

# **Reconceptualising Fear of Crime: The Emergence of Crime Awareness**

Presented by

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## ABSTRACT

Over the past fifty years, the concept of ‘fear of crime’ (FOC) has become firmly embedded in fields such as crime prevention, victimology and media studies. It is generally perceived as an irrational response to discourse about crime events or crime rates in the sense that those who are least likely to be impacted tend to have higher levels of fear. There remain tensions in the literature on FOC because it is a difficult concept to define and because ‘testing’ of the concept has been heavily reliant on quantitative studies. After fifty years of researching this phenomenon, it seems appropriate to revisit the concept in the light of social, cultural and technological changes wrought in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This conceptual thesis seeks to reformulate the ‘fear of crime’ concept in light of the notions about risk, pre-eminence of global threats over domestic offending, the proliferation of information-sharing through social media which has strengthened our ‘connectedness’ and the seeming ubiquity of some crime prevention mechanisms that has led to a view of them as banal. The thesis reflects the complexity of FOC and provides new avenues for the exploration of risk perceptions, social trust, and the apparent banality of prevention. The involvement of these factors in shaping responses and attitudes towards crime victimisation risks demonstrates a need for a reconceptualisation of crime fear. Qualitative findings from a previous research project by the candidate reflected the complexity of FOC and provide new avenues for the exploration of risk perceptions, social trust, and the apparent banality of prevention. Consideration of extant research further showed instances of awareness in discussions about crime risk management and so the concept of ‘awareness of crime’ was created.

Consideration of extant research further showed instances of awareness in discussions about crime risk management and so the concept of ‘awareness of crime’ was created.

The awareness concept is shaped by several factors. The first is familiarity with crime risks, where these have become part of day-to-day life and so are no longer feared. Secondly, the 21<sup>st</sup>-century mass-media scepticism and social media savvy shapes understandings about crime. People are active in sharing information and experiences

relating to crime victimisation, and social trust appears to affect perceptions and responses to crime. The third major contributor to awareness is the way in which individuals judge threats to their safety. The seriousness and likelihood of victimisation dominate judgements about the significance of a crime risk. Subsidiary factors supporting awareness include the eschewing of 'fear' labels, given the negative connotations of the word 'fear' and its derivatives. The individual responsabilisation for crime prevention in neoliberal societies encourages awareness because there is a reduced onus on the state to protect the public from victimisation. Finally, a sense of control over personal crime risks appears to perpetuate awareness in place of fear of crime where there is a belief that crime risk has been managed.

Awareness presents a new lens through which to consider theories of crime such as Routine Activity Theory, as it appears to shape decision-making processes and routine behaviours where these affect victimisation risk. Awareness is also linked to Beck's risk society thesis since it has arisen partly from a preoccupation with risk-management. Crime awareness calls for further investigation into information-sharing via social networking and construction of crime risks, and cultivation of worldviews through media. The changing nature of risks, globalisation, and communication may be creating a shift where attitudes and responses towards crime risks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are characterised by awareness, and thus fear of crime is no longer the most suitable paradigm through which to examine these.

## **Declaration of Originality**

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilments of the requirements of the degree of *Master of Arts (Research)*. This thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.

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Madeleine Jarrett-Luck

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction: An Overview of Fear of Crime**

Fear of crime has been a consistent criminological concern in industrialised Western societies for at least five decades. The term ‘fear of crime’ (FOC) was coined by the news media in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and evolved into a fully-fledged social scientific concept in the mid-1960s. Also referred to in the present text as ‘crime fear’, precise definitions of FOC vary. However, this phenomenon can be identified as an emotional and physiological response to the possibility of specific criminal events occurring. Thoughts and beliefs about the likelihood of crime victimisation are also sometimes considered as part of the crime fear concept.

Fear of crime has led to a vast body of statistical and theoretical exploration. While the legitimacy of FOC as a criminological research focus is “no longer in question” (Lee, 2007, p. 102), it appears that there is a need to review the continuing relevance of this concept. Research thus far has uncovered much about the characteristics of and influences upon FOC. For example, crime fear appears to be heavily gendered, with women consistently reported to be more fearful than men. FOC also appears to be elevated as a result of personal and vicarious experiences with victimisation, and often is incongruent with actual rates of offending. Furthermore, problems inherent in earlier research on the topic led to calls for more qualitative studies in place of quantitative and statistical works. Thus, there is a perceived need for the review and reconceptualisation of what crime fear is and how responses to the threat of crime victimisation are understood.

New styles of governmentality, technological change, and risk management have impacted upon the way in which attitudes towards crime are constructed and how people experience and cope with FOC in post-modern times. Rapid technological and social developments which characterise the present era impact upon the way crime is perceived, and by extension how crime fears are constructed (Jackson, 2006; Lupton, 1999; 2000; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010). The widespread use of the Internet and social networking as means of sharing information and experiences (especially among young people) may impact the formation of attitudes towards crime (Cops, 2010; Palfrey &

Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998). Furthermore, societal changes have led to a decreasing adherence to traditional life-course trajectories by young adults, and so youth may have less trust in the state and institutions to provide security and stability (Cops, 2010; Tapscott, 1998; 2009). These broader socioeconomic changes and concerns about the future are argued to manifest as fear of crime (Russo, Roccatto, & Veino, 2013).

As a result of the dynamic influences of technology and social change, it is possible that FOC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents a different entity than that of the 1960s. New styles of governance have changed the nature of crime victimisation and prevention, where there is a growing onus on the individual to be responsible for managing their own crime risks (Cooper, 2008; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). This has encouraged the growth of the private security industry and expanded the gap in the capacities of different socioeconomic groups to protect themselves from crime (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008). Such variation has the potential to alter FOC as it exists for the lower class versus middle and upper classes (Cooper, 2008). Overall, the rapidly changing nature of the post-modern world and the accompanying insecurities and uncertainties that this produces continue to act upon FOC, and so a revisitation is certainly warranted.

While still important, issues of personal safety and security may no longer be connected to crime fears in the ways indicated by previous studies (Lupton, 2000; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010). In particular, it has been suggested that tools and strategies aimed at preventing crime have become such a part of everyday life and routines that they do not have the strong links to crime fear that were shown in earlier research (Goold, Loader, & Thumala, 2013; Lupton, 2000; Mythen & Walklate, 2006). For example, measures such as CCTV, burglar alarms, and the access controls used in buildings and public transport systems have become banal in nature; something mundane, routine, and unworthy of attention or interest (Goold, Loader, & Thumala, 2013).

The nature and influences of risk have also shifted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with management of these becoming a growing focus. Extant research suggests that some risks are more manageable than others. For example, while global-level risks such as terrorism and climate change are impossible to control for at the individual level, crime victimisation and personal safety are deemed easier to address (Beck, 1992; Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Management of these lower-level risks can be achieved through technological fixes,

changes in lifestyle and routine activities, or through living in a secure area like a gated community (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008). The extent to which victimisation risks are controllable (or at least perceived as controllable) is then thought to have an impact on the nature of crime fear. Specifically, studies on perceived risks and uncertainty suggest that FOC may be a manifestation of cumulative fears about other risks that cannot be controlled (Hirtenlehner & Farrall, 2013; Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Such works argue that in contrast, the risks of harm and loss that crime represents are far more actionable and manageable, hence the use of personal crime prevention strategies as a way of dealing with these feelings and perceptions of potential victimisation risk (Hirtenlehner & Farrall, 2013; Lupton, 2000; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010).

One of the most significant changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the advent of digital technologies and their ubiquity in daily life. Social media networks have become increasingly important in the sharing and dissemination of information, including crime news. This tendency is especially strong among those who are now young adults and have spent their childhood growing up with digital media (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014). The images and messages which are conveyed to this age group about crime are shaped through their social networks and by their decreasing levels of distrust in traditional institutions and providers of news, such as broadcast television, in comparison with sources such as the Internet (Buckingham, 2006; Selwyn, 2009; Tapscott, 2009).

These changes further emphasise the need for ongoing adaptation of the FOC concept as its genesis was in an age when broadcast media was expanding. As FOC is a social construct, with any changes or societal shifts, the nature and prevalence of this phenomenon may also be affected. Social media and digital technology and their pervasiveness represent a key form of this continuing social change (Buckingham, 2006; Selwyn, 2009; Smith, Skrbis, & Western, 2012; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). As most people lack the personal experience of being the victim of a criminal offence, the information gleaned from other sources plays a vital role in the construction of attitudes about crime and how they respond to the threat that criminal victimisation represents (Devereux, 2014; Innes, 2003; Walklate, 1998). Hence, FOC can now be shaped by what is learned about crime victimisation from others in social networks, rather than from television and newspapers as was the case when it first emerged as a scientific concept.

In sum, there are several reasons why FOC requires reconceptualisation in the contemporary era. The rapid social changes which characterise many modern Western communities today have created a culture of uncertainty and insecurity which impacts upon crime fear. In such environments, the focus is on avoiding the harms and losses of the many risks people face at individual, community, and societal levels. Developments in technology and communication of crime information have affected how people form ideas about crime victimisation risk. This suggests that the relationship between such measures and the emotional experience of crime fear, cognitive judgements about victimisation risk and the behaviours resulting from these two aspects require re-examination.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

There are three key theoretical approaches which inform the present thesis. The first of these is Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979). This theory applies to criminal offending and victimisation risk through a focus around routine activities which influence opportunities for crime commission. The relevance of Routine Activity to this thesis lies in the role that routine activities of individuals play in impacting their perceptions about crime and victimisation risks. The second key theory is that of cultivation via mass media. Cultivation theory was originally conceived in relation to the role of television violence in shaping the belief systems and attitudes of audiences and has become one of the most widely studied theories of mass communication (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). The third major theoretical underpinning is that of the risk society. Formulated by Beck (1992), the risk society thesis posits that the world today is beyond control, where the potential for any given event to occur may be unknown, and therefore a prime driver of behaviour is attempted avoidance of these events (Austen, 2009; Beck, 1992; O'Malley, 2004; Rigakos & Hadden, 2001; Yates, 2003).

#### *Routine Activity Theory*

This theory argues that if three elements of suitable target, absence of guardianship, and a motivated offender converge in time and space, the likelihood that a crime will occur is increased (Clarke, 2005; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson, 2002). In relation to

victimisation, the theory also posits that the routine behaviours that make up human lifestyles determine exposure to crime risks (Cohen & Felson, 1979). This is pertinent to the reassessment of the FOC concept because fears and risk perceptions could be expected to impact upon routine activities, depending on their strength and salience. Routine Activity Theory explains how changes in the environment can create opportunities for crime commission (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Sutton, Cherney, & White, 2008). Routine behaviours are defined as “any recurrent and prevalent activities which provide for basic population and individual needs, whatever their biological or cultural origin” (Cohen & Felson, 1979, p. 593).

Routine activities impact on opportunities for crime commission, depending on the time and space in which they are performed (Cohen & Felson, 1979). For example, routine activities in or near the home, or performed with family or friends, are less likely to elevate victimisation risk than activities conducted away from the home, at night, or with strangers (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Furthermore, the conditions and locations of certain targets (businesses, homes etc.) may facilitate the convergence of the triangle of crime and render these targets more vulnerable to crime victimisation (Hopkins & Tilley, 2001). A failure to address the conditions which lead to victimisation of the self or property is then argued to lead to revictimisation. However, this link is able to be disrupted through alteration of routine activities (Felson, 2002; Hopkins & Tilley, 2001). Routine Activity Theory is congruent with the idea that people make rational decisions about their routine activities based upon available information and perceptions or shared experiences (Rountree & Land, 1996; Yar, 2005).

### *Cultivation Theory*

The cultivation theory treats broadcast media as a system of messages and images which are viewed ritualistically and have become all-pervasive in daily life (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). It is argued that heavy viewing of television violence has both first and second-order effects upon viewers. First-order effects are about the relationship between television viewing and perceived likelihood of events occurring in the real world, while second-order effects examine the relationship between television viewing and more generalised attitudes about the state of the world (Nabi & Sullivan, 2001). Cultivation theory is relevant in considering whether crime news media is

continuing to influence young peoples' perceptions about crime in the era of social networking. How media surrounding crime news impacts upon constructions and beliefs about crime and victimisation is of interest in re-evaluating the crime fear concept given its history in shaping this phenomenon (see Chapter Four section on social discourse).

Crime and perceptions about offending and victimisation risks are a major area of focus in cultivation research (Grabe & Drew, 2007). Characteristics such as the realism of the crime message and the fictional or non-fictional status of a given program are argued to impact upon perceptions about crime, which are cultivated through viewing (Grabe & Drew, 2007). Furthermore, there are two contrasting avenues of causation concerning the role of lifestyle choices and how these may influence, or be influenced by, cultivation of world views. The concept of resonance, for example, argues that people will be more affected by television messages about crime if their own life experiences are congruent with these messages (Gerbner et al., 1986). In contrast, life experiences may moderate the extent and nature of cultivation through a process called mainstreaming (Gerbner et al., 1986).

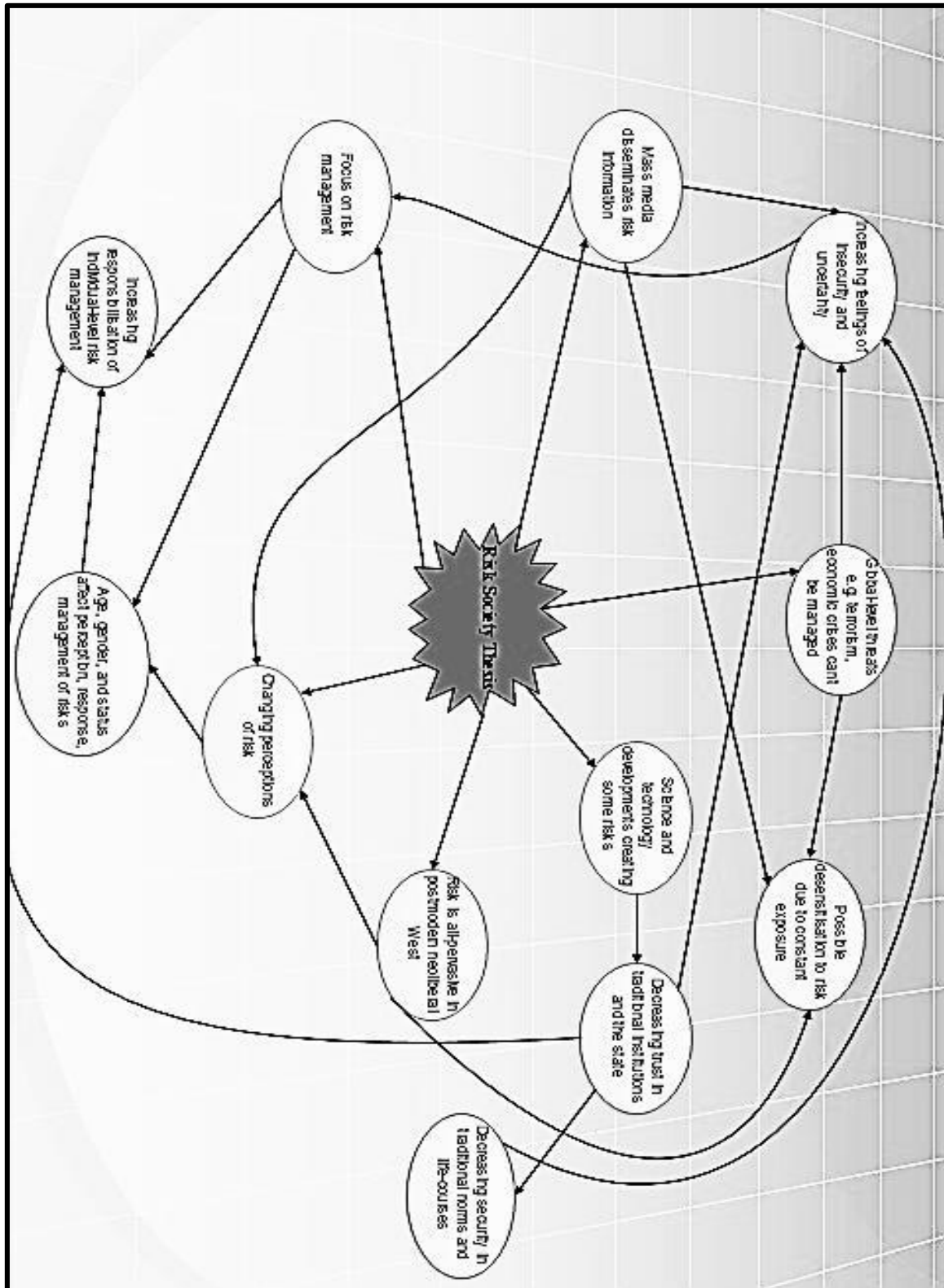
The current preference for information sources such as the Internet and personal social networks among young people may, however, be changing the relevance of the cultivation perspective. The reduction of trust in and use of public news media as an information source among younger adults (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998; 2009) raises questions about the role of newer, more self-selective forms of media in cultivating the attitudes about crime. Does broadcast media coverage still play a role in cultivating perceptions about crime for young people, and if so, what is the nature of this relationship? Is it possible that young people's worldviews in regard to crime and victimisation are now shaped more by social media and information acquired through the on-demand nature of digital technologies? Cultivation theory is therefore imperative to the present examination of such queries.

