sexual objects. The otherness of Aborigines was emphasised with reference to their apparent unproductivity, living off the land rather than conquering it by changing the landscape to a productivist mode of growing food, raising livestock and developing market towns.

Pioneering studies of gender and rural social life conducted over the last two decades have consistently shown rural masculinity to be narrowly constructed around traditional conceptions of gender (Alston 1995; Dempsey 1992; Poiner 1990). This body of research has been largely concerned with exposing gendered divisions of labour in agricultural production, exposing the long neglected contribution women make to the rural economy (Allen 2002; Alston 1995). While worthwhile, the impact of these social changes on rural men has gone largely untheorised. While there is a welcomed – and much needed – growing body of criminological literature on masculinities and crime (Carrington, McIntosh and Scott 2010; Collier 1998; Gadd and Jefferson 2007; Messerschmidt 1993), there has been little attention paid to the complexity of violence and men in rural social settings.

Carrington's (2007) research has argued that interpersonal violence tends to be very high per capita in rural settings, especially violence against women. Her findings contradict the conventional wisdom that crime rates tend to increase with population size and density (Hogg and Carrington 2006: 67). A body of administrative data confirms that rural men have higher rates of intimate partner abuse and sexual assault, and are 2.6 times more likely to die from interpersonal violence (Carrington 2007: 91). By contrast, violence in large cities like Sydney is reported to be declining. International research has also indicated qualitative differences in the experience of violence between rural and urban women. In the US, rural women have reported higher frequencies of physical and sexual abuse, compounded by significantly less social support and limited access to services (Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff and Leukefeld 2003: 83).

Explanations for these higher rates of violence have examined rural ideology and the construction of masculinity in rural contexts. Strategies through which masculinity is produced are historically and culturally contingent. In frontier societies, such as Australia and the US, exploitation and colonisation allowed for the development of the idea of specific 'frontier' masculinities, which achieved their own kind of symbolic ascendancy in colonial societies. These shared with earlier aristocratic and bourgeois articulations of masculinity a disdain or devaluation of the feminine and a related distaste for civilisation and urbanisation. Indeed, the pervasiveness of ideas associated with frontier masculinities owed much to the way in which the city or 'culture' came to be correlated with femininity. For example, the very notion of the 'wild frontier' is premised on it being lawless, with survival represented as a masculine ideal (Liddle 1996: 373).

Just as rural communities have been constructed in national culture as symbolising authentic forms of community, rural men have also come to symbolise what comprises 'authentic' masculinity in national culture and among urban men (Carrington 2007). Rural men are associated in popular culture with visible markers of strength, physicality, courage, and power (Hogg and Carrington 2006: 164). Popular imagery of rural men is regularly limited to physical occupations such as farming, forestry or mining. In terms of leisure activities, there is an emphasis on outdoor activities such as hunting. Leipins' (2000b) study of agriculture and masculinity found that the media portrayed farmers as a select composite of masculinity, drawing on rugged, physically active outdoor work. Masculinity is here defined according to tasks performed, the physical features of men, or through occupational success, with only a select cohort of men legitimised as 'real farmers'. An important element in defining masculinity is an ongoing struggle with nature, defined through the display of aggression and deployment of combative metaphors. Meanwhile, rural women are defined by their lack of relationship with the land and doubts about the durability of their bodies and physical capacity to engage in rural labour like mining or agricultural work (Little 2002: 669).

Similarly, Campbell's (2000) analysis of pub drinking adds another dimension to rural masculinities. In his analysis, Campbell (2000: 566) describes after-work drinking by men as both 'conversational cockfighting and the disciplines of drinking which are incorporated into a performance of masculinity ... [which] are never directly mentioned or addressed by participants'. Hence, its exclusionary but invisible nature is like the 'glass phallus' displayed at one of the pubs where his research was conducted and which inspired the title of his article.