### *The Risk Society Thesis*

Fear of crime and how people perceive and manage their risk of victimisation has been an increasing focus in discussions of the risk society thesis. This is due in part to the increasingly complex and dynamic nature of information dissemination, socioeconomic

factors affecting crime prevention, and neoliberal governance. A basic understanding of the complexity of the risk society thesis as it relates to FOC and constructions of risk in contemporary times can be gained from considering the interplay of the factors involved in the risk society, as can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure. 1.1 Mind-map of the key components of the risk society thesis





In order to embark on a reconceptualisation of crime fear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the risk society thesis is of especial relevance. It helps to address the complexities of crime fear when considered against the backdrop of socioeconomic and political climates which characterise many Western societies today. Furthermore, as crime victimisation represents an individual-level risk in daily life, the risk society thesis serves as a lens through which to view how this threat is understood and responded to. This extends beyond younger adults to those in other age cohorts. The idea that some risks have become all-pervasive in daily life, and the interrelationship with control over different types of risk, each provide additional angles from which to explore how FOC is manifest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Rapid technological development and changes which characterise affluent Western nations are believed to have exacerbated the uncontrolled nature of risk (Beck, 1992; O'Malley, 2004; Yates, 2003). In response to this, more individualised decision-making takes place regarding the risks to which people are exposed (Azmanova, 2011; Beck, 1992; Lee, 1999; Rigakos & Hadden, 2001). The opinions of experts and authorities are no longer considered to be the legitimate pathway to knowledge and truth, and risks become the concern of the individual (Ekberg, 2007; Lee, 1999; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). What Beck (1992) refers to as a 'culture' of fear develops within this political and socioeconomic climate, assisted in part by the mass media. The media control and disseminate knowledge about known and unknown risks to the general public, and the way in which this information is shared then impacts upon personal risk perceptions and by extension can instil fear about these risks (Beck, 1992; Ekberg, 2007). The dominant political parties in a given jurisdiction can benefit from this perpetuation of fear by implementing and publicising populist strategies which provide an impression of control of the state over these risks (Lee, 1999). This aligns with Beck's initial thesis, where it is posited that an absence in the capacity to control and manage global risks strongly contributes to increased fear (Beck, 1992).

There is a growing body of research combining the exploration of the crime fear phenomenon through the contextual lens of the risk society (Beck, 1992; Chadee & Ying, 2013; Chan & Rigakos, 2002; Cooper, 2008; Ekberg, 2007; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010). The thesis has been applied in the examination of individual, community, and

global-level crime victimisation risks, and to the investigation of factors influencing crime fears and personal crime prevention strategies. Crime is often listed as one of the all-pervasive risks which have become the focus of risk management strategies. In particular, the tendency towards increased responsabilisation of risk management to the individual is thought to carry across to the way in which people control and minimise their own crime risks (Beck, 1992; Lee, 1999; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). The neoliberal styles of governance which are said to characterise Western communities under the risk society paradigm also appear to align with present-day approaches to crime control and crime prevention.

Considering that the present examination centres around young adults, it is important to recognise and understand patterns which may differ from the positions put forth by Beck in his original construction. Specifically, the perception of an event, circumstance, or person as being risky can mediate the entire relationship between actual risk and crime fear. While the initial risk society thesis by Beck (1992) conceived of risks as being entirely negative, his later adaptations acknowledged the ambivalence that risks and risk-taking can represent (Yates, 2003). This is important when considering the sometimes deliberate nature of behaviour by young people which may increase their risk of crime victimisation.

### **Risk and Crime Fear: A Seminal Australian Study**

One Australian study is especially relevant to the present thesis because it involved a qualitative examination of perceptions about victimisation risk and how this related to worries about crime victimisation. This study by Lupton (2000) included interview and focus groups, as well as ratings of risk and fear levels, in order to tease out the interrelatedness of risk and fear, and how these two concepts were affected by demographics and personal experiences. Lupton also sought to investigate the types of explanations people gave for their fears and perceptions of risks (Lupton, 2000).

The research found that personal prior victimisation or the victimisation of a close friend were dominant factors relating to levels of worry and risk perception. These experiences led to increased awareness of the risk of crime victimisation and hence a greater level of

becoming a victim in future (Lupton, 2000). Women felt more at risk of victimisation than men, and worries about victimisation were higher among prior victims (of both sexes) than among those who had no experience with crime victimisation (Lupton, 2000).

In regard to perceptions about crime victimisation, participants shifted between two notions. One is that victims are partly responsible through their failure to engage in efficient prevention strategies, and the second is that crime “is random and unpredictable, and could happen to anyone, regardless of the efforts they took to prevent it” (Lupton, 2000, p. 30). Thus crime risk was perceived as low, rather than non-existent. Two paradoxical responses resulted from this: that a certain level of fear was elicited, or that fear levels were low because since crime risks were always a possibility there was nothing to accomplish by worrying about them (Lupton, 2000). This highlights the differences between worry or fear, and risk perceptions.

Furthermore, the study was unresponsive of the idea that crime fear was high and led to increased passivity among the general population in response to potential victimisation risks (Lupton, 2000). While risks were deemed to be knowable to some extent, they were not found to be actionable or controllable in every situation. Overall, Lupton claimed that crime risks had become “a routine part of modern consciousness, an everyday risk to be assessed and managed” (Lupton, 2000, p. 33). The research found that being more aware of crime risks did not necessarily lead to heightened fear, and that crime was seen as being both preventable and inevitable.

### **The Present Thesis**

The seminal Australian study outlined above serves as a springboard for the present thesis. The present reconceptualisation is targeted at exploring the FOC and awareness of crime (AOC) concepts as these exist for young adults in first-world Western communities. Similar to the study by Lupton, the awareness concept arose during previous qualitative investigation by the candidate, where there were hints of a pre-eminence of awareness over fear (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). This drove the expansion of the thesis upon the conclusions drawn in Lupton’s study. The current work also expands upon the research by Lupton by taking into consideration the behavioural aspect of FOC;

actions undertaken to prevent personal victimisation are explored in relation to their role in influencing risk perceptions and crime fears. Points of investigation include the potential banality of crime prevention behaviours, and the ways in which risk perceptions and socio-technological advancements characterise young peoples' attitudes towards and appraisals of their own crime victimisation risk.

It is anticipated that the thesis will demonstrate the continuation of the crime awareness and crime fear constructs and the highly dynamic nature of these as they exist today. The idea that awareness comes into play in fears and perceptions about crime victimisation (as raised by Lupton) is explored in detail. The findings concerning the preventability and inevitability of crime provide a basis from which to pursue questions about the controllability of crime victimisation risks as these are perceived by young Australians, and whether and how these factors interplay in overall levels of awareness and fear (Lupton, 2000).

In the present work, fear of crime has been defined as 'anxiety or concern about the occurrence of specific criminal events'; this is a variation from the physiological definition used in research within the psychology discipline (Warr, 2000). The term 'fear of crime' relates only to the specified affective responses and not to cognitions and beliefs about crime and crime victimisation. Following from the work of Lupton, the term 'awareness' is defined as 'consciousness of external events'. In the context of the present reconceptualisation, the 'events' referred to will be criminal acts, or victimisation by a criminal act.

### *Rationale*

There is a clear need for the reconceptualisation of crime fear as it exists in contemporary times. Rapid technological, political, and socioeconomic changes impact on a concept as complex and dynamic as FOC. Different groups continue to be affected by crime fear in different ways, and the variation of FOC patterns among these demographics indicates that understandings and perceptions about crime and personal victimisation risks are equally varied. Young adults are the focus of this work due to the socio-cultural differences which separate them from other age groups, as well as for their tendencies to misplace or underestimate their potential for crime victimisation. Statistically, young

people are far more likely to be victims of violent interpersonal crimes, insofar as Australian figures show, than middle-aged or elderly individuals (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a).

Paradoxically, this age group also tends to report the lowest levels of crime fear. While this paradox has been explored elsewhere (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Franklin, Franklin & Fearn, 2008; McCrea et al., 2005; Russo & Roccatto, 2010; Scarborough et al. 2010), there has yet to be an in-depth qualitative analysis of this phenomenon as it exists for young people in Australia. Further, the effects of ever-present digital technology and social media which partly shape the attitudes and communication styles of young adults may also influence their risk-ambivalent, lower-fear tendencies. The existence and nature of a possible relationship between these facets of young people's daily lives have yet to be investigated and thus these areas are explored here.

### *Overview*

Initially, the thesis centred on the crime fears of university students and how these fears interacted with personal prevention strategies (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). However, a review of the literature in combination with findings from prior qualitative research by the candidate brought to light the concept of awareness of crime, which in turn called for a broader theoretical treatise.

This previous research investigated crime fear and personal crime prevention strategies used by young people. It comprised three focus groups which discussed young people's attitudes towards crime, the types of crimes they are fearful of and how this is reflected in their crime prevention behaviours. Serendipitously, however, the key finding was that of an apparent awareness response to perceived crime risks, rather than a sense of fear. This was deemed relevant to the reconceptualization of FOC, and thus the candidate's earlier research makes an appearance in the present thesis.

This dissertation attempts to overcome the shortcomings and limitations inherent in some of the previous work on the FOC concept by addressing:

- How crime awareness differs from crime fear

- How social discourse impacts upon constructions of crime threats for young people
- How technology influences knowledge and attitudes towards crime risks
- How feelings of control (real or perceived) affect responses to crime victimisation risks

### *Thesis Outline*

The following chapters provide a summation of the relevant literature and the findings from the candidate's prior research, and analyse these two components in order to reconceptualise the way in which FOC exists as a sociocultural phenomenon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Chapter Two examines the history of the crime fear construct and arguments for the rationality and irrationality of this fear among the general public. Australian statistics about crime fear, community disorder, victimisation and reporting of victimisation are also presented. Chapter Three delves into the factors which impact upon FOC, such as demographics and experience with crime victimisation. Chapter Four offers an examination of risk and its interrelationship with crime fear, crime prevention, and the role of media in the social construction of attitudes towards crime. These topics are discussed primarily with regard to how they are experienced and understood by young people. Chapter Five discusses the limitations and shortcomings in existing FOC work, including the ongoing problem of defining the crime fear concept in the contemporary age. It also canvasses in greater detail the findings from the qualitative work described above and the emergence of the crime awareness concept which became paramount in driving the reconceptualization of crime fear.

In Chapter Six, the discussions from this earlier research are considered in conjunction with the literature to offer new perspectives on the conceptualisation of crime fear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Chapter Seven examines caveats and criticisms of the present reconceptualisation and the awareness of crime concept, closing with implications and recommendations for future investigation, followed by general conclusions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review: The Background of Crime Fear**

This chapter reviews the historical background, statistical Australian data, and views surrounding the rationality of macro-level fear of crime. The early sections of this literature review will provide a brief history of the development of crime fear as a social scientific concept, followed by some Australian statistics surrounding this phenomenon. The three major models used for explaining variations in crime fear are then presented, namely the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models. The chapter closes with a discussion examining the argument of whether the FOC reported by the general public is rational or irrational.

#### **Fear of Crime: An Historical Overview**

While crime fears have likely existed for millennia, the term ‘fear of crime’ and its conceptualisation as a social scientific construct did not emerge until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2007). Its foundations, however, were laid by the conditions of rapid social, technological and economic growth and development in Western Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The flourishing of industry and the emergence of a powerful new middle class led to the expansion of many cities and the dispossession of the poor, whom came to serve as cheap labour in workshops and factories (Lee, 2007). The poverty, filth, disease and overcrowding led to both actual and perceived increases in criminal and immoral behaviour among the lower classes, who were deemed dangerous to the middle and upper classes (Lee, 2007). Those in power exerted greater control over the ‘undisciplined’ working class and a sense of anxiety and insecurity formed among the bourgeoisie (Lee, 2007). Britain and France had especially high concerns about crime as associated with the dangerous lower classes responsible for most criminal acts, and this fear was often expressed within print media (Lee, 2007). Crime fear drove reforms in criminal law, punishment, urban planning, and the development of what would eventually become criminological science (Lee, 2007). The acting of governments upon these needs

contributed to greater social control and understanding; fears about crime and disorder appear to have been far less significant from the mid-1800s (Lee, 2007).

FOC as a social scientific concept did not make an official appearance until the 1960s in the United States. It occurred as part of a rapid criminological expansion during a time when crime was a key socio-political focus (Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2007; Wyant, 2008). The emergence of victimology fuelled this development aided by the use of public opinion polls and the collection of more robust data on crime and public attitudes (Lee, 2007; Walklate & Mythen, 2008). While the media had been sporadically using the phrase 'fear of crime' in publications containing interviews with experts since the mid-1930s, the term came into greater usage in the years leading up to 1965, at which point there was "an explosion of fear of crime stories" (Lee, 2007, p. 51). 'Fear of crime' became something publically known and discussed, and was once again being recognised as an important social issue at a time when the United States was giving greater attention to the social wellbeing of its citizens (Jackson, 2006; Lee, 2007).

Increases in crime rates between the 1950s and 1960s, as well as moral panics about juvenile delinquency meant that the concept retained its salience (Lee, 2007; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; Wyant, 2008). The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice in 1965 (Lee, 2007), while not explicitly focused on fear of crime, included survey research on community perceptions of crime (Lee, 2007). Despite some differences, each of the surveys found a flawed relationship between perceptions and attitudes about crime (Lee, 2007; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; Warr, 2000). While they did not coin the term (because it had already become part of common discourse) the research produced by the Commission did give FOC form as an object of study, and if there exists "an epicentre to FOC as a social scientific concept, these surveys constitute it" (Lee, 2007, p. 66).

Since this time, FOC has evolved to become one of the most commonly researched topics in criminology (Walklate & Mythen, 2008). While there are still many inconsistencies in how the term is understood, constructed, and operationalised (Sacco & Kennedy, 2002; Skogan, 1993; Warr, 2000), scholars have continued to expand upon knowledge of crime fear and its effects. The focus on FOC led to the development of data collection tools such as the International Crime Victims' Survey and the British Crime Survey, as well as being



a central component of seminal crime theories such as the Broken Windows Thesis (Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Lee, 2007). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, criminologists have increasingly recognised the multidimensional nature of FOC as a construct, and its dimensions are frequently being broken down and studied in order to improve understandings of perceptions about crime and its consequences (Lee, 2007). This is continuing in the body of criminological study today.

### **Fear of Crime: An Australian Statistical Overview**

Crime represents a significant social problem in Australian communities. In light of this, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) have maintained records of fear of crime and perceptions of social disorder. The most recent releases from these institutions present a clear image of the state of crime victimisation of young people in Australia.

An overview of victimisation rates from 1996 to 2007 from the AIC (2013) shows that while homicide rates have decreased consistently throughout this time period, other interpersonal offences such as physical and sexual assaults have greatly increased. There was an increase of 55% in physical assaults, and 36% in sexual assaults (AIC, 2013). Robberies had also risen from 16372 to 17988 (AIC, 2013). Physical assaults were by far the most frequently reported violent crime and the rate of offences increased steadily over the entire recording period (AIC, 2013). Physical assault was the most likely crime for 15-24 year-olds to be victimised by, and individuals aged 18-24 were more than twice as likely to be assaulted than those aged 25 and over (5.8% compared to 2.3%) (ABS, 2011a). Overall, the figures reflected an overrepresentation of young people as victims of assault in Australia. While the 15-24 year-old age group makes up approximately 16.2% of the national population, this demographic accounted for 34.4% of physical assault victims (ABS, 2011a).

Crime victimisation in Australia has also prompted statistical investigations into fear of crime. It was found that 72% of Australians felt safe in their local area after dark, though women were four times as likely to report feeling unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhoods after nightfall (Johnson, 2005). Feeling unsafe does not necessarily

equate to feelings of fear and indeed other studies have found that roughly 70% of Australians have little to no fear of being attacked in the street, and 82% are not worried about sexual assault (Roberts & Indermaur, 2009). Females nevertheless reported higher levels of crime fear than males for all violent offence categories (Roberts & Indermaur, 2009). This finding is consistent with the vast majority of fear of crime research, where women are almost always identified as being more fearful of crime victimisation than men.

In 2011, the Australian Bureau of Statistics also surveyed citizens on perceptions of disorder and social problems in their neighbourhood. According to their results “over 10 million Australians aged 18 years and over (60%) believed there was at least one social disorder issue in their local area” (ABS, 2011b, para. 1) with 20% believing that the issue was a large problem (ABS, 2011b). For the vast majority of respondents, personally experiencing or witnessing the disorder issue most affecting their local area played a role in their awareness and perceptions of that issue (98.2%) (ABS, 2011b). Nearly one-quarter (23.4%) also claimed that information from friends and relatives had contributed, while 14.5% thought their views had been impacted by information obtained from media reports (ABS, 2011b). This differs from earlier statistics where up to 80% of participants reported television, radio, and print media as being important sources of information about crime and disorder issues (Roberts & Indermaur, 2009).

Statistics indicate that 96% of Australian households participate in at least one type of crime prevention measure, with greater numbers of strategies associated with having been a victim of crime within the five years preceding the survey (Johnson, 2005). Perceptions of likelihood of victimisation were linked with the perceived effectiveness of local police in dealing with crime problems, where those who felt the police were doing a very poor job in their neighbourhood being twice as likely to feel fearful alone in their local area at night when compared with those who believed the police were doing a very good job (Johnson, 2005). Similarly, those who perceived themselves as more vulnerable to criminal victimisation also reported feeling of unsafe in their neighbourhood (Johnson, 2005). Crime victimisation does not however appear to be prevalent for young adults, with only 25% of those aged 18-24 feeling that personal safety was a major concern of theirs (Mission Australia Research & Social Policy, 2009).

## **Explanatory Models of Crime Fear**

There are several explanations for how crime fear is influenced by personal and environmental factors. Three explanatory models attempt to identify the ways in which the experience of crime victimisation risks can vary. The three models are referred to as the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models. Each appears to explain some of the variation in FOC among individuals and groups, though none have been identified as superior nor wholly discredited (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Kohm et al., 2013).

### *The Vulnerability Model*

The vulnerability model argues that those who believe themselves to be more vulnerable to crime will be more fearful of crime, and is most applicable to women and the elderly, as these are the demographic groups who have been found most consistently to report higher levels of FOC (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Shippee, 2012). There is little elaboration on how the perception of vulnerability to crime under the parameters of this model works (e.g. living in a high-crime neighbourhood, being physically smaller and weaker than potential assailants, etc.). However, the model has been linked to demographic variables such as age and sex, as well as experiential variables such as prior victimisation, social ties, and media exposure. For example, research into the impact of gender on perceived vulnerability and subsequent fears of crime has found that women consistently perceive themselves to be more physically vulnerable than men, and hence less able to defend themselves in the event of an interpersonal attack (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Scarborough et al., 2010; Snedker, 2006).

It has been hypothesised that the vulnerability model may provide the best explanation for female fears of sexual assault (Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; Shippee, 2012; Testa & Livingston, 2009; Wattis, Green, & Radford, 2011). Sexual assault tends to be a primary concern of female participants when asked to self-report on their crime fears (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009). Indeed women fear most types of violent crime for their potential to escalate into rape and other forms of sexual attack.

Perceptions of vulnerability may similarly be predictive of perceptions of disorder within specific communities (Brunton-Smith, 2011). However, the vulnerability model has been the subject of findings shown to be ineffective at explaining variations in FOC across groups of participants (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). There is also no clear directional relationship between perceived vulnerability and FOC (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Shippee, 2012).

### *The Disorder Model*

The disorder model originates from Wilson and Kelling's (1982) Broken Windows Theory, and presents the view that neighbourhood environmental characteristics and social activities affect perception of a community as a whole and thereby influences FOC (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Brunton-Smith, 2011; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). It is argued that increased incivilities and breakdowns in the social and physical aspects of the community will increase perceptions of neighbourhood problems and by extension increase FOC among residents (Brunton-Smith, 2011). This is due to the fact that perceptions of disorder lead to increased feelings of uncertainty and create the perception that personal safety is potentially under threat (Brunton-Smith, 2011; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013; Scarborough et al., 2010; Skogan, 1986).

Disorder has been found to be highly detrimental to factors such as community cohesion which reduce FOC (Brunton-Smith, 2011; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Scarborough et al., 2010; Skogan, 1986; Wattis, Green, & Radford, 2011). For instance, one study found that perceptions of disorder within a given neighbourhood were the strongest predictor of fear of becoming a victim of property crimes (Alper & Chappell, 2012). Other research also revealed disorder to be highly predictive of both cognitive and affective aspects of FOC (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). An investigation of functional and dysfunctional levels of FOC similarly described a significant positive relationship between dysfunctional fear and neighbourhood disorder (Jackson & Gray, 2010). It is suggested that high levels of disorder can exacerbate the role that prior victimisation plays upon FOC (Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013). Recent results show that the impact of disorder on FOC could be tempered by social integration (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Scarborough et al., 2010).

### *The Social Integration Model*

The social integration model focuses not on the factors that increase FOC, but on a factor that helps decrease it. Social integration has been specified as “a person’s sense of belonging to their local surroundings as well as their attachment to the community” (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008, p. 209). It considers cohesion and collective efficacy and how FOC can be lowered when community members respond to problems together (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). While a poor predictor of fear of property crimes, the social integration model has been found to be the strongest of all three theoretical models for predicting fear of violent crimes (Alper & Chappell, 2012). There remains persistent argument that social integration can reduce perceptions of both vulnerability and neighbourhood disorder depending on the strength of social support networks (Chadee & Ying, 2013; Lorenc et al., 2013; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Skogan, 1986). For example, increased social capital and cohesion have been found to mediate the relationship between increased FOC and environmental and socio-demographic characteristics, such as socio-economic status (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Lorenc et al., 2013; Scarborough et al., 2010). Of the three explanatory models, it is the social integration model which most closely aligns with the phenomenon of social trust, and the impacts that such a concept can have upon experiences with and perceptions about crime and crime victimisation risks.

Each of the three theoretical models of FOC presents a different perspective on how and why crime is feared, the strength of that fear, and what reduces or increases it. While all approaches have their merits, perhaps their greatest value comes from the fact that they are compatible and interrelated (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). No one model is able to entirely explain variations in FOC, yet all continue to offer valuable partial explanations that continue to structure the study of crime fear.

### **The Rationality of Crime Fears**

A final point to consider in researching FOC is the rationality of this fear as it is experienced by members of the general public. Since the adoption of survey methodologies as a primary means of collecting data on crime fear, political and academic

authorities have debated at length whether levels of FOC are rational or irrational in comparison to the relative likelihood of being victimised (Lee, 2007; Walklate, 1998). The view of crime fears as irrational, especially where these fears are particularly high, has been the prevailing view throughout the past five decades or more (Lee, 2007; Lupton & Tulloch, 1999; Wyant, 2008). However, with the increasing recognition of the multidimensional and complex nature of FOC, and the use of more qualitative approaches in studying this phenomenon, stronger arguments for the notion of crime fears as a rational response have arisen.

How human rationality and irrationality are defined and expressed is central to understanding the debate on crime fear. Unfortunately, even the definitions and criteria under which behaviour is judged as rational or irrational tend to vary widely (Dahlback, 2003; Tilley, 1997). For example, categorising behaviour as rational generally involves the implication that it was performed in accordance with sound judgement and reasonability (Dahlback, 2003; Niggli, 1997). Usually the process by which an individual decided to act, think or feel a certain way is judged in determining the rationality of an active, cognitive, or emotional response (Dahlback, 2003). Scientist and philosopher Karl Popper's view of irrationality is when a person cannot be dissuaded from their plans or choices, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to suggest that they will be worse off as a consequence (Tilley, 1997). Strong emotions and lapses in judgement are thought to be responsible for the majority of human irrationality (Ariely, 2009; Boyd & Richerson, 2001; Tilley, 1997).

There are multiple factors which contribute to the argument that crime fears are irrational. For example, fear, especially as it is perceived in psychological circles, represents the type of strong emotion that is argued to cloud rational decision-making (Warr, 2000). In a post-modern society in which risks and risk avoidance are emphasised, sensationalised and communicated to the general population, it may be possible that the general public has become conditioned towards fearfulness. This is implied by the risk society thesis (Beck, 1992), where foci of harm and loss prevention are paramount and the mass media and other forms of social discourse amplify awareness and fears surrounding potential risks to individuals, their loved ones, and their property, thereby creating a culture of fear. Empirical exploration of the impact of media crime reporting on fear supports this link,

indicating that the social constructions of the world around us perpetuate an awareness and fear of crime risks (White, 2012; Heber, 2011; Innes, 2003).

The most common component of the argument for irrationality stems from statistical quantitative data gathered from large-scale crime and victimisation and social surveys. Many studies have found fear levels among participants which vastly exceed their actual likelihood of crime victimisation (Alper & Chappell, 2012; May, Rader, & Goodrum 2010; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007; Rader & Cossman, 2011). This irrational crime fear is shown to be stronger for women than for men, and for the elderly, rather than younger groups (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013).

The detrimental effects of fear have contributed to the prevailing notion that FOC is a major social problem, outweighing and separated from the actual occurrence of crime itself (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Scarborough et al., 2010; Skogan, 1986). The possibility is that the public are suffering needlessly from the negative impacts of crime fear, since their likelihood of being victimised is statistically very low in most cases (Lupton, 1999; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003; Scarborough et al., 2010). This has become part of the familiar frame through which crime fear is widely recognised and understood; the crime fear logic. This frame incorporates the main (sometimes erroneous) ideas which comprise general knowledge and views about FOC. A key component of the crime fear logic is that irrational crime fear occurs in excess of crime risk (Lupton & Tulloch, 1999).

While the argument of irrationality has its weaknesses, the often illogical and unreasonable behaviours and decision-making in which people engage on a daily basis lends strong support to this perspective. Irrationality among humans has mostly been examined through the lens of economic scholarship, especially in regard to the types of decisions made about financial expenditure and personal judgements of what can be gained and lost in a transaction with another (Ariely, 2009; Boyd & Richardson, 2001; Klein, 2001). Several examples of the fallibility of human reasoning in such contexts have been identified and explored in recent years. For example, when presented with the possibility of acquiring an item for free, an irrational excitement is triggered which has been found to interrupt the rational cost-benefit analysis process that usually governs decision-making behaviour (Ariely, 2009). The tendency to be drawn by such offers is

argued in the same work to be linked to fear, in that humans are “intrinsicly afraid of loss...suppose we choose the item that’s *not* free. Uh-oh, now there’s a risk of having made a poor decision – the possibility of a loss” (Ariely, 2009, pp. 60-61).

On the other hand, when presented with a deal that seems too good to be true, people tend to suspect a trap of some kind, and avoid involvement with that transaction (Ariely, 2009). One view is that human beings are predictably irrational, engaging in the same types of irrationally repeatedly throughout everyday life (Ariely, 2009; Boyd & Richardson, 2001; Lupton & Tulloch, 1999). Humans tend to judge the value or desirability of one option in comparison to other available options, rarely judging a thing upon its own merits (Ariely, 2009; Klein, 2001). This tendency could potentially link back to the role of the risk society in impacting upon irrational levels of fear in response to crime. The advent of intensive security-mindedness and growing proliferation of crime preventive measures such as the construction of gated communities and increased public surveillance might be based on choices which weighed up the costs and benefits of making such decisions against the costs and benefits of not doing anything to protect the self and property from crime. The decision to then adopt these preventive measures is made in keeping with the overarching tendency towards harm and loss reduction that characterises the risk society in contemporary times (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008). Thus, these actions could be considered rational, despite the actual likelihood of a crime event occurring.

The opposing argument that crime fears are rational, rather than irrational, is grounded in advancements made in the study of FOC over the past two decades. It is suggested that crime fear is not irrational because it is based on a belief that one is at risk of being victimised, not on factorial calculations of the actual likelihood of being a crime victim (Lupton & Tulloch, 1999). Scholars holding this view emphasise the limitations of human rationality and the importance of context and available information in the processes of logical decision-making (Tilley, 1997; Walklate, 1998). It has been emphasised that there are individual differences in amounts and types of information people have about crime and crime risks (Lupton & Tulloch, 1999; Walklate, 1998). People often make decisions and experience feelings based on the information they currently possess in conjunction with information from outside sources e.g. media reports on crime or a family member or



friend's recount of personal victimisation (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003; Kohm et al., 2013; Jennings, Gover, & Pudrzynska, 2007; Semmens, 2007). A choice to feel fearful of crime is not made in the face of knowledge about their actual likelihood of victimisation, but in the face of perceived victimisation risk based upon the information available. As people are not presented with an accurate or specific likelihood of victimisation, this fear is not irrational in nature (Lupton & Tulloch, 1999).

Another counterargument to the idea of irrationality is that crime fear may be based on inaccurate or misrepresentative data. Large discrepancies have been found between quantitative and qualitative methodologies used in FOC research with the implication that existing survey data have presented a flawed picture (Farrall et al., 1997). Some authors suggest that traditional measures of crime fear have and continue to overestimate the actual occurrence of FOC at individual and societal levels (Farrall, 2004; Farrall & Gadd, 2004a; Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2011; 2013; Hough, 2004; Jackson, 2005). Furthermore, the chronic underreporting tendencies which distort official crime statistics mean that the actual likelihood of victimisation against which the general public's fears are measured may also be far from the 'true' rates of crime.

This point is especially relevant to female fears of crime, given that women are afraid of sexual assault more than any other crime type, and that this crime is rarely reported (ABS, 2010; 2011; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; McCrea et al., 2005; Wattis, Green, & Radford, 2011). Female fears of offences such as rape are argued as being entirely rational given that most women tend to be sexually assaulted by someone they know and encounter on a regular basis (Walklate, 2007; Franklin, 2010; Testa, Hoffman, & Livingston, 2011). Overall, the fact that in reality little is known about the actual levels of crime and crime victimisation precludes any determination of fears about crime as being rational or irrational in nature.

### **Summation of the Background of Crime Fear**

This chapter has addressed the history and development of the FOC phenomenon to date. Patterns of crime fear and related issues of community disorder and criminal victimisation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia have been presented, drawing attention to the high rates of

victimisation and low reporting by younger groups of respondents, as well as to the types of crime that are of concern to the Australian public. The vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models described in this chapter are representative of the major factors believed to cause variation in levels of crime fear across social groups, and provide important background knowledge for the consideration of the empirical studies discussed in Chapter Three. Finally, the ongoing arguments surrounding the rationality of crime fear for people in affluent Western communities demonstrate two major perspectives in the management and understanding of crime fear by neoliberal governing bodies. Below in Table 1 is a brief summary of the main points about crime fear research that are germane to the present thesis.

Table 1. Word-table of major points of FOC background literature

<b>Major Points From FOC Background Literature</b>
<p><b>FOC is a complex social phenomenon with an ongoing history of change</b>            Crime fear has existed for centuries, but has only relatively recently been recognised as an important social scientific concept for 50-60 years. It changes as communities continue to change and develop.</p>
<p><b>Australians have relatively low levels of crime fear</b>            Statistics indicate that the Australian public is not highly fearful of crime, despite physical and social disorder being commonly reported in some communities.</p>
<p><b>The vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models offer explanations for variations in crime fear</b>            FOC variations among different groups are not yet fully explained, however these three models identify the causes for some variation. Vulnerability and disorder focus on factors which increase crime fear, while the social integration approach looks at a factor which decreases crime fear.</p>
<p><b>Crime fear is dichotomised as being rational or irrational</b>            Research between perceived and actual crime victimisation risks has led to a dichotomising of crime fear as rational or irrational, with irrationally high crime fears seen to be a greater social problem than irrationally low crime fears.</p>

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Literature Review: Examinations of Fear of Crime**

While the preceding chapter presented the historical background of crime fear, this chapter covers the main elements of fear of crime. Four key mediating factors in the FOC literature: age, gender, socioeconomic circumstances, and victimisation will be canvassed. Further discussion is provided into the role of trust and the social environment is provided. The term ‘social environment’ is used to describe the community of individuals with whom physical space and interpersonal interaction is shared in the routine activities of daily life. For example, a university campus and its surrounding student residences could be considered a social environment within the parameters of the present thesis. The extant literature similarly treats this concept as the local neighbourhood or community within which a group of individuals resides. While it is not possible to canvass each variable in its entirety, a summation of the extant research on the influences of demographics and victimisation experience to provide a framework for the subsequent chapters.

#### **Fear of Crime and Demographic Differences**

Empirical findings regarding age as a moderating factor in fear levels are somewhat inconsistent. While earlier findings tend to indicate greater fear amongst the elderly (Norton, 1982; Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998), newer works have indicated that younger people may have higher crime fears (Lupton, 2000; Kaminski, Koons-Witt, Thompson, & Weiss, 2010). One study from the latter group revealed that despite their physical weaknesses in comparison with younger generations, elderly people did not have high crime fears, while younger people had heightened fears about crime because they perceived their lifestyles as putting them at greater risk of victimisation, because they more often found themselves in public places where they might be susceptible to an attack by another young person (Lupton, 2000). Younger women living together have been found to report being more fearful for their personal safety than older women (Rader &

Cossman, 2011). Recent statistics have indicated no significant differences in feelings of unsafety between the young and the elderly, where approximately 26% of respondents from both age groups reported feeling unsafe (ABS, 2010). This represents a significant change in the crime fear logic that irrational crime fear is that which occurs in excess of actual crime victimisation risk.

Other evidence indicates that young adults experience feelings of general insecurity more strongly than older people, yet the elderly have higher levels of specifically crime-related fears (Cops, Pleysier, & Put, 2012). Being elderly remains linked to greater FOC, mediated by a sense of physical vulnerability (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Britto, Van Slyke, & Francis, 2011; Norton, 1982; Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998; Rengifo & Bolton, 2012). This stands contrary to actual risks of victimisation, which are far higher for young people, due largely to the types of routine activities in which they engage e.g. socialising at night and frequent consumption of alcohol (Testa & Livingston, 2009). The disconnect between actual likelihood of victimisation and perceived risk among older age groups has led to suggestions for age to be studied in conjunction with victimisation risk and experience (Zhao, Lawton, & Longmire, 2010).

These inconsistent findings are indicative of the influence of other variables upon the relationship between age and FOC. The role of lifestyle appears to affect the impact of age upon crime fears and perception of victimisation risk. For instance, younger people tend to engage in more risky behaviours and perceive these behaviours in a more positive light when compared to older age groups, despite the fact that such risks mean young people have greater exposure to crime victimisation (Austen, 2009; Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Testa & Livingston, 2009). Reduced social networks and absence of friends living in the same community are linked to heightened FOC for older people where one study found that increasing age was correlated with increasing FOC (Oh & Kim, 2009). Accordingly, those aged 65 years and older had the highest rates of reported crime fear (Oh & Kim, 2009). However, perceptions of social cohesion and the levels of trust within communities of elderly people were found to decrease this fear (Oh & Kim, 2009).

Empirical studies that take on gender differences report that higher levels among females are particularly evident for interpersonal violent crimes, such as sexual assault (Fisher &

May, 2009; May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Snedker, 2012; 2006; Tomisch, Gover, & Jennings, 2011). Women are more likely to report personal crime fears and to exhibit restricted behaviours in response to these fears (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Rader & Cossman, 2011).

Recent research has challenged the widely established pattern of higher female FOC in general. Findings indicate that women's higher levels of FOC extend only to violent and interpersonal offences and not to property offences, such as theft (Moore & Shepherd, 2007). Similarly, testing of levels of masculinity and femininity in regard to gender identity has revealed that those with higher masculinity scores had lower level of FOC, regardless of sex (Cops & Pleysier, 2010). This indicates that crime fear may be tied more closely to gender roles than to biological sex alone. Contrarily, sex does appear to impact fear of rape victimisation, where women are more likely to be victimised and are more fearful of this type of crime. It is posited that the added threat of being sexually assaulted increases women's fears of all types of crime, offering a possible explanation for the differences in fear between the sexes (May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010). One argument suggests that sexual assault renders women more fearful because their perception of victimisation risk for this type of crime is higher than males (Cops & Pleysier, 2010). This thesis, known as the 'shadow of sexual assault hypothesis', is a reasonable assumption when considering that sexual assault is the only crime of which females are more likely to be victims (Franklin, 2010; Kelley-Baker et al., 2011). A recent test of the thesis found that fear of sexual assault was the strongest predictor for fear of nonsexual violent crimes (Ozascilar, 2013).

Other explanations relating to the gendered nature of FOC revolve around socialisation. It is posited that females are socialised to believe that they are more vulnerable and less aggressive than males, and behaviours which adhere to this doctrine are reinforced both deliberately and inadvertently (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; McLean & Hope, 2010; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Snedker, 2006). This extends to the presence of a sociability bias where adolescent females are more open in their discussions about FOC, while males seem to deal with such emotions internally (Snedker, 2006). Current findings match with the stereotypical gender socialisation process, in which women are taught to be more emotionally expressive, while males learn that it is more masculine to be stoic and

autonomous and so men may be less likely to report FOC (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; McLean & Hope, 2010; Snedker, 2006). One study explores this phenomenon through pre- and post-testing of respondents who were asked to report on their crime fears. In the initial stage of the study, males and females reported their FOC to researchers. A second set of reporting was later conducted in which participants were told that physiological measures (monitoring of heart rates, in this instance) would enable researchers to determine if participants had been lying. This resulted in a large increase in the frequency of male FOC reporting, and very little difference for the female participants (Pierce & Kirkpatrick, as cited in McLean & Hope, 2010). Such studies demonstrate the potential for underreporting of FOC that may occur due to the sociability bias experienced by males.