The second myth about rurality would appear, on the surface, to be the opposite of the rural idyll. While the rural idyll creates rural space as an object of desire because it is not urban, rural space may also be presented as an object of dread because it is not urban (Bell 1997; DeKeseredy and Donnermeyer 2013; Scott and Biron 2010). There exists in cultural texts a countryside which is dangerous and malevolent, exposing the fragility of civilisation itself (Bell 1997). There is a radical shift from romantic images of rural communities to images of backwardness and savagery. The second myth of the rural presents us with communities in decline, which are populated by ignorant and conservative people. This is a dystopian rural, which, as Bell (1997) discusses, has been depicted in popular culture as filled with gothic styled monsters of the kind encountered in the recent Australian outback horror *Wolf Creek* (2005) or the various renditions of the American horror film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. It is a landscape of violence and rigid gendered divisions. This myth works to exaggerate rural 'strangeness' and, in doing so, works to broaden the assumed gulf which separates rural and urban life.

Here the rural order emanating from imagined *gemeinschaft* qualities is turned in on itself, so that what was normatively valued in the idyll becomes a source of the abject. For example, dense social networks and organic solidarity may produce and support violence, as seen in

horror films in which traits that were legitimated in the idyllisation of the rural are now presented as excessive. Inbreeding, insularity, backwardness and sexual perversion (incest and bestiality) are traits associated with the village idiot, white trash, hillbillies, rednecks and mountain men. Incest and degeneracy are transformed into symptoms of solidarity (Bell 1997: 96; Bell 2006: 152).

Even though the bush has largely been celebrated in Australian national mythology, for example, there are other darker subterranean cultural visions of the bush associated with rural horror (Bell 1997). From the earliest days of frontier settlement, people have 'vanished' in Australia's vast expanses, seemingly swallowed up by the countryside itself. The bush has been host to some of Australia's most publicised crimes, from the 'Ripper-like' Gatton murders of 1898 to the more recent (1980) disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain, the 'backpacker' murders of the 1990s, and the murder of British tourist Peter Falconio outside Alice Springs in 2001. In such examples, the bush is a hostile environment home to atavistic types who prey on urban innocents (Hogg and Carrington 2006: 4). The bush as a dark or alien environment is also explored in popular culture, notably in a range of books and films, such as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), which draws on the themes of the bush as a place in which young women are sexually molested or vanish altogether.

Another dimension of crime in the rural context is its racial overtones. Hogg and Carrington (2006) identify two themes of rural 'crime talk' – Aboriginal people in general and youth – with the two often woven together. Inclusion of references to Indigenous crime operates to contextualise and signify unique aspects of the crime problem in Australia. If crime occurs in 'the bush' it is a product of Indigenous pathologies or 'race' relations. Presumably, towns with a low Indigenous population do not experience crime.

It is no small irony that Indigenous Australians who, historically, have been violently displaced from their lands and culture have been repeatedly characterized as an uncivilised presence in the reconstructed landscape from which they have been displaced. One mark of this incivility is a perceived capacity for violence. Aboriginals are 'outsiders' who do not conform to an imagined sense of 'community' which pervades the rural spaces they inhabit. Aboriginals are, again with some irony, 'outsiders' in rural space. The apparent ambiguous and inarticulate status of Indigenous people within the rural social order stimulates fear: they do not conform to the idealised images of 'traditional/tribal' Indigenous people which dominate the imagined space of the rural idyll (see Bell 1997). Nor do they belong in the 'white' community. They are not part of the landscape – not its past or its future. Similar perceptions of Indigenous people and the settler societies which came to dominate them in post-colonial times can be found in other countries as well, and continues to contextualise their contemporary relationships with mainstream society and its criminal justice institutions (Hazlehurst 1995; Wakeling, Jorgensen, Michaelson and Begay 2001; Wood and Griffiths 2000).

A third dimension of problem analysis illustrated by rural criminology scholarship is the localised context for rural residents' constructions of crime (Young 2011: 83-110). For example, one of the first accounts of fear of crime in a rural setting was O'Connor and Gray's (1989) study of the small Australian town of Walcha. Walcha was a relatively culturally-homogenous community with strong agricultural roots. In Walcha, crime was considered virtually non-existent but, if crime was accounted for, it was associated with outsiders and events that bought outsiders into the town. This strong externalisation of crime can be partly explained by Walcha's geographic isolation and strong intergenerational and horizontal ties to locale. These ties meant that, when crimes did occur within the community, they were not perceived as threatening. Offenders tended to be strangers rather than known others. Blaming the outsider assisted in the promotion of internal social order. The authors argued concern about crime may actually be concern about unwanted social change – a threat to 'how the place used to be'. In a similar vein, Dempsey's (1990) study of community structure and social problems in a small

Victorian town illustrated how labelling and social marginalisation of groups known as 'no hopers' assisted in the allocation of blame for most crime problems. Likewise, Loader, Girling and Sparks (2000) showed how crime talk was used in an English village to highlight desirable and undesirable qualities of place and social activities (see also Jobes et al. 2005). More recently, Lee (2007: 121) studied fear of crime in two rural communities in New South Wales, arguing that divergent responses from the same town reflect the symbolic dimensions of crime in the locality and each respondent's stake in particular forms of crime talk.