A third demographic factor that impacts upon perceptions and experiences of crime fear is that of socioeconomic circumstance and local social and physical environments. For example, fear has been noted as being a far more significant problem in large cities and urban environments than in rural areas and small townships, consistent with statistical data on rates of crime commission (Will, 1995). While macro-level investigations into FOC tend to reinforce the idea that fear is a problem equally shared amongst all groups within a given society, the reality is that some experience this fear more than others do (Cooper, 2008; Jones, Abbott, & Quilgars, 2006). For example, neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty and unemployment typically have higher FOC (Scarborough et al., 2010; Will, 1995). Reports from those living in economically and socially segregated communities in the United States, especially minority groups, also reflect this pattern (Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998). A partial explanation is that those with wealth expend more resources on security measures (Austin, 1991; Hummelshein et al., 2011, Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998). This is further supported by findings that taking more extensive self-protective measures was positively correlated with being of high social status (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2003). It is a possibility that “income better represents perceptions that respondents may have about their abilities to insulate themselves from crime, and consequently...income is associated with lower levels of fear” (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002, p. 544).

In comparison, those with lower incomes have been identified as being more likely to engage in avoidance-style behaviours to achieve the same goal (May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010). This reflects the existing argument that poverty, area of residence, and social exclusion all obstruct the ability to manage and minimise their risk of crime victimisation (Jones, Abbott, & Quilgars, 2006; Kemshall, 2006). Lack of physical and financial resources appear linked to the greater crime fears found for those with lower levels of education, when compared with highly educated groups (Kitchen & Williams, 2010; Scarborough et al., 2010), as is increasing inequality (Ellin, 2001; Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Jones, Abbott, & Quilgars, 2006). Higher crime fears among disadvantaged groups may be influenced by actual levels of victimisation, with those in the lowest classes reporting victimisation at twice the rate of middle class citizens (ABS, 2010). Socially disadvantaged and disorganised communities tend to be associated with increased levels of gang activity and violent crimes, and these neighbourhoods also suffer from lower levels of cohesion and trust that can inhibit crime fears (Will, 1995). An international study recently reported findings that people of lower socioeconomic classes “show high levels of fear of crime mainly as a consequence of income inequality, social benefits, and expenditure on education” (Veino, Roccato, & Russo, 2013, p. 529).

Contrary to the argument that those of lower socioeconomic position possess greater levels of crime fear, it is also hypothesised that more disadvantaged groups may actually experience lower FOC than their wealthier counterparts. For example, it has been suggested that the increased frequency and intensity of exposure to crime-related risks that are experienced by those living in disadvantaged areas may lead to a sense of familiarity with these conditions, resulting in lower FOC overall (Franklin & Franklin, 2009). Overall, however, it appears that socioeconomic disadvantage is linked with increased feelings of uncertainty and insecurity stemming from reduced resources and capacity to manage risks such as crime victimisation (Jones, Abbott, & Quilgars, 2006; Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Kemshall, 2006; Kitchen & Williams, 2010; Scarborough et al., 2010). Discussion thus far indicates that this link also perpetuates heightened likelihoods of both actual crime victimisation and crime fear among the lowest socioeconomic classes.



## **Fear of Crime and Victimization**

While victimisation is acknowledged to play a role in concerns regarding crime, the findings remain inconsistent. Primarily, the argument focuses on whether direct victimisation (that which is experienced first-hand by the person) is more influential than indirect victimisation (seeing a murder scene in a fictional crime drama, or hearing about a real life crime via social networks or news media). Recent figures show that those victimised within the last 12 months reported feeling more unsafe (38%) than those who had not been victims (25%) (ABS, 2010). This supports the notion that previous victims tend to have higher levels of FOC than non-victims (Jackson & Gray, 2010; Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2012; Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998; Russo & Roccato, 2010). Yet, it was recently identified that while victimisation of property crimes increased FOC in regard to further property crimes, being a victim of violent crime was predictive of increased fear of all types of crime (Alper & Chappell, 2012). Similarly, women who had been victims of assault demonstrated much higher levels of fear than women who had not been victimised (Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2012).

The difficulty is that the consistency and duration of the impact direct victimisation has upon FOC has yet to be confirmed. Specifically, it has been noted that while recent direct victimisation has been found to strongly increase FOC, this effect tends to diminish over time periods as short as three months (Russo & Roccato, 2010). Furthermore, repeat or multiple victimisations have been found not to have a significant impact on FOC (Russo & Roccato, 2010). Other work reports that victimisation only impacts upon FOC when certain conditions are met, for example, when there is a high degree of perceived disorder within a given community (Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013).

Such inconsistencies reinforce the position held in the current literature that levels of FOC are usually experienced to an extent that is vastly disproportionate to actual likelihood of victimisation, especially for women (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Franklin, Franklin & Fearn, 2008; Russo & Roccato, 2010; Scarborough et al. 2010). So common is this tendency that it has become known as the 'fear-victimisation paradox'. The fear-victimisation paradox represents another component of the crime fear logic which guides general views and knowledge about FOC. The paradox is the tendency for those with the lowest likelihood of victimisation (e.g. women and the elderly) to have the highest fear of crime, while

those with the highest likelihood of victimisation (e.g. young adult males) tend to have much lower crime fears (Alper & Chappell, 2012). This phenomenon is part of the familiar frame of FOC works (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Franklin, Franklin & Fearn, 2008; McCrea et al., 2005; Russo & Roccato, 2010; Scarborough et al. 2010).

However, not all studies on the paradox and FOC distinguish the affective element of fear from cognitive judgements about potential risks of crime victimisation (May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013; Tseloni & Zarafonitou, 2008). The recurring issue is that the addition of the cognitive victimisation risk perception element renders FOC-related findings less valid, because the studies in question are not measuring the emotional fear response to crime on its own (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin & Fearn, 2008). Recent works provide findings in support of the role of prior victimisation in increasing crime fears, especially for women previously victimised in violent or sexually-motivated offences (Fargo, 2009; Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2012; Russo & Roccato, 2010), and in opposition of it (Kohm et al., 2013; Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013; Shippee, 2012).

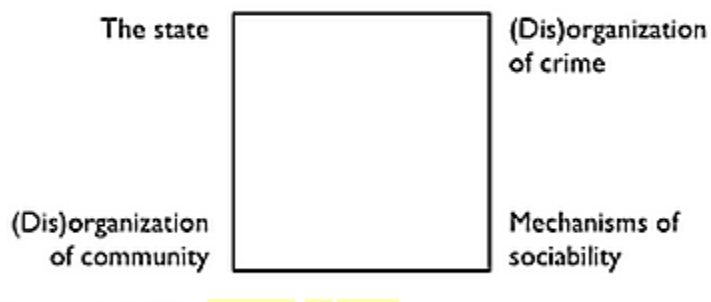
However, other research suggests that the victimisation of others in the social network, or the vicarious experience of victimisation through television media, may have a greater impact on FOC levels than being a victim oneself (Chadee & Ying, 2013; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007). For instance, it has been pointed out that “personal victimization is not as important in shaping worry about crime and precautionary behaviour as is ‘indirect victimization’...which has been found to mediate the effects of victimization on emotional worry, making those effects almost entirely indirect” (Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007, p. 246). Victims and witnesses of crime events may share information about these experiences with one another and this information can spread throughout mutual social networks, a process that is enforced by evidence that the vast majority of knowledge and understanding that young people in particular have of crime comes from indirect sources, such as friends, family members, and the media (Chadee & Ying, 2013; Kohm et al., 2013; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003).

## Trust and the Social Environment

Social trust is another important concept in the exploration of fear of crime. Walklate (2007) says that trust in others relates back to an expectation of regular and honest behaviour from these others, but that in reality, these social expectations are not always fulfilled (Walklate, 2007).

Crime fears can be seen as an argument against the proliferation of trust amongst members of the community, especially when victimisation is a factor. For example, the rate of sexual victimisation of women by men that they know and trust, rather than by unknown strangers, challenges the notion of a trusting worldview (Walklate, 2007). This creates recognition of the fact that a familiar individual may be no more trustworthy than a stranger, encouraging the breakdown of existing social bonds and discouraging the formation of new ones (Walklate, 2007). Walklate and Evans (1999) have explored the way in which trust influences a sense of ontological security, formulating a theory known as the 'square of trust' (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Walklate and Evans' Square of Trust (1999)



Where a person is situated within the four mechanisms of the square impacts upon who can be trusted and how much people can trust others. This suggests that communities with high disorganisation, poor mechanisms of sociability, reluctance to offer trust to members of state institutions such as the police, and crime characterised by high levels of organisation would foster very low levels of trust, for example. The hazards and

uncertainties associated with the modern world are also indicated to be detrimental to the formulation of social trust (Hollway & Jefferson, 1997).

Mistrust of others and a fear of strangers are cited as key components of the FOC concept (Jackson & Gray, 2010; Sommerfeldt, 2013) while tendencies towards particularised trust have failed to promote the formation of social capital that plays a vital role in relationship-building with others in the community (Sommerfeldt, 2013). This extends not only to other civilians, but also to law enforcement agents and justice representatives. Trust and positive perceptions of the effectiveness of police in the local area have been found to be associated with decreasing crime fears (Collins, 1991), and the AIC's victimisation survey reported greater feelings of unsafety among those who believed the police were performing poorly in regard to dealing with local crime problems (Johnson, 2005). Beck (as cited in Dupuis & Thorns, 2008, p. 151) suggests that this change may become increasingly widespread as people "have lost trust in the capacity of institutions to solve contemporary problems". The proliferation of fear that can result from a lack of belief that law enforcement can competently manage and prevent crime is then argued to lead to greater distrust and fear of others in the local area, causing withdrawal from participation in community activities (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008).

Social trust plays a role in the interpretation and perception of crime victimisation risks and accompanying emotional responses (Rader & Cossman, 2011; Walklate, 2007; Visser, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2013). In particular, research on the impact of physical and social disorder upon crime fear suggests that the presence of such disorder erodes trust in the members of a community, while the experience of being socially integrated and trusting others in neighbourhood is said to reduce FOC (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Conklin, 1975; Jackson, 2004; Renauer, 2007). It is possible that trust in particular may influence feelings of fear or safety within more insulated and socially active communities.

The exploration of trust has revolved around the college and university environment, and inferences are supported by evidence that the cloistered physical and social environments afforded by college campuses may promote the development of generalised trust and a sense of belonging among students (Rader & Cossman, 2011). Students perceive themselves to be at a much lower risk of being victimised by other students on their campus than by non-student perpetrators. Much literature concerned with the role of the

social environment identifies the capacity for greater generalised trust and community involvement that fosters cohesion to enhance a sense of stability within a given community (Kaina, 2011; Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Lorenc et al., 2013; Oh & Kim, 2009; Sommerfeldt, 2013; Walklate, 2007). The claim is that this counteracts the sense of uncertainty and perceptions about unsafety and disorder that form from experiences within physical and social surroundings (Brunton-Smith, 2011; Jackson & Gray, 2010; Lorenc et al., 2013). Recent research is supportive of this view, finding that cohesion in communities reduces social disorder (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Scarborough et al., 2010).

The prevailing argument is that society is largely governed by the need to calculate, manage, and avoid the occurrence of risks, whether these are to an individual, a group, or the entirety of the society itself (Azmanova, 2011; Beck, 1992; Lupton & Tulloch, 1999; Walklate & Mythen, 2008). Emphasis is placed on the individual responsibilities of people in protecting themselves from risks, including that presented by crime, with the implication that victimisation is the result of failure to adequately secure the self and personal belongings against the risk of this occurring (Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010). This contradicts the very nature of social trust, implying that others cannot be relied upon to help protect against potential victimisation by crime. The cumulative effect is that the world is a dangerous and uncertain place, where people cannot be trusted and each individual must take measures to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their valuables from the risk represented by criminal victimisation. This is the formation of the fearful culture that is believed to characterise post-modern Western communities. In these types of social environments, the predominant view is that other people are untrustworthy, and that potential offenders lurk around every corner waiting for victims (Azmanova, 2011; Critcher, 2011; Dupuis & Thorns, 2008; Heber, 2011).

Overall, it appears that the relationship between fear of crime and development of social trust is bi-directional in nature. Fear in general appears to decrease trust and cohesion, while social relationships which are mutually trusting foster greater trust and promote cohesiveness and reciprocity, thereby reducing fear of crime (Sommerfeldt, 2013; Zanin, Radice, & Marra, 2013). This is supported by recent findings which identified that social cohesion and trust had a significant impact on levels of crime fear, where more extensive

social networks were associated with lower FOC (Oh & Kim, 2009). Another study has explicitly identified trust as influencing fear of victimisation of physical interpersonal crimes, with findings that, “trusting neighbours has more of an effect on fear of violent crime than perceptions of disorder or prior victimization” (Alper & Chappell, 2012, p. 360). This effect may not carry over to property related offences, because “trust has less of an effect on fear of property crime than perceptions of disorder or prior victimization” (Alper & Chappell, 2012, pp. 360-361).

Of the existing explanations of FOC, trust seems to align most closely with the social integration model. It encourages the participation of individuals in their community, as community members who trust each other are likely to be more cooperative and also to take more active roles within the neighbourhood (Zanin, Radice, & Marra, 2013). Indeed it may be that the sense of belonging and trust among students on the same college campus may motivate students to intervene in cases where a crime might occur (Rader & Cossman, 2011). The apparent bi-directional relationship between fear and trust means that strong levels of crime fear may impede the social trust and integration processes, however. FOC is described as a “corrosive factor” and a “serious obstacle to the development and maintenance of high social trust”, indicating the power that fear holds in its capacity to thwart trust within communities (Zanin, Radice, & Marra, 2013, p. 524). Contrarily, the fostering of social trust between individuals, agencies, and communities can help to minimize crime fears (Portela, Neira, & Salinas-Jimenez, 2013; Sherchan, Nepal, & Paris, 2013; Zanin, Radice, & Marra, 2013).

### **Fear of Alternative Crime Types**

Despite the widespread investigation of FOC over many decades, there is a lack of the application to offences other than ‘street crime’. In particular, while the criminological enterprise has addressed perceptions concerning white-collar, domestic, and cyber-offending (Dodge, Bosick, & Van Antwerpen, 2013; Piquero, Carmichael, & Piquero, 2008; Wall, 2008; Yamawaki et al., 2012), little attention has been given to crime fear in relation to these categories of offences. This may be in part due to the limited coverage of such crimes in the news media (Allen & Savigny, 2012), where for example assaults

taking place between domestic partners traditionally were ignored (Johnson, 2005). The simple lack of visibility of such crimes to the general public may have led to less consideration of the risks of falling victim to these offences. To further this argument, crimes such as white-collar, cyber, and domestic offences often do not provide the media with a visible victim whom they can present to audiences as an object deserving of empathy (Devereux, 2014; Dodge, Bosick, & Van Antwerp, 2013). This is consistent with the ongoing tendencies for white-collar crimes in particular to generate less outrage from the public, despite the often massive amounts of harm caused (Dodge, Bosick, & Van Antwerp, 2013).

Given the constant expansion of globalisation and the development of technologies which provide new opportunities for crime (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Walklate & Mythen, 2008), it is important that this gap in the FOC research is rapidly and accurately addressed. At present, available evidence suggests that fear of cyber and white-collar crimes is at least as complex as fear of street crime (ABS, 2011a; 2011b; Henson, Reynolds, & Fisher, 2013; Wall, 2008), although online financial fraud and identity theft have been identified as being the most feared type of crime among Australian adults (ABS, 2011a; 2011b). There is some empirical evidence to suggest that white-collar offending is considered to be at least as serious as street crime, especially by older age groups, or those more highly educated (Piquero, Carmichael, & Piquero, 2008). The myths that continue to surround the area of domestic violence in general may have precluded this sub-category of crimes from receiving the necessary empirical attention to date. For example, common views surrounding domestic violence include the view that verbal and emotional abuse are not acts of domestic victimisation, and that victims who return to their abusers are to blame for their own circumstances (Yamawaki et al., 2012). Furthermore, there appears to be confusion among people about what sorts of behaviour constitute domestic crimes. For example, while it is generally agreed that it is acceptable for a female to slap a male, it is not believed to be acceptable for a male to strike a female (Chapin, 2009). Female-perpetrated stalking may be seen as more deviant than male stalking (Chapin, 2009).

Thus there has been little research about fear of other crime types. The lessened newsworthiness of these crime events, as well as the problems in identifying a victim, means that reporting of these offences and by extension the public response to them is

minimal. There are some recently published works which identify that fear of online financial victimisation is relatively high among Australian populations, but such patterns are infrequent and studies require further replication. The continuing developments in globalisation and technology which have come to characterise first-world Western communities, however, indicate that further study in the area of fear of alternative crime types is needed.

### **Summation of Fear of Crime Literature**

This chapter has addressed several aspects of the FOC literature as prior studies have attempted to explore and explain this phenomenon across space and time. While patterns of crime fear and the nature of the FOC experience appear to vary widely throughout, there are several key issues of consistency within this body of criminological study. Women are consistently found to report higher levels of crime fear than men. Likewise, those of lower socioeconomic status and education level tend to have higher FOC. This is posited to be due to both of these demographics being at greater vulnerability to victimisation in comparison to other groups. Direct victimisation can also heighten victimisation fears, however this may not remain constant over time. Indirect reports of crime victimisation can also impact upon perceptions of crime risk. The levels of trust in a given social environment have a bidirectional relationship to the levels of crime fear in that environment and this effect changes with crime type. Finally, despite the vast body of extant FOC literature, cyber, white-collar, and domestic violence offences have received little attention from scholars in this field. Table 3 summarises the main points surrounding crime fear as established by existing research.