Notably, given our consideration of crime-talk, gossip is an important element in relations among people living in small rural communities because it provides a means by which people can demonstrate their affirmation of norms within the groups to which they belong and through expressions of shock and horror about crime events both local and non-local, reinforcing constructed perceptions of others who do not conform or whose status is marginalized by their gender, race and lifestyles.

The tight organisation of social networks among established groups at the local level facilities the flow of gossip (Elias 1994: 89). Gossip can be used to produce a stereotypical representation of the outsider, but it can also be used to reinforce group solidarity. Thus, gossip operates to both denigrate and idealise aspects of certain social figurations, especially when it is exaggerated. What occurs, then, is a process in which the diversity and complexity of social life is reduced to stereotypical representations which operate to maintain and reproduce existing configurations. Praise and blame gossip are powerful tools to enforce group cohesion, but also mark hierarchies between established and outsider.

Rural others and critical criminology

Earlier, we argued that one of the lessons the accumulated research on rural communities and crime can teach critical criminology is the need for the development of a critical theory of place. One important component of this theory is the need to understand that rural places are 'contested' in a variety of ways, including the ideologies which underpin publicly held definitions of crimes and offenders, and of the ways these belief systems affect policing styles and the operation of the criminal justice system in non-urban localities. Hence, a critical criminology approach to the study of crime and place should be more than a consideration of structural factors such as inequality, poverty and multiple collective efficacies: a complementary consideration of factors from a cultural criminological approach is necessary as well (Muzzatti 2012; Young 2011: 96-98). Indeed, geography and place thus have a strong symbolic value (Liepins 2000b) in cultural constructions of traditional rural masculinities, racialisation of Indigenous and other rural peoples, and other 'strange ruralities' (Hogg and Carrington 2006; Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006; Saugeres 2002). The crime and justice realities affecting rural places may be national and even international in scope, and may be largely expressed today through virtual or non-physical communities (that is, social media); nonetheless, these social, cultural and economic forces shape how people behave at the places where they live, work and raise their families. Without a doubt, rural places (and by extension, urban) are constructed and contested.

Second, the ideology of crime at the local level can be examined in relation to how rural residents talk about crime. Rural communities make excellent laboratories to aid the development of critical criminology scholarship because their smaller populations often allow expressions of marginality and racialisation to be more vivid and pronounced. Hence, the extant rural literature is a lesson for critical criminologists that the rural context has great potential for the study of all dimensions of crime from a critical perspective.

The research on how crime-talk is constructed in the rural context should also remind critical criminologists that the threat of crime must be situated in terms of both the internal and

external sources of threat. Typically, external crime threats involve strangers and newcomers, while internal threats are associated with endogenous groups, such as local youth and/or racial minorities who live there but are marginalised. Race was less of an issue in the ethnically homogenous community of Walcha, in which Indigenous people were geographically separated and living at an old mission site a number of kilometres outside the town. In this respect, Walcha presents an atypical community with regard to most studies of rural crime conducted in Australia. In communities examined by Hogg and Carrington (2006) in their extensive analysis of law and order politics in rural Australia, perceptions of crime and community were heavily influenced by race (Hogg and Carrington 2006: 161), which was also noted by Jobes et al. (2005). Fear of crime is significant in terms of not only what is said, but also what is not said. Hogg and Carrington (2006) have indicated that crime-talk in rural settings tends to ignore interpersonal violence and exaggerate the extent of property crime. Similarly, Indigenous violence is highlighted, while 'white' violence tends to be muted and even ignored, remaining 'hidden' and pervasive' (Hogg and Carrington 2006: 149). Indeed, as Scott et al. (2007: 1) have noted: '… crime outside the city [in Australia] is not so much spatialised as it is racialised'.