Table 3. Points of consistency in FOC literature

<b>Key Findings on Factors Affecting Crime Fear</b>	
<b>Women report higher levels of crime fear than men</b>	Females generally experience higher FOC than male counterparts. This is argued to be a function of higher perceived vulnerability of women to interpersonal violence and sexual attacks. Socialisation processes are suggested to have conditioned the differences in male and female feelings of and reporting of crime fear.
<b>Socioeconomic disadvantage is linked to higher victimisation risk and crime fear</b>	Being of lower education, socioeconomic status, and living in a lower-class area are associated with heightened concerns about crime and perceived victimisation risk. Lower classes have a reduced financial capacity to put crime prevention measures in place. This leads to higher victimisation risk and higher crime fear.
<b>Both direct and indirect victimisation experiences impact upon crime fear</b>	FOC is generally higher for those who have been victimised than for non-victims, but this effect depends on crime type and length of time since victimisation. Media and the experiences of those in the social network can affect perceptions of vulnerability and risk. It is not yet established whether direct or indirect victimisation has a more significant impact on crime fear
<b>Social trust and crime fear share a bidirectional relationship</b>	Social trust can lower FOC within a community, however high crime fear also reduces social trust. This effect is altered depending on the type of crime feared e.g. interpersonal violence versus property offences.
<b>FOC research has been insufficiently addressed in relation to white-collar, cyber, and domestic offending</b>	This is suggested to be caused by less obvious perpetrators and victims, less coverage by the media, and a lower overall visibility and clarity of these types of crimes as they are perceived by the public.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Literature Review: Crime Risk, Technology, and Prevention**

This chapter is devoted to the investigation of areas of risk and personal crime prevention strategies as these issues apply to young people. The first half of the chapter identifies the theoretical foundations of the risk concept given their relationship to fear of crime, and its continuing relevance in crime fear research. The role of social discourse in manipulating and disseminating information about crime victimisation and associated risks is also canvassed, accompanied by a brief discussion of the interrelationship between FOC and the politics of modern governance. This is followed by an overview of the Net Generation concept created by Don Tapscott (1998), an important approach to understanding the circumstances which have contributed to the behavioural and cognitive characteristics of adults who have grown up in a world of digital media resources and devices. This includes a summary of risky behaviours given that such actions can increase, rather than reduce, susceptibility to victimisation.

#### **Crime Risk and Social Discourse - Key Approaches to Theoretical Discussions of Risk**

An introduction to the risk society thesis (Beck, 1992) has been provided in Chapter One. However, the following section goes beyond the basics of this approach to understanding risk and risk management by examining the thesis as it relates to crime and crime fears. Aspects such as the socio-demographic characteristics of the risk society, the way in which crime risk has become individualised through this paradigm, and the role that social discourse plays in how crime risk information is disseminated and shared are explored below.

##### *Socio-demographic Features of the Risk Society*

What constitutes risky behaviour is affected by a range of demographic characteristics including gender, age and ethnicity, as well as personal life experiences (Austen, 2009;

Bauman, 1997; Mythen, 2007). With respect to age, for example, research suggests that young people have very different views of risk from that put forth in the original risk society thesis. Young people live in increasingly uncertain conditions and so risky behaviour may be used as a way of coping with the day-to-day stresses of living with that uncertainty (Lupton, 1999). Indeed, risk-taking can enhance social integration for some youth subcultures, where members will voluntarily commit minor crimes such as shoplifting or vandalism in order to reinforce their group status (Mythen, 2007). Likewise, socialising with friends in public environments (which can increase victimisation risk) has been associated with lower levels of fear among young people (Cops, 2010).

Young people tend to exhibit an optimistic bias, whereby they downplay the riskiness of certain behaviours (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982). They also tend not to be inherently concerned about risk and reject negative labels associated with risk-taking behaviours (Austen, 2009). Some youthful cohorts seek to portray themselves as risk-averse, especially when compared to older or authority figures (Austen, 2009). This appears to be an avowal of the negative perceptions connected with the types of risk-taking common among young people, such as binge-drinking, casual sexual encounters and partying behaviours (Austen, 2009; Cops, 2010; Testa & Livingston, 2009). Gendered patterns of risky behaviour have undergone significant change in recent decades with a confluence in the risk-opportunity structure for males and females, and risk literature tends to be viewed through a masculine lens (Chan & Rigakos, 2002). In addition, women tend to take part in sexually risky behaviours, such as casual coupling, having sexual relations while heavily intoxicated, and prostitution (Chan & Rigakos, 2002; Franklin, 2010; Testa & Livingston, 2009).

Socioeconomic status also appears to affect perceptions and management of risks. Possession of economic resources and higher class status have an effect upon how people deal with risks in the risk society, despite Beck's position that the experience of risk in the post-industrial era has become increasingly decoupled from existing class structures (Cooper, 2008). It has been suggested that members of different class categories exist within different risk societies, in which individuals "are more or less vulnerable and more

or less on their own” depending on their socioeconomic status (Cooper, 2008, p. 1258). This aligns with the neoliberal attitudes of many post-modern Western styles of government, where individualised and self-disciplined styles of personal governance are common (Azmanova, 2011; Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). Neoliberalism promotes the idea that the individual is not only the bearer of their own risks, but are also responsible for the choices they make about these risks and the consequences of those decisions (Azmanova, 2011; Cooper, 2008; Lee, 1999). Such approaches to government de-emphasise the role of socioeconomic class in the risks people face and their ability to deal with these risks (Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). However, evidence consistently seems to indicate that the class to which a person belongs holds significance in regard to both of these issues.

### *Individualisation in the Risk Society*

With the tendency towards the individualisation of responsibility for crime risks, individual-level preventative strategies have become increasingly common in recent years (Zedner, 2007). The proliferation of gated neighbourhoods is but one example of attempts to mitigate crime risks (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008). This may be a means of dealing with the overarching uncertainty that prevails in the modern risk society, as the threat of crime may be perceived as a risk which can be acted upon and controlled to some extent (Dupuis & Thorns, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 1997). Overall, there is an acknowledgement of the fact that while risk management is possible in the attempt to prevent crime, this risk cannot be eliminated entirely (Cooper, 2008; Handmer & James, 2007).

Alternative perspectives on the concept of risk argue that the negative overarching connotation of risks fails to consider a number of important aspects surrounding risk aversion and personal security measures. For example, risk is not always an aversive concept, but can present both positive and negative outcomes (Austen, 2009; Bauman, 1997; Mythen, 2007; Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Yates, 2003). Further, some people actively engage in risky actions as a way of having fun, experiencing pleasure, or rebelling against society (Austen, 2009; Cops, 2010; Mythen, 2007). An investigation by Lupton and Tulloch (2002), found that risk, while largely described in a negative fashion,

was also viewed as positive in some ways. Participants noted that in many circumstances, while they might be fearful of taking a certain risk, they were aware of the potential benefits if the risk worked in their favour, such as having fun or novel experiences.

In contrast to Beck's assertions that government, science and industrial development are seen as major contributors to risks, some evidence suggests that risk is rooted in individual circumstances, being about personal lifestyles and particularised perceptions (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Risks are seen as "an ever-pervasive part of life...strongly tied to individuals' life situations, which were seen to both expose them to certain risks and influence the ways in which they viewed phenomena as risks or not" (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002, p. 331). This indicates that it is perhaps risks that occur at the micro-level of society – that of the individual – than those which occur on macro-level global scales which represent a lesser cause for fear and concern among the general public. Such perspectives stand in contrast with Beck's argument that it is these macro-level risks which are increasingly coming to the fore in the present era (Beck, 1992). However, Beck appears to be suggesting that while local risks to which people are exposed in everyday life are sources of fear, global risks are seen as more threatening to communities as a whole. Smaller, more individualised risks in life are also easier to manage and prevent than risks such as climate change, international terrorism, or war.

Another issue of importance is that of deliberate risk-taking behaviours. Some people are collectors of new sensations – sensation-gatherers – and constantly seek novel and thrilling experiences that open new avenues of excitement (Bauman, 1997). Illicit drug use, binge drinking, and fighting with peers are examples of illegal behaviours adopted by sensation-gathering individuals, whom Bauman (1997) suggests possess personality traits such as impulsivity, spontaneity, and a general dissatisfaction with rules and regulations. The greater the risk, the more attractive it may be (Bauman, 1997). The upholding of social and legal norms is overruled by the desire for new and exciting experiences, and ignorance of these normative systems occurs during the commission of the risky act (Bauman, 1997).

### *Risk in an Era of Choice*

The idea of sensation-gathering shares some commonalities with the risk society thesis, specifically in that both argue that a breakdown of traditional social norms and values is currently taking place as part of the changing ideas about risk. In an environment where risk and uncertainty are more pervasive in daily life, trust in these pre-existing life-course patterns and social traditions has deteriorated. Young adults now study, work, and live in different conditions than their parents (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). The increased levels of freedom and autonomy that are said to characterise this latest generation of adults (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998; 2009) mean that young people have a wider variety of choices available to them in regards to how they will plan and carry out their lives. Decreasing adherence to the traditions of previous generations appears to create the impression of a less controlled, more risky social culture, where the previous securities of lifelong jobs and marriages with children lose prominence (Beck, 1992; Cooper, 2008; Ekberg, 2007). No longer are life paths laid out for young people to follow, and Beck argues that this creates more risks, since there is increased pressure to make the right choices and rely on plans and resources to attain security and comfort in the risk society (Cooper, 2008; Neocleous, 2013).

### *Summary*

Overall, Beck's risk society thesis is a helpful lens through which to examine the phenomenon of crime fears in Western democracies. The thesis explains the nature of risk and the role it plays in governing thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It demonstrates how institutions of power, especially the mass media, have constructed and disseminated risk from a local to the global scale. It shows how social transformations have led to the disintegration of trust in public institutions and in authority figures. The thesis also continues to be applicable given the neo-liberal approaches to governmentality which tend to characterise many First-World Western nations. Individualisation of risk perception and risk management are consistent with distrust in experts and authorities, as well as with the expanding variety of choices available to people in how they choose to conduct and govern their own lives. These facets in particular are useful to the present thesis. The tendency for young people to be more ambivalent appraisers of risk who may

engage deliberately in risky actions and carve out their life trajectories from an increasing array of choices surrounding education, employment, and family is also of significance given the focus of this thesis upon young adults. Thirdly, Beck's inclusion of the mass media as influencing the way in which risks are learned about and acted upon also facilitates discussion of this influence as it applies to young people, helping to address the questions of where this demographic acquires their risk information and how, if at all, it affects their risk management behaviours.

The risk society thesis is not without its shortcomings however, especially in the manner in which it can be applied more than two decades later in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Specifically, limitations exist in Beck's work (1992) concerning the way in which media impacts upon perceptions of risks among the general public, as well as Beck's conceptualisation of risk as a perpetually negative phenomenon (Tulloch & Lupton, 2001; Wilkinson, 2001). Furthermore, there are inconsistencies in the way in which Beck seeks to both define risk in an objective fashion and describe it as something which is inherently affected by the way in which people interpret and understand it (Tulloch & Lupton, 2001). This indicates that it is not the theoretical but the social construction of risk that is most important when applying the concepts of the risk society to personal crime prevention behaviours. The characteristics of the individual cannot be overlooked in the analysis of actions that may increase risk of criminal victimisation, as well as in studying the actions taken to reduce victimisation risks. This is especially relevant to young people, who possess more ambivalent attitudes towards risk-taking than other groups and who are currently breaking away from the social traditions, norms, and values which are argued to have offered security (or, at least, the illusion of security) for preceding generations (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

#### *Social Discourse and the Dissemination of Risk Information*

Indirect experiences with crime may increase crime fears. This is supported by findings that exposure to media reports on crime trends and to people in the immediate social circle that have been victimised has a mediating effect on FOC (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Kohm et al., 2013). Recent research into indirect victimisation has produced inconsistent

findings. This is reported to be due to true victimisation rates being unknown due to large discrepancies in reporting rates between males and females (Tomisch, Gover, & Jennings, 2011; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Snedker, 2006). The breadth of experiences that can be conceptualised as indirect victimisation may also be a contributing factor.

Another facet of social discourse which impacts constructions of crime risks is mass media. The media has a substantial influence on the manner in which information about crime and victimisation risks are selected, reported, and disseminated to the general public (Critcher, 2011; Devereux, 2014; Innes, 2003; Lee, 1999). Evidence indicates that the way in which the mass media report on crime can exacerbate victimisation fears (Kohm et al., 2013). Television viewing in particular is argued to cultivate inaccurate beliefs about the frequency and nature of crime, as well as the types of people who perpetrate it and are victimised by it (Gerbner et al., 1986). This then leads to formation of a ‘mean world’ view which perpetuates fear and distrust at individual, community, and societal levels (Critcher, 2011; Gerbner et al., 1986).

The cumulative result of the mass media’s style of reporting is argued to be heightened levels of crime fear disproportionate to actual risk of victimisation, as well as an inaccurate picture of what crime looks like and who it is perpetrated by (Devereux, 2014; Heber, 2011; Innes, 2003; Lee, 1999). Governmental influence must also be taken into account here, given that many crime news stories are often informed or supplemented by commentary from political claims-makers, law enforcement agencies, and even criminological ‘experts’ under state employ (Critcher, 2011; Lee, 1999). FOC can be useful as a means of garnering public support for punitive ‘get-tough’ approaches to crime and justice issues, and media news outlets which perpetuate (explicitly or otherwise) fearful attitudes may benefit the agendas of various political parties (Azmanova, 2011; Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Lee, 1999; Neocleous, 2013). Overall, the problem of the mass media in relation to crime fear is that the way in which mass media reports and socially constructs risks tends to encourage that fear is “the only sensible and rational reaction to an increasingly unsafe, dystopian society” (Heber, 2011, p. 75). This is linked to the extant crime fear logic of populations having FOC which is irrationally high in comparison with actual levels of victimisation, since media coverage creates an unrealistic image of criminal events.



### *The Political Economy of Crime Fear*

As mentioned above, political agendas and contemporary styles of governance are linked with FOC as a social scientific concept. As this concept is altered by major social changes, so too is it affected by politics. Public opinions and values influence political objectives in relation to researching and managing criminal justice issues (Lee, 1999). Indeed, it was a perceived need to resolve the ‘problem’ of public crime fear which emerged from survey research in the 1960s and spurred much of the focus on FOC for criminologists over the following decades (Lee, 1999). This conceptualisation of FOC by governments continues to fuel its investigation today. Parties of all political orientations have allocated resources and reached out to federal research and statistical institutions to maintain a clear picture of what FOC is and how prevalent it is amongst the general population (Lee, 1999; 2007).

Despite the growing knowledge base fed by this research, when developing policies to tackle crime fear governments gravitate towards ‘get-tough’ approaches to managing crime and offenders, with the misguided notion that such strategies will reduce crime, and therefore fears associated with crime (Lee, 1999). These policies, while ineffective, may be popular with voters since they may appear to be a logical and sensible means of crime control (Azmanova, 2011; Lee, 1999). The adoption of populist policies then becomes useful in helping the political party in question either gain or maintain approval and thus benefits their position within the presiding government (Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Lee, 1999).

The fact that FOC can indirectly be a tool for the acquisition of political power or the maintenance of hegemony is important because it facilitates and shapes further research endeavours into crime fear. FOC is already complex and difficult to define and explain, and this is compounded by the fact that it does not exist in a socio-political vacuum. This is exemplified in the risk-management and security-obsessed public agendas observable in modern Western democracies such as Australia and the US, where governments emphasise the need for securitisation against global-level threats such as terrorism (Cricher, 2011; Hawdon & Wood, 2014). Regulatory policy encourages the individual to take responsibility for managing the risks in their lives and works against the idea of community welfare and the manifestation of social trust (Cricher, 2011; Hawdon &

Wood, 2014). This may encourage adoption of risk-management and preventive strategies for communities and individuals. Further, crime news media foci and the information they receive from government claims-makers help to present stories of danger and risk to the public and (sometimes explicitly) advocate for the punitive and security-oriented mentality which dominates political discourse (Azmanova, 2011; Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Lee, 1999). This worldview is maintained in spite of the fact that at present, the global community is more stable and 'safe' than in any previous era of history (Cricher, 2011). This paradox demonstrates the strength of influence held by media and government discourse in the shaping of public opinion and perceptions of risk.

### **Risk-Taking and the Net Generation**

The Net Generation are said to be highly skilled with technology and computation, and faster at learning new technologies than older generations. Due to the pervasiveness of digital technology in their lives, these people are superior multi-taskers and used to acquiring information quickly and easily via online sources (Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010; Tapscott, 2009). Digital media has a highly visible and important instrumental and expressive role in their lives (Westlund & Bjur, 2014). Their critical thinking skills in particular have received praise, as the availability of information on the Internet means that close scrutiny is required to determine the accuracy of data (Kennedy et al., 2010; Tapscott, 1998; 2009).

The Net Generation tend to learn through experiencing events for themselves (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998). Experiential accounts of criminal victimisation may be seen as more trustworthy for the wider generation of young people than news media, for example, as there appears to be a general view of social distrust of corporations and media outlets for this demographic (Tapscott, 1998). The Internet empowers users to ask their own questions and find their own answers and Net Generation members are able to attain information about a news event with speed and ease (Kennedy et al., 2010; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 1998; 2009). In accordance with their patterns of media use and aptitudes for digital technology, a vast majority of young people use the Internet as their primary information-seeking tool (Smith, Skrbis, & Western, 2012).

Another role of technology in the lives of the Net Generation relates to privacy. Students tend to be less aware of the possibilities and consequences of digital technology usage and online social networking than other groups (Albrechtslund, 2008; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Younger people are more likely to provide real information about themselves, their lifestyles, and their familiars via social networking sites than older adults (Doster, 2013; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2009). Information shared by users of social networking sites in particular may be personal and emotionally open, creating the possibility for other parties to take advantage of these young people (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014; Doster 2013; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). However, in engaging in regular social networking and the use of Internet sites to communicate with others, it is also possible that young people are managing their own risks of cyber-crime victimisation through the process of lateral surveillance.