Conclusions

Rural crime scholarship is growing, but, even so, its contributions to critical criminology remain meagre. The purpose of this article was to help ford the gap between rural criminology and critical criminology by discussing the extant literature in three areas – rural communities and crime, agricultural crime and rural 'others' – and how each displays lessons for the advancement of a critical criminology.

Each area was discussed in relation to distinctive functions – criticism, problem-solving and problem analysis – which the rich body of critical criminology has contributed in the past to criminological thought in general. The study of rural communities and crime demonstrates the need for a critical analysis of theory and concepts. In particular, the rural work on communities and crime points to the logical fallacies of social disorganisation theory and allied concepts, like collective efficacy. Social disorganisation theory is not merely a weaker framework for explaining variations in official crime rates in rural areas than in urban localities: it is seriously flawed when it assumes a linearity of high disorganisation with high crime. What the rural work has shown is that there is likely no such thing as disorganisation, only variations in the social structure or social organisation of communities with crime (regardless of the source of crime data and of its various flaws). Hence, forms of organisation – and, by extension to more recent criminological expressions, forms of collective efficacy – are associated with variations in crime. The important implication of this line of reasoning is that it allows for a conceptualisation of diversity in social structure at the local community/neighbourhood level, shoving aside functionalist notions by Sampson (2012) and others who see collective efficacy as a one dimensional or holistic characteristic of urban neighbourhoods (and, by extension, rural places) in order to establish linear relationships with crime rates. In fact, the rural literature tells us that multiple forms of social organisation exist side-by-side, and each can simultaneously constrain some crimes while each enables other kinds of crime. The overall lesson for a critical criminology is simple: it is time to begin to build a critical criminology of place.

The distinctive function performed by agricultural crime studies was problem-solving. Specifically, the overwhelmingly descriptive literature on agricultural crime points to the need for the development of a critical criminology of agriculture and food. Agriculturalists are no longer simply food producers but business people entangled in complex webs of globalised commodity chains. With the industrialisation of farming has emerged a high rate of victimisation of food producers. Even so, they themselves are often the offenders: they steal from their farm neighbours, exploit labour, ignore and violate outright environmental regulations, and engage in illegal activities such as drug production. Hence, those farmers who engage in these pluriactivities illustrate how actors can simultaneously participate in multiple

forms of collective efficacy (that is, one as a farmer/neighbour/citizen and one as a member of a network of offenders), and serves to reinforce the criticisms of mainstream criminology from consideration of the rural literature on community and crime.

Scholarship on rural 'otherness', like the research on rural communities and crime, calls for critical criminologists to build alternative models of the ecology of crime from those heretofore utilized by mainstream criminologists. The value of the function of problem analysis as can be seen in rural studies, such as those related to masculinities, racialisation, and fear of crime, is that cultural criminologists will find rural communities to be rich with opportunities for examination of various aspects of exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination by both local residents and law enforcement and criminal justice agency personnel. Rural places are not homogeneous, as the rural idyll suggest. They are contested landscapes. In that regard, how crime is talked about shows the way people who live in physical proximity to each other construct perceptions about crime, and how these perceptions are shaped by factors both external and internal to the locality. Hence, place-based criminological models would benefit greatly from a consideration of the role of ideology in shaping localised forms of human relations (Liepins 2000a, 2000b).

Even though it was not the intent of this article, we recognise that there is a great deal that critical criminologists can teach rural criminology scholars. However, this already has been discussed in other places (Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy 2008; 2014), even though additional dialogue is both needed and welcomed. Hence, we invite critical scholars to turn their attention to rural issues of crime and criminal justice so that the growing cadre of rural scholars can nurture their sociological imaginations through a more critical approach to the subject matter (Young 2011).

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[1] For a comprehensive (but not complete) bibliography of the rural crime literature, see the reference section of *Rural Criminology* by Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014).

[2] Portions of this paper are from two sources: (1) Chapter 3 (Creating the Critical in Rural Criminology) in *Rural Criminology* by Donnermeyer and DeKeseredy (2014) and 'Wolf Creek, rurality and the Australian gothic' by John Scott and Dean Biron (2010) in *Continuum: Media & Cultural Studies* 24(2): 307-322.

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