Coined by Andrejevik (2005), lateral surveillance refers to the occurrence of peer-to-peer monitoring of friends, family, and colleagues. There is no one all-powerful watcher, as with more traditional hierarchical patterns of surveillance, and all participants watch the activities of one another in the online environment (Andrejevik, 2005). This is made simpler by the existence of sites such as Facebook, which provides a rapid and simple means by which users can check the activities, associations, and even whereabouts of their online connections (Andrejevik, 2005; 2011; Awan & Gauntlett, 2014; Doster, 2013). Young people, as prominent users of such technologies, are able to check for potential risks in the online communities of which they are members. There is an awareness of the need to monitor the behaviour of others in a young person's online environment as a part of taking responsibility for the security of oneself, as on the Internet people are not always who they appear to be (Andrejevik, 2005; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Frequent usage of the social networking technology favoured by the Net Generation therefore facilitates a means of managing risks and exposure to potential offenders online.

Young adults (of whom the Net Generation is largely comprised) hold ambivalent views to stereotypical risk-taking as it relates to the integrity of themselves and their personal property. Potentially, this ambivalence is explained by the greater tendency towards risky behaviours among adolescents and young adults in comparison with older groups (Cops, 2010; Kelley-Baker et al., 2011; Testa & Livingston, 2009; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009).

It is possible that this perspective on risky behaviours is tied to the Net Generation's ability to accept and adapt to rapidly changing life conditions, as swift social, political, technological and economic change often brings with it a level of uncertainty about who will be affected by this change, and how these effects will manifest.

Following this line of reasoning, young adult members of the Net Generation exist in a world characterised by continual uncertainties in which they are not only familiar with and accustomed to a lack of distinct known factors, but also in which personal crime risks may seem trivial and unimportant in comparison. This poses a potential explanation for lower levels of fear among this age group, as they are able to adapt and adjust faster to changes in the social and physical world which surrounds them (Jones et al., 2010; Tapscott, 2009). Crime victimisation, while a significant risk for their generation, also may pale in comparison with other issues over which the Net Generation feels greater levels of insecurity.

Another defining characteristic of the Net Generation is their high levels of independence and autonomy, by which they choose to take control of their own lifestyles and the risks inherent in these. Tapscott (1998, p. 85) claims that the youngest generation of adults are "alert, aware, focused, and certainly in control". They are described as knowing the risks associated with their on- and off-line activities and being capable of evaluating these effectively (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). There may therefore be a sense among this demographic that self-reliance is important and that they should control their own lives. This attitude fits with the notion of individuals adopting personal crime prevention strategies and taking responsibility for the minimisation of their own victimisation risks. The same idea is also consistent with the individualisation of blame for becoming a crime victim, whereby a person putting themselves in the way of potential harms or failing to adequately protect themselves and their property is held accountable for their own victimisation (Walklate & Mythen, 2008; 2010). If young people believe they cannot rely on state institutions to create or present opportunities for their futures perhaps they have similar attitudes about the ability of state bodies to protect them from risks such as crime. This could impact upon their decision-making about crime risk management and the strategies they adopt in response to the victimisation threat.

## **Risk-Taking Behaviours**

Actions which may increase potential victimisation risk range from the deliberate to the unintentional and can extend to living conditions and past victimisation experiences. One particular set of behavioural tendencies is called ‘risky altruism’ (Homant, 2013; Homant & Kennedy, 2012). This is defined as altruistic behaviours that place the actor under a significantly increased risk of criminal victimisation, for example, giving a stranger a lift (Homant, 2013; Homant & Kennedy, 2012). It has been found that victimisation by strangers is more prevalent among risky altruists than other groups, with riskier groups reporting nearly double the experiences with crime victimisation (Homant, 2013). However, it was also noted that despite increased experiences with crime victimisation in comparison to others, the differences in fear felt by risky altruists in comparison with ‘safe’ altruists was insignificant (Homant, 2013). This pattern may be caused by risky altruists being frequently active in situations facilitating criminal victimisation, and inaccurately judging their own victimisation risk (Homant, 2013).

Disregard for the potential risks of a given environment or situation is a further example of risk-taking behaviours that are counter-productive to preventing or minimizing chances of becoming a victim of crime. This can occur where a “familiarity with...a given context may largely nullify the potentially fear inducing physical features of that context” (Lorenc et al., 2013, p. 6). This could lead to a reduction in individual-level crime prevention and general situational awareness. An abandonment of such measures for preventing victimisation is considered to be risk-taking behaviour in itself (Homant, 2013; Homant & Kennedy, 2012).

Other risky behaviours that contradict personal crime prevention measures include social consumption of alcohol (Fargo, 2009; Franklin, 2010; Testa, Hoffman, & Livingston, 2010; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009). The psychotropic effects of even small to moderate amounts of alcohol impede judgement, reaction times, and altered perceptions of environmental and social cues, which increases the potential for a person to become a victim of crime (Kelley-Baker et al., 2011; Monks et al., 2010; Testa & Livingston, 2009). This increased risk of victimisation occurs purely by virtue of being in a social environment where alcohol is being consumed, regardless of alcohol consumption by the

individual (Testa, Hoffman, & Livingston, 2010; Testa & Livingston, 2009; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009).

This pattern is reflected among other research, which identifies that sexual sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviours, such as having several sexual partners, engaging in casual coupling or 'hook-ups' and drinking heavily prior to sexual activity are all behaviours that can significantly increase risk of sexual assault (Fargo, 2009; Franklin, 2010; Monks et al., 2010; Testa, Hoffman, & Livingston, 2010; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009). Risk-taking behaviours in regards to both alcohol use and sexual activity are also more likely to produce the conditions supporting sexual victimisation among college students than amongst older age groups. Empirical study suggests that this is due to the culture of alcohol and relationship-independent sex that is fostered within the college social environment (Franklin, 2010; Kelley-Baker et al., 2011; Testa & Livingston, 2009; Vander Ven & Beck, 2009).

### **Summation of Crime and Risk Literature**

In summary, the existing literature suggest that because of the highly uncertain nature of global, political, and economic risks faced, communities have become characterised by the need to calculate, assess, and protect themselves from potential harms and losses. The way in which young adults perceive and respond to these risks appears to be different to that of older generations, and this change is argued to be heavily influenced by the advent and rapid progress of digital technology and devices in the past two decades. The politicisation of the FOC issue during the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century has fuelled the idea of crime fear as a social 'problem' requiring resolution, and this mentality has permeated the relationship between FOC research and the handling of crime and justice issues in the public spectrum over the last five decades. Social discourse feeds and amplifies social constructions of these risks and the threats they represent at the individual and community levels, and people aim to take measures to control and reduce vulnerability to these.

While people cannot control all threats, that which is represented by crime is highly visceral and salient, and represents a suitable manifestation of a threat that can (at least to

some extent) be controlled. Engaging in security strategies to prevent crime victimisation therefore provides citizens with the illusion of control which serves to reduce immediate crime fears, though pre-existing concerns about social insecurities and global-level risks may still remain. Many of these concerns are influenced and fed in part by political discourse and agendas put forth in relation to threat-management at a societal level. Despite this, some demographics, especially young people, continue to actively participate in risk-taking behaviours which render them more likely to be victimised by crime. The major points specified within this chapter are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Points of consistency in crime and risk literature

<b>Key Findings From Risk and Crime Prevention Literature</b>
<p><b>The risk society is characterised by obsession with risk management and reduction</b>            Communities have become more preoccupied with avoiding harms and losses, such as those resulting from crime victimisation, than with gaining benefits and achievements.</p>
<p><b>There is an increasing individualisation of responsibility for crime prevention</b>            Crime prevention is a task for each person or household, rather than police or government institutions. If a person becomes a crime victim, that victimisation is seen to be the result of their own failure to adequately manage their victimisation risk.</p>
<p><b>Young adults known as Net Generation members have lifestyles and attitudes shaped by rapid developments in digital technology</b>            This group have grown up in a world of constant uncertainty, rapid change, and access to massive amounts of information and means of communication, influencing how they think and feel about crime.</p>
<p><b>Media reporting influences hence the social construction of risks, but may be superseded by social and on-demand media</b>            The dissemination of risk information tells us who and what should be feared. Constructions of risk by the media create the idea that societies are constantly under threat. Social media and on-demand information sources appear to be having an increasing influence on these constructions as preference for these sources increases.</p>

## **The Cumulative Findings from Prior Literature**

The issues raised in the current thesis present a strong case for the need for ongoing reassessment and reconceptualisation of the FOC phenomenon. Primarily, the pervasiveness of risk may be increasing awareness of risks but reducing fear through familiarity with these risks. Harm and loss prevention appear to be taking precedence over acquisition of positives and achievement of goals in the risk society. Increasing globalisation and the risks connected with this process, such as terrorism and economic crises, may be further affecting how individual-level risks like crime prevention are perceived. For example, personal crime risks are more actionable and able to be controlled than global-level risks, thus the former are of less concern than the latter. The growing tendency towards the individual responsabilisation of crime prevention is also thought to help shape personal crime prevention strategies and attitudes towards victimisation. This includes the practice of victim-blaming, whereby a crime victim is seen as having failed to adequately protect themselves and is therefore at fault and undeserving of sympathy.

These points demonstrate the necessity for reconceptualising fear of crime and how it is experienced in contemporary times. This need is especially important in regard to young people, who are overrepresented as crime victims and often live lifestyles which place them at greater risk of criminal victimisation. Hence, the attitudes and behaviours of this group as a result of their perceptions about crime and crime risks are the main focus of the current study.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Shortcomings of Traditional Research and the Emergence of Crime Awareness**

In spite of the extensive empirical investigation into the FOC concept, there still remain gaps and limitations within the literature. This chapter canvasses these shortcomings and the challenges with which they present the FOC researcher in the post-modern context. The first section reports the major voids within this body of criminological investigation, specifically, the infrequency with which fears of crime white-collar, cyber, and domestic violence are studied. The methodological problems currently affecting the validity and accuracy of FOC research will be examined. Specifically, the issues presented through the study of FOC using quantitative methods are presented, and difficulties in the conceptualisation of the crime fear phenomenon itself are canvassed.

The examination of problems in extant crime fear research was fuelled by prior research undertaken by the candidate. This involved qualitative focus group discussions about FOC, risk, and personal prevention behaviours (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). The emergence of crime awareness was a serendipitous occurrence that dominated the group discussions. The awareness idea reflected the comments made by participants in the seminal study by Lupton (2000), and a review of the literature indicated that such a concept might have some relevance in a reconceptualization of crime fear. For this reason, the discussions from the candidate's previous research were included in the current thesis. This chapter briefly describes these and summarises the themes which arose.

#### **Gaps in Existing Literature**

As noted earlier a key problem with existing research is that there has been an overwhelming focus on street crime. Few researchers have explored the nature, prevalence, and incidence of crime fear for white-collar, domestic, and cyber-offending (Dodge, Bosick, & Van Antwerpen, 2013; Piquero, Carmichael, & Piquero, 2008; Wall, 2008; Yamawaki et al., 2012). At present the available evidence suggests that fear of cyber and white-collar crimes is at least as complex as fear of street crime (ABS, 2011;

Henson, Reynolds, & Fisher, 2013; Wall, 2008), although online financial fraud and identity theft have been identified as being the most feared type of crime among Australian adults (ABS, 2011b). Furthermore, research in this area indicates that laypeople do perceive that these types of offences can be at least as harmful as more traditionally-studied street crimes and in some cases fear of specific crimes such as online identity theft are exceeding fears of the former (Roberts, Indermaur, & Spiranovic, 2013).

The study of fear of domestic violence is also an area of little exploration. While issues of violence and aggression in the home are increasingly being recognised as both a dramatically under-reported and highly damaging form of criminal behaviour (Chapin, 2009), they have yet to receive the attention that street crimes have garnered in this body of research. It has also been acknowledged that a complex relationship between female vulnerability to intimate-partner violence and female fear of other crime types exists, though the nature of this relationship has yet to be investigated in detail (Broll, 2014).

### **Methodological and Conceptual Problems**

Another limitation is that a vast amount of existing research has failed to adequately acknowledge and address the differences between the three psychological facets of crime fear: the affective, cognitive, and behavioural components (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008). Arguably, fear of crime itself represents only the affective aspect of this triad, as it refers to the emotional state of being fearful, separate from cognitive judgements and behavioural responses (Chadee & Ying, 2013; Kohm et al., 2013; Scarborough et al., 2010). However the recent tendency has been for researchers to group this emotional response with a cognitive component, specifically perception of risk of being victimised by crime (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Custers & Van den Bulck, 2011; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008).

The overwhelming tendency to research FOC using quantitative survey methods is a key deficit for this area of study, and may be resulting in a gross misrepresentation of crime fear as a major social problem. The reliance on large-scale surveys may be contributing to a misreading of the prevalence of FOC (Farrall et al., 1997; Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2011; Jackson, 2005). Specifically, it is argued that questions which supposedly capture data about crime fears in actuality only ask respondents about their feelings of safety (in

relation to living in a particular area or being alone at night) which are separate from fears about crime (Farrall & Gadd, 2004a; Jackson, 2005; Rader, 2004). Questions about perceived safety may be more closely aligned with measuring respondents' assessments of crime risk than their actual emotional experiences of fear. The closed-choice survey questions on safety also tend not to elicit information about frequency of crime fears (Farrall & Gadd, 2004a; 2004b).

The misrepresentative effects of quantitative reporting can be seen in the findings of one major study. This investigation involved conducting two separate interviews with participants, where the first interview asked quantitative, closed-ended questions and the second interview was conducted in a qualitative semi-structured manner (Farrall et al. 1997). There were mismatches of FOC reporting between the quantitative and qualitative interviews, where, for example, one participant drew a distinction between worrying and thinking about crime. She was invited to answer the same question (from the quantitative interview) with the word "think" in place of "worry" and changed her score of 1 to "a 4 or a 5" (Farrall et al. 1997, p. 672). Overall, the majority of the most serious mismatches found in this study were the result of using open-ended in place of close-ended questions (Farrall et al., 1997). This example adds powerful support for the use of a qualitative approach in future, given that "emotional responses to anything are not best captured using quantitative methods" (Farrall, 2004, p. 167).

Another deficiency in existing crime fear research is the way the FOC phenomenon is conceptualised given its multidimensional nature. The definition of FOC is an issue of continuing debate and several varying conceptualisations exist (Sacco & Kennedy, 2002; Skogan, 1993; Warr, 2000). For example, some authors argue that the term 'fear' is interchangeable with 'anxiety', 'worry', or 'concern' (Farrall, 2004; Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2011; Jackson, 2005; Roberts, Indermaur, & Spiranovic, 2013), while others view them as separate entities (Hough, 2004; Warr, 2000).

A prevailing perspective in this regard is the recommendation for fear to be considered from its psychological and physiological definitions; as an immediate, instinctive response to a threat to personal safety or the integrity of belongings and environment (Hough, 2004; Sacco & Kennedy, 2002; Warr, 2000). Under this especially selective definition, it is likely that actual experiences of fear would "probably be pretty rare",

dramatically altering the types of findings generated by research in this area (Hough, 2004, p. 175). The alternative approach, which has been and continues to be utilised in more recent and qualitative research on crime fear, emphasises the importance of emotional responses to crime as something that is subject to change and is influenced by socio-cultural contexts, rather than a static, psycho-physiological experience of fight or flight instinct (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2013; Jackson, 2004; Walklate, 1998). According to this perspective “fear of crime should be located within the actor’s definition of the situation, their subjective experience or interpretation placed in its social context. These are themselves fluid and under the process of re-interpretation as new information is gained through social interaction” (Jackson, 2004, p. 6).

This debate is not the only issue impeding the successful conceptualisation of crime fear. Traditionally, there has been a tendency to misinterpret perceived risk of victimisation, a strictly cognitive judgement, as the emotional experience of fearfulness about crime (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Rader, 2004). This is problematic in that perceptions of victimisation risk may not always be consistent with the levels of fear experienced (Rader, 2004; Semmens, 2007). Furthermore, the specific wording used in quantitative and qualitative FOC questionnaires has also been found to alter reported levels of crime fear (Farrall et al., 1997). Major debates and shortcomings surrounding conceptualisation still remain, and it has been suggested that a definitive fear of crime concept may not even be possible to achieve (Lee, 2007).

### **Summary of Problems in Fear of Crime Research**

Overall, it has become increasingly clear in recent years that FOC is an incredibly complex concept which involves affective responses that are heavily context-specific and difficult to define. However, the continuing prevalence of crime fear as a subject of criminological and socio-political focus requires that further exploration of this phenomenon be conducted so as to improve the means of identifying and measuring it in future. As is indicated in the above exploration of methodological problems in the study of FOC, there are many flaws for which existing research in this area may be criticised. In particular the failure to adopt more qualitative methods in preference of adhering to more traditional methodologies should be challenged in new and forthcoming

publications. Furthermore, there has been an overwhelming tendency for researchers to focus almost exclusively on street crimes when studying and measuring crime fear. In particular, while research has addressed perceptions concerning white-collar, domestic, and cyber-offending (Dodge, Bosick, & Van Antwerpen, 2013; Piquero, Carmichael, & Piquero, 2008; Wall, 2008; Yamawaki et al., 2012), few researchers have attempted a deliberate exploration of the nature, prevalence, and incidence of crime fear for these categories of offences.

New and alternative research methodologies are needed to overcome existing problems in measurement and reporting of crime fear, with a view towards encouraging the exploration of this phenomenon through detailed qualitative analysis. Furthermore, identified gaps in existing research must be addressed, specifically where these relate to offence types other than those categorised as street crime, and the role of trust at the macro level of society. The present thesis endeavours to address these weaknesses of prior research through the qualitative investigation of responses to perceived crime victimisation risk. A summation of the key methodological and conceptual problems surrounding FOC can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Key gaps and shortcomings within FOC literature

<b>Key Gaps and Shortcomings of FOC Literature</b>
<p><b>FOC research generally fails to examine fear for specific crime types</b> Existing crime fear studies does not segregate and measure crime fear per offence type in most cases. Some works differentiate between interpersonal and property offences, however overlaps and difficulties categorising given offences e.g. muggings may affect validity of results.</p>
<p><b>FOC has received minimal attention in regard to white-collar, cyber, and domestic crime types</b> Very little research has been done into the nature, frequency, and intensity of crime fears felt in response to these types of crimes. Where this has occurred, data has been of a statistical nature only. Confusion about what constitutes these crimes may be partially responsible for this gap.</p>
<p><b>Most traditional FOC research does not differentiate between the affective, behavioural, and cognitive components of crime fear.</b> There is often significant overlap between cognition and affect, and this threatens the validity of findings, as data supposedly reporting on crime fear may actually be reporting on perceived victimisation risk, feelings of safety or unsafety etc.</p>
<p><b>Qualitative data is more suited to studying FOC than quantitative data is</b> The complexity and multi-faceted nature of FOC as a social scientific concept means that richer verbal data may be helpful in improving the understanding of it.</p>

## **Prior Candidate Research on Fear of Crime**

The review of the literature and an examination of the shortcomings and limitations of FOC research reveal key issues which must be addressed prior to any attempt to reconceptualise this concept. While great attention has been paid to crime fear investigation over the past five decades, the vast majority of these studies have been empirical in nature, usually taking a quantitative, rather than qualitative perspective. Crime fear is an incredibly complex concept, and newer research is attempting to take this into account via different methodological approaches. However, because of its inherent nuances, there is potential for quantitative methods to misrepresent or fail to communicate the true nature of crime fear. This problem is compounded by a general dearth in qualitative investigations of FOC which has continued well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In light of these issues, and of the conceptual aim of the current thesis, it was decided to include some serendipitous findings which arose from the candidate's earlier research directed toward crime fear, risk, and personal prevention strategies (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). Participants were ten females and four males studying at a local private university. Participants were 19-24 years of age, and all studying at least one Psychology subject. Two groups were comprised exclusively of female participants, while another had only males, as this was a part of the original research design.

The focus groups were aimed at gaining rich verbal feedback about the experience of crime fear and the use of crime prevention behaviours among young adults. Major issues explored were the fear of specific crimes, the adoption of specific crime prevention behaviours, and how personal and vicarious experiences with crime victimisation affected perceptions about crime risks (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). The group discussions generated a notion of *awareness* of crime, which appeared on its surface to be as multi-faceted and complex as FOC itself (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). Awareness as an alternative response to the threat of crime victimisation also appeared to align with findings from the literature on the risk society, the fear-victimisation paradox, and with the work by Lupton (2000) described in Chapter One. However, there were a number of paradoxical and ambiguous findings which also arose in regard to crime fear itself. It was these characteristics of the previous research findings which led to their inclusion in the crime fear reconceptualization that occurs in this thesis.

## The Emergence of Crime Awareness

A summation of the key themes to emerge from the focus groups in the candidate's previous research work is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Discursive themes emerging from prior candidate research

<b>Themes from Prior Candidate FOC Research</b>
<p><b>Eschewing of FOC in favour of AOC</b>            Fear does not appear to be a barrier for young people, but they tend to self-report as being 'aware' of crime, rather than 'fearing' it. Participants indicate an awareness of victimisation risk which does not extend into fearful thoughts or feelings.</p>
<p><b>Crime risks can be controlled for</b>            It is agreed that crime risks can be controlled, and deliberate preventive strategies aim to achieve this. Perceived control over risks is sufficient to reduce concerns about crime victimisation.</p>
<p><b>Prevention is part of routine activities</b>            Taking measures to prevent victimisation is seen as "common sense" and instinctual. Restrictive prevention methods do not appear to flow from AOC as from FOC.</p>
<p><b>Mindfulness of context and location</b>            Situational factors and location are taken into account by young people when assessing their perceived risks of crime victimisation. Riskier environments warrant more deliberate use of prevention strategies.</p>
<p><b>Awareness affected by complex array of variables</b>            Like FOC, AOC appears to be tempered by differences in sex, victimisation experience, likelihood of being victimised and severity of victimisation outcomes.</p>

There was a demonstrated aversion to the concept of 'fear of crime'. 'Fear' was not believed to be an accurate description of how participants felt about crime, but crimes were something that most people should be 'aware' of. Thus, there was a preference for the concept of crime awareness. For example, it was stated that "the experiences that you have and the stories that you hear about don't necessarily make you scared. They just make you aware...". This tendency occurred even in instances where crime victimisation had been personally or vicariously experienced. These experiences made people "more aware" of their surroundings without the added fear response: "I'm not more afraid, but I'm more aware – that's what I take away from it". There was agreement that it was necessary to be alert to what was happening around you in a general sense, even if fear was not part of the equation. Awareness was acknowledged as a necessity for crime prevention, where "you have to be aware of what could happen", and that "being aware is still important" in preventing becoming a victim of crime.

Carrying valuables around in plain sight was thought to make a person a more likely target for potential offenders, demonstrating an awareness of victimisation possibilities. However, the consciousness of this greater likelihood of becoming a crime victim was explicitly stated not to perpetuate fear of that greater risk. For example, one participant pointed out that her family were aware of crimes occurring within their neighbourhood, but that this was insufficient for them to take precautionary measures. It was only post-victimisation that preventive strategies were undertaken. This suggests that while awareness is a precondition for fear to occur, it may not be predictive of that fear, and that awareness on its own is also not always enough to promote the adoption of personal prevention strategies.

Awareness of crime was generally perceived to be instinctive rather than a deliberate thought process. Being aware and making decisions based on that awareness was seen as “a subconscious thing”, and strategies involving avoidance of aggressive others to prevent physical assault exemplified this. This idea of subconsciousness carried over to the implementation of personal crime prevention strategies. Groups took a long time to articulate their personal preventive techniques due to the fact that they did not consciously consider these to be done to prevent victimisation. The confusion about the question is indicative of the lack of attention or complex thought dedicated to these strategies as they are implemented on a day-to-day basis. This was reflected by comments such as “that’s just common sense” or that some behaviours were “instinctive” or “subconscious” rather than the subject of overt consideration. Responses appear to suggest that actions aimed at prevention of victimisation are subconscious or banal behaviours undertaken as part of a routine in a given context, such as clubbing. Personal crime prevention strategies involved many small actions directed at reducing risk and exercising appropriate caution and awareness of given situations: “with that kind of thing [personal crime prevention] it’s definitely little steps”.

Context appeared to influence whether or not awareness of crime encouraged preventive strategies. The insulated nature of the university campus, for example, was perceived as being safe enough to leave valuables unattended. The element of surveillance which characterises university study areas seemed to create a sense of security about belongings, even especially valuable items. Participants felt comfortable leaving others to supervise



their possessions due to the natural guardianship afforded by the busy study environments on campus: “It’s sort of safer because there are a lot of people around, like, who would approach someone else’s things, knowing that other people could see?”. This suggests a reliance on the presence of other students as being deterrent enough for any potential thief. It is indicative of a structural and locational aspect to awareness of crime.

Further, this reliance indicates the potential influence of social trust upon a lack of prevention behaviours. One participant stated that: “for me it’s quite surprising that none of it is being stolen”. It was also pointed out that “different places make a difference” and that despite her surprise at the lack of theft on campus “I do leave my stuff unsupervised because I feel like there’s a lot of people, so it’s very unlikely that something will get stolen”. These comments indicate the role that the social and physical characteristics of a given context have upon perceptions and awareness of crime victimisation risks. Risks are weighed against consideration of the opportunity structure of crime in certain situations. Extra precautionary behaviours undertaken during overseas travel were due to awareness of an increased risk of crime victimisation in these contexts, and locations which were perceived as being more risky e.g. nightclub precincts were argued to merit greater situational awareness and more deliberate implementation of preventive behaviours. It was implied that awareness of heightened risks, or perceptions of some spaces and situations as more risky than others, might lead to feelings of crime fear. Overall it was acknowledged that place plays an important role in shaping responses to the perceived risk of crime victimisation, whether these manifested as awareness or fear.

Discussion of media and social networks revealed that information from these channels also contributed to awareness of crime. This effect differed depending on the source of the account. Hearing about crime from a friend or family member had far more impact on their thoughts and feelings about victimisation these accounts were “more tangible” and “closer to home”. There was recognition of the need for mass media to achieve high ratings and generate profits, and understood the media to be far from impartial in reporting crime news. One participant claimed that victimisation of someone close to her “would make me more aware, because you’d hear it first-hand, not just from the media, or something that they’re making this whole big story about”. Another noted that “if I see something in the media, I don’t really listen to that, because it’s their job [to sell crime

news]”. Overall, it was felt that media reporting of crime was not entirely accurate, because “some things don’t come up in the media, only certain things do”, and “one of their [the media’s] things is to instil fear the community, so that it creates more news to report, and we spend money getting these security measures and things like that”.

Finally, a tendency towards individual responsibility for physical safety and protection of belongings emerged from discussions. Those who had been victims of property crimes described their victimisation as being due to their own failures to take adequate precautions, and at no point attributed blame to the persons responsible for stealing their belongings. No mention was made of the police or campus security team for playing any role in preventing crime, further indicating the lack of reliance on external bodies for protecting the public from crime. This is consistent with the neoliberal styles of governance which characterise current Australian communities and also with the penchant for victim-blaming, where reporting of criminal events often focuses on any questionable characteristics and lifestyle choices of victims that might have contributed to their victimisation.

Where prevention was implemented, common strategies included pretending to be talking on the phone, keeping a watchful eye on any suspicious individuals nearby, and walking close to other groups of people. Some engaged in self-protective strategies, carrying items on their person that could be used to defend themselves from an attacker. Precautionary strategies performed included locking cars and homes, “closing windows, making sure flyscreens are shut” and being “very careful about where I park”. Carrying only those valuables needed, and keeping these on their person, were reported as preventive measures against having items such as mobile phones and wallets stolen. One participant stated that she only takes out her phone “when I need it. I don’t walk around holding it, because that’s going to make me a target”, while another advised that “having your things close to you at all times” was a good way to reduce the likelihood of theft.

This indicates that in day-to-day situations crime risks seem to be judged as low and having minor negative impacts, as is suggested by the lack of conscious thought devoted to personal crime prevention strategies. These ‘banal’ tactics for exerting control over perceived crime risks are examples of the types of routine activities described by Cohen and Felson (1979) which have long been theorised to play a role in minimising the

potential for being victimised. Avoidance tactics, for example, were described as being an unconscious or instinctual behaviour: “you just do that [avoid aggressors] instinctively. It’s not like you’re actually scared that they’re going to attack you” and that prevention “is instinctive, just thinking about the safest thing to do”. Yet, victimisation experience can be surmised to affect assessments of crime risk, as this sense of banality was lost when deliberate thought about crime victimisation was prompted.

Banality further did not extend to the prevention of re-victimisation. One group member being “always concerned about my car getting broken into, mainly because it’s happened before and my window got smashed...I’m always thinking ‘is locking my car enough?’”. Another who had been a victim of theft noted that “It’s a shame I’ve had to become a bit more aware because I’ve had stuff nicked”. A third reported that he had once been held at gunpoint for money, and this was why “being jumped” was his greatest crime fear. Certain crime risks may gain an increased salience once victimisation has already occurred, suggesting that the general lack of conscious attention devoted to personal crime prevention shifts in response to this experience. For example, it was stated that “if you know someone, and something’s happened to them, it kind of makes you more fearful automatically...when I moved here, it was things that people told me that had happened here [on the Gold Coast] that influenced what I thought”. There was a consensus that victimisation experience “does make you more cautious. We have more locks on our front door than we used to, and we got a security alarm and everything set up right after the crime”. Crime prevention strategies were also perceived to be “steps you tend to take after [being a victim], to prevent it” supporting the notion that victimisation plays a role in shaping awareness as well as crime fear.

The acknowledgement of fears of certain crimes is important as it indicates elements of ambiguity in the distinction between crime fear and crime awareness, and how young peoples’ experience of these responses can be shaped by personal and vicarious experiences with victimisation. This is consistent with prior literature exploring the relationship between FOC and being a victim of crime, or hearing accounts of the victimisation of friends or family (see Chapter Three). The need to investigate and clarify these ambiguities further justifies the current thesis’ focus on reconceptualising FOC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Further mismatch occurred between affective and cognitive responses to crime risks and the relationship these had to personal prevention behaviours. It appeared that despite concerns about personal safety, this never stopped participants going out at night or engaging in routine activities. This may be explained in part by the way that people tend not to “really fear [crime] until it’s in your face”. For instance, it may be difficult to envision being victimised in a given situation and the effect this would have, especially if there is no prior history of victimisation. In contrast, discussion implied that since there was always the potential for experiencing a criminal event, therefore people were “always aware of it”.

Knowledge of crime risks did not appear to lead to self-imposed behavioural restrictions, as FOC may do. There was admission of engaging in activities which might carry an elevated risk of victimisation, but these were not a cause for crime fear or taking preventive measures; “...whenever I’m walking around at night by myself or anything like that, I don’t really ‘fear’ anything...I’m not going to let that stop me”. Further, awareness of the possibility of crime victimisation did not appear to create an expectation of victimisation. “I mean, you do [fear crime], but you don’t, because fear makes people make certain decisions. You make a decision because you want to do that at that point in time. You’re not going to let fear of maybe getting jumped affect whether you’re going to go this way or that way to get home, like, you’re going to go home the way you want to go home”.

Routine leisure activities of participants further supports this notion. For example, the risk of victimisation when going out to socialise at night had some influence in terms of use of crime preventive strategies, but did not stop recreational visitation to clubs, pubs, or entertainment districts. For participants, placing themselves in positions of potential victimisation seemed to be incidental rather than deliberate, indicating that crime, while perhaps not actively sought out, was seen as part of the accepted risks of participating in this type of activity. The use of avoidance strategies was only practiced to the point at which it appeared to place undue behavioural restrictions on participants. Precautionary crime prevention measures were adopted where the desire to partake in a given activity or visit certain locations seemed to outweigh concerns about victimisation. This suggests

that the behavioural outcomes commonly associated with FOC in the literature (e.g. restricting their routine activities) may be less likely to flow from AOC.

The perception of control over crime risks is another possible explanation for the disjunction between affective and behavioural responses. When a risk is assessed, it can be considered alongside the ability to avoid or defend against that risk or to protect the self from the harms or losses which may result in the case of victimisation. If there is a belief that these negative outcomes can be controlled for, the decision to perform particular actions or be in given places may be upheld, despite the potential risks these may present. For example, the tendency to go out at night and visit nightclub precincts was recognised as being potentially dangerous by participants. However, by choosing to go out in groups and be alert to their surroundings, these risks were believed to be sufficiently controlled. Implementation of preventive strategies to the point that risks are perceived as being controlled can change how people feel about given crime risks. If there is a belief that the perceived danger has been controlled, people may feel safer and their behaviours may align with this feeling.

It is possible that semantic differences contribute to the ambiguity of crime fear, as while participants appeared to be averse to referring to themselves as “fearful” in response to crime risks, words such as “paranoid”, and “worried” were used to identify feelings about these risks. Perhaps one individual’s definition of worry about crime is another’s definition of fear of crime. There is certainly potential for males in particular to be more inclined to describe their affective responses to crime victimisation in terms other than fear, as this may be seen as impugning their masculinity in front of other males and in the presence of a female interviewer. It is possible that this power of word connotation may also be at play in the preference for awareness of crime over fear of crime.

Assessment of crime risks seems to be conducted differently for crimes affecting personal safety rather than safety of possessions. Concerns for the security of property were felt more frequently than fears for personal safety. It was commented that “I’m more concerned about my safety than my possessions when I go out, but on a day-to-day basis I don’t really think about safety as much as I do about my possessions”. However, seriousness was the presiding factor when considering interpersonal offences. For example: “The fear is greater with physical [crimes] but the fear is more constant with

possessions, because you're more susceptible, and it happens more frequently". Another participant similarly noted that "with the physical stuff, I think it's obviously more serious than, say, having your phone stolen, but you're also less likely to get jumped." This suggests a hierarchical structure to the way in which young people assess the risk of crime victimisation. The comments also evidenced seriousness and frequency as being two key factors in how people assess and respond to crime risks. It is possible that type of offence may even be predictive of whether seriousness or frequency will be the dominant factor in a given context. However, given the role of context and prior victimisation experience in shaping perceptions of crime risks, in-depth consideration of these possible assessment 'criteria' are needed. The interplay of these factors is indicative of the complexity of AOC and the common links it shares with FOC, supporting the inclusion of awareness in the current reconceptualization.

Ignorance and denial about likelihood of victimisation was another theme which appeared to be affected by individual factors such as biological sex and prior victimisation experience. Feeling as though a crime "wouldn't happen to me" emerged as a main reason why crime prevention strategies might not be adopted. Gender seemed to influence this, where males were identified as feeling less vulnerable to victimisation than females. For example, there was a view that males (correctly or incorrectly) believe themselves to be more capable of preventing or escaping instances of interpersonal violence or aggression, and that this created a "false sense of security" for men, which led to less fear of crime. This was reflected in statements that "a lot of my guy friends say that they're not afraid of crime" and that "the dudes who work out and are really buff are like 'it won't happen to me'". Stereotypical notions of masculinity, as well as the influence of alcohol, were implicated in making men arrogant and ignorant of the potential risks involved in a given situation (for example, "mouthing off" to other men in a nightclub precinct).

Ignorance in particular was expressed as a common factor in feelings of exemption from the possibility of victimisation. It was stated that "you don't want to be ignorant...Ignorance and arrogance are big things" and this again indicates the perceived importance of crime awareness. Consistent with views on prevention as being instinctual, not undertaking any preventive measures against victimisation was seen as being ignorant to crime risks and failing to be appropriately aware of crime. Discussions further indicated

that victimisation experience reduces ignorance about crime risk, and that this effect extended to the victimisation experiences of those in people's social networks. The salience of victimisation information from within the social circle was thought to be due to relationships between individuals. "You have a relationship with someone, so you can see their pain, and be empathetic. You see it as if you're in their steps, whereas you might not see it like that for a stranger." Hearing something from a significant other in the social circle might alter the belief that crime could never happen to a person. "There's the thought that, 'oh, it'll never happen to us' and then it happens to someone you know and then you're like 'oh, it's real'". The effects of social discourse upon awareness are reflective of how FOC is socially constructed, further implicating AOC as an important component in the reconceptualization of the crime fear concept.

### **Summation of Prior Qualitative Findings**

The focus groups revealed five main ideas surrounding fear versus awareness of crime, personal prevention strategies, and factors affecting perception of risks of crime victimisation. Firstly, FOC was eschewed in favour of AOC. Participants described themselves as being aware of risks rather than fearful, and this awareness appears to have a complex interplay with environmental and experiential factors such as context and prior victimisation. Awareness helps to shape assessment of crime risks at the individual level, and judgements of risk vary widely. Which criteria take precedence is based on time, place, and type of offence by which victimisation might occur, and personal experiences with crime.

There was a belief that crime risks were a part of everyday life which could be controlled for, and participants reported behaviours which were aimed at achieving this (actual or perceived) control. Where preventive strategies were adopted, these were largely banal in nature and made up part of the routine activities of participants when in potentially risky situations. The perception of control over crime risks meant that participants were less likely to adopt the restrictive behaviours that have previously been found to flow on from crime fear. However, participants were mindful of how victimisation risks differed depending on context and location. More conscious thought was devoted to implementing preventive strategies in these scenarios, and this is reflective of the complex interplay of factors involved in individual assessments of crime risks.

Finally, these tendencies appear to be tempered by possible sex differences, variations in personal and vicarious victimisation experience, and the types of offences an individual judges themselves to be most vulnerable to in a given context. Decision-making takes place in relation to the perceived frequency with which certain crimes occur, and the potential severity of being a victim of these crimes. This demonstrates an awareness of the pervasive nature of crime victimisation risks in daily life, which is argued to be a key contributor to a possible decline in FOC in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western communities. Taken together, these themes indicate the importance of considering AOC alongside the equally complex FOC concept, and support the need for a reconceptualization of crime fear as it exists today.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Awareness of Crime - Contributing Factors**

In this thesis I argue that there has been a paradigmatic shift in the concept of ‘fear of crime’. FOC, first recognised as a social scientific concept in 1965 (Lee, 2007) has become one a key focus of criminological study over the five decades since its inception. It has contributed to the construction of internationally recognised surveys for collecting data about victimisation and public attitudes toward crime, including the British Crime Survey (Lee, 2007). The crime fear concept has significantly impacted fields beyond criminology, reaching into media studies research, victimology, and the broader sociology or social sciences disciplines. It is acknowledged that FOC shares a complex relationship with media representation of crime and also how information and experiences with victimisation are shared among people.

The influence of FOC also extends beyond academia, playing a role in criminal justice practices and policy, where it has been inculcated into policing and crime prevention programs. FOC appears to be a useful justification for allocations of funds, and implementing new policing and penal practices and legislation measures for dealing with crimes and perpetrators. This is because FOC can influence public opinions about offending behaviours, means and harshness of punishment, and the effectiveness of police and prevention efforts in their communities (Collins, 1991; Johnson, 2005; Piquero, Carmichael, & Piquero, 2008). Maintaining political power in a democracy is largely dependent upon fulfilling the wants and needs of the constituency, hence a population’s crime fear may impact upon the criminal justice approaches used by its government.

Contrarily, political agendas of competing parties may also encourage the concept of crime fear to be managed in a certain way so as to facilitate an alignment between these parties’ criminal justice approaches and what is considered desirable by the public. Government groups have a degree of power over media reporting in several Western democratic nations, where they can directly or indirectly provide information or opinions about crime-related issues or specific crime events (Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Lee, 1999). Most people have little to no experience with the criminal justice system, or with crime

victimisation in general, and thus rely on external accounts to form their own ideas about these concepts (Lee, 1999). The news media remains a key conduit through which this information is provided, especially for older generations of adults (Devereux, 2014). Given the traditional public reliance on the media for learning about crime risks and the outcomes of victimisation, it can be seen how those parties in power can use their capacity for information dissemination to shape the way in which crime stories are portrayed to voters. Through such means politicians can influence the social construction of crime in their constituencies towards a congruence with the types of crime-and-justice policies that a given party wishes to adopt (Hawdon & Wood, 2014; Lee, 1999; Neocleous, 2012).

Crime fear can be described as the strong, negative emotional state felt in response to the risk (real or perceived) of being a victim of crime. While an affective concept at its core, knowledge, experiences and judgements about crime, and performance of behaviours which affect victimisation risks as also closely tied up within FOC. This contributes to the frequency with which FOC is studied alongside risk perceptions and crime prevention behaviours. However, there are also several problems with crime fear research in terms of methodologies used and the complexities of the concept.

Much investigation has been quantitative in nature, failing to fully appreciate the dynamic interplay of the factors which influence and are influenced by crime fear (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2013; Farrall et al., 1997; Jackson, 2005; Rader, 2004). Further, there is no agreed upon universal working definition for FOC. Scientists of varying disciplines tend to focus upon different aspects of crime fear in attempting to identify and explain this concept. For example, a psychology researcher may define FOC very differently than a criminology researcher, who will define it differently from a sociologist. Psychological definitions of crime fear consider fear to be a mostly physiological reaction to a perceived threat, and so long-term anxieties and worry about crime are excluded (Hough, 2004; Warr, 2000). Sociological definitions often tend to treat 'fear' as a term interchangeable with other emotions such as 'worry' or 'anxiety' (Farrall, 2004; Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2013; Jackson, 2005; Roberts, Indermaur, & Spiranovic, 2013).

While these cross-disciplinary tensions represent good social scientific practice and help to drive attempts to find the most accurate definition for FOC, researchers may be attempting to draw conclusions about entirely different notions than others researching

the same topic. This further complicates efforts to define and explain the already complex crime fear concept. While often treated as a concrete concept, FOC is in actuality more vague and amorphous than most quantitative research suggests. The lack of a conclusive agreed-upon definition for the concept over decades of dedicated research is demonstrative of this. FOC does not appear to relate exclusively to the physiological response to an immediate victimisation threat. Indeed:

*...The phrase [fear of crime] has also been equated to a variety of emotional states, attitudes, and perceptions including mistrust of others, anxiety, perceived risk, fear of strangers, or concern about deteriorating neighbourhoods or declining national morality...it considers both the emotional responses to situations and circumstances that may produce fear as well as the cognitive assessments of risk for victimisation which may also create fear. (Scarborough et al., 2010, p. 820).*

Since FOC affects and is affected by innumerable variables, there is extensive variation among findings which has yet to be fully explained. Patterns of fear are inconsistent and subject to constant change. Sometimes these may appear to defy logic, as with the fear-victimisation paradox, where those least likely to be crime victims tend to report the highest levels of FOC, and those at higher risk report less FOC. This lack of clear-cut answers to the questions surrounding the causes, effects, and prevention of crime fear promotes an ongoing pursuit of research in this area.

Despite these issues, the sheer volume of empirical investigation has revealed some common patterns surrounding FOC, as reported in the literature review chapters of this thesis. Women are consistently more fearful than men, and previous victims of crime are more fearful than those who have not been victimised (Fisher & May, 2009; Jackson & Gray, 2010; May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2012; Russo & Roccato, 2010; Tomisch, Gover, & Jennings, 2011). There is a tendency for the elderly to have more fear than young people (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Britto, Van Slyke, & Francis, 2011; Norton, 1982; Reid, Roberts, & Hilliard, 1998; Rengifo & Bolton, 2012). Paradoxical findings concerning fear and victimisation indicate that physical and sexual attacks are feared more than property crimes, despite the dramatically lower rates at which the former crime types occur (Johnson, 2005; May, Rader, & Goodrum, 2010; Cops &

Pleysier, 2010; Ozascilar, 2013). Further, those who are most likely to be victimised (e.g. adolescents and young adults) tend to be less fearful than those with a lesser chance of victimisation (e.g. women and the elderly). There is an overall pattern of fear inconsistent with actual crime statistics, and this occurs across demographically varied groups (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Russo, Roccato, & Veino, 2013; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007).

The inability to fully explain such findings is indicative of how complicated and amorphous the thoughts, feelings, and actions which accompany crime fear are. It indicates that the FOC phenomenon differs now from what it has been understood to be in previous decades. Recent studies identify that crime fear may have been drastically overestimated in the past, and that how people respond to and experience FOC in present times differs from the research findings, especially those from last century (Farrall, 2004; Farrall & Gadd, 2004a; 2004b; Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2013; Hough, 2004; Jackson, 2005). Advances in communication technology and social networking appear to be particularly impactful. Exploring communication of information and experiences surrounding crime victimisation shows continuing changes in how these are shared, and the role of the social environment is receiving greater attention from crime fear scholars as social networking and media become more ubiquitous (Bouchillon, 2014; Gleason, 2013; Rosengard, Tucker-McLaughlin, & Brown, 2014; Yardi & Boyd, 2010). Since social scientific constructs are by nature moulded by social processes and human interaction, these changes play a role in the ongoing development of the crime fear concept. It thus cannot be expected that the FOC concept would remain unchanged in the time since its inception in 1965.

Paradigms such as the risk society thesis (Beck, 1992) are increasingly examined in tandem with FOC, and the relationship between perceptions about risks and attitudes towards crime has become a focal point of crime fear research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lupton, 2000; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Mythen, 2007; Mythen & Walklate, 2006). The increasingly globalised nature of communication, business, and threats to safety and security is contributing to a growing preoccupation with risk management, and this is argued to be impacting upon FOC (Beck, 1992; Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Walklate & Mythen, 2008; Yates, 2003). A decline in the prevalence of crime victimisation fears is thought to

be attributable to the all-pervasive presence of larger, less controllable threats such as climate change and terrorism, for example (Mythen & Walklate, 2006; Vieno, Roccato, & Russo, 2013; Visser, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2013). Cognition about crime risks and how to manage these against the backdrop of the global 'risk society' has become accordingly prescient in more recent attempts to explain FOC (Walklate & Mythen, 2008). There is a growing recognition of how responses to the threat of crime are changing as the physical and social world changes, and it appears that a fundamental shift from traditional understandings of FOC which accounts for this may be due.

However, to achieve such a transformation, a more conceptual approach to the examination of FOC is required. This is a vastly different perspective than that which has dominated crime fear study to date. Despite their frequent use, statistical and quantitative methods can only tell so much about FOC. In comparison, qualitative and conceptual examinations which appreciate the dynamic and complicated nature of the concept are rarely undertaken. The relatively minimal amount of full-length written texts which discuss or offer complex theorisation about crime fear, in comparisons with the many thousands of academic articles which have studied it, is a clear demonstration of this. In Australia, there has only been one major volume (Lee, 2007) taking a more conceptual approach along with the work of Lupton exploring the 'risk society' elements in recent years.

The current work strives to address this shortcoming by reconceptualising crime fear and exploring the emergence of a concept of 'awareness of crime' (AOC). AOC is defined here as AOC as 'consciousness of the risk of one's own crime victimisation in a given context'. This definition operates for individual-level crime risks specifically, and one does not have to have a realistic understanding of their actual likelihood of victimisation to be aware of crime. This thesis argues that there has been and continues to be an ongoing shift from FOC to AOC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where fear is declining and being replaced by an awareness of crime victimisation risk. This decline of FOC results from a number of intersecting influences; three of which are thought to be major contributors, and three subsidiary factors. Each is discussed in turn below.

Firstly, it is hypothesised that crime has become such a constant presence in modern times that it is considered a part of day-to-day life, no longer warranting an extreme emotional

response such as fear. Secondly, the shift from fear to awareness is affected by ongoing changes to social environments and networking which characterises the lives of adults, where factors such as information sharing and trust within communities shape knowledge and perceptions about crime risks. The third key factor is that of hierarchical nature of crime risks and the ways in which these are perceived, where different aspects of risks are prioritised differently across varying contexts.

Feeding into the major themes surrounding crime awareness are three subsidiary factors which help to form the background of the shift from FOC to AOC. The first of these is sense of control, where the belief that individual-level crime risks have been managed or controlled for may reduce or negate crime fear. The second contributor is contemporary forms of governance which emphasise individual-level responsibility for preventing crime. The potential desire to eschew negatively-associated 'fear' labels is also believed to play a role in the emergence of crime awareness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The pervasiveness of crime victimisation risks has familiarised people with the potential for victimisation. Thus there has been what some might call a desensitisation process. This then contributes to reduced fear, but the need for awareness remains so as to reduce victimisation likelihood due to the fact that being a victim of crime can have serious consequences. It is especially important to examine this tendency as it exists for young people, given their heightened risks of crime victimisation, lower levels of crime fear, and more frequent risk-taking behaviours. Aside from explorations into the contributing factors of awareness this chapter offers, concluding remarks about the issues of crime awareness and control of victimisation risk are presented.

### **Crime Risk Familiarisation and Prevention Banality**

The idea of the awareness of crime victimisation risk is closely tied to the FOC concept. Fear cannot be experienced in relation to a potential risk unless there is consciousness of the fact that one may be susceptible to the risk. It has been suggested that an accurate understanding of crime risk does not automatically result in crime fear, however (Lupton, 2000). While awareness of crime is a necessary condition for the experience of FOC,

being aware of the potential for crime victimisation does not guarantee a feeling of fear in response to that risk.

The transformation from FOC to AOC may be attributable to becoming accustomed to crime risks in everyday life. It is possible that crime has become such a constant presence in modern times that it is a familiar part of day to day living. This familiarity has reduced the sense of fear that was initially experienced in response to the victimisation threat. There is support for this view in works which identify that becoming familiar with signs of crime and disorder can weaken the relationship between these signs and fear of crime (Lorenc et al., 2013; Riger, LeBailly, & Gordon, 1981). This is consistent with the crime fear logic that people are safer in their local area and believe stranger victimisation to be the most significant threat to their safety. There is a tendency not to see familiar people and places as crime risks, and so AOC is likely to be lower in these contexts. Contrarily, statistics research finds that people in general are most likely to be victimised by friends, family members, or acquaintances, and that this victimisation often occurs in places familiar to the individual or within their area of residence (ABS, 2011a; AIC, 2013). The local area, even if having some signs of disorder and crime, may still be thought of as safe in comparison to the outside world.

This erroneous belief about where they might be victimised and who by could be shaping young people's practice of crime awareness. For example, precautions might be taken if going out at night to an entertainment precinct, but not in the event of a house party, even if all attendees are under the influences of alcohol or other drugs. Here, crime risk management attempts are reflective of the existing crime fear logic. The view is that what is familiar is also what is safe, and that crime victimisation is only a possibility in unfamiliar territory, or when interacting with strangers in public places. The lack of restrictions young people place upon their routine activities (even when these might be inherently risky) indicates that the inaccurate view about victimisation circumstances persists, but that fear of these risks is minimal to non-existent.

Regular exposure to crime news in the media could play a role in increasing familiarity with signs of crime risk, influencing the extent to which people become accustomed to these signs and the threats that they represent. The media reminds people that they live in a world of uncertain and unpredictable risks, and there is an understanding of the necessity

of minimising the potential for loss or damage to person and property. An awareness of potential harms and losses through crime victimisation is hence maintained. However, the ‘mean world’ view which is argued to be cultivated by mass media reporting does not automatically lead to heightened crime fear in present times. There is a possibility that in 21<sup>st</sup> century a gradual desensitisation to crime news is occurring, given the frequency and saturation of coverage this type of news receives from media channels (Devereux, 2014). AOC may be taking precedence over FOC as audiences are less shocked by what they read, hear, or see on the news. These types of stories tend to be chosen for reporting because they are more likely to generate an emotional reaction from viewers (Devereux, 2014; Innes, 2003) but constant ongoing exposure to crime news could be lessening the FOC as audiences become accustomed to this coverage.

Other potential contributors to the tendency towards AOC are connected to the Net Generation of adults. Young people are always connected to others in their social network, and this constant connectivity may act as an appeaser to crime fear, as well as encouraging risk-taking behaviours based on the activities and attitudes of peers. For example, the preference for sensation-seeking and experiential learning which characterise this group could lead to increased exposure to situations in which victimisation might occur. These ideas are supported by findings showing that “the more they [young people, especially adolescents] report an external, informal leisure pattern, characterized by gathering with friends...the *lower* they score on the fear of crime scale” (Cops, 2010, p. 397). Similarly, the constant presence of a person’s social network via their online media can make them feel as though they are secure and supported, and that a friend is never far away (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014). Young people often engage in activities which are associated with victimisation risk, and favour experiential styles of learning, rather than simply accepting what they are told or shown by others (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). This may contribute to an overall perspective of crime is where young adults are fully aware of what crimes might happen and what their possibility of victimisation is, yet their learned experiences and familiarity in these situations means that they are not fearful.

It is important to acknowledge the fear is not the only affective response which results from victimisation risk and the potential for crime. Risks can be sources of celebration



and enjoyment, and induce feelings of excitement and exhilaration (Banks, 2013). Thus far there has been little attention given to what draws people into areas and situations which can increase the risk of victimisation. A need for creative expression and an escape from regulations and rules is one explanation. It is possible that young adults enter dangerous situations or partake in deviant behaviours as a means of fulfilling these needs, as well as to self-express in ways deemed irresponsible or unacceptable in most social contexts (Williams, 2007). Involvement in illicit events may stimulate creativity and exploration, and represent a temporary exit from the responsibilities and monotony of daily life (Bottrell, Armstrong & France, 2010; Ferrell, 2004; Williams, 2007).

Deliberate engagement in risky behaviour is often seen as a part of socialising with friends and having exciting life experiences (Bottrell, Armstrong, & France, 2010). Taking risks and getting into and out of trouble in this way may enhance subjective experiences and help to form new relationships with others (Bottrell, Armstrong, & France, 2010; Burt & Simons, 2013). This could be expected to influence attitudes towards such risky actions, where willingness to take risks might increase so long as victimisation did not occur. Having multiple thrill-seekers within one social group might also increase risky behaviour among those low in the thrill-seeking trait, given the power of peer influence among young people.

Boredom may impact upon the affective response to victimisation threats and crime risks. Entering a dangerous situation might result not in fear, but in excitement and exhilaration at the prospect of rule-breaking and the sense that the grind of day to day life has temporarily been escaped. Routine activities and the heavy regulation of many facets of daily life help to perpetuate a situation of ongoing boredom, where the sameness of the everyday can be dull and monotonous (Ferrell, 2004; Williams, 2007). Young people may seek to cope with this boredom by resisting it (Ferrell, 2004). The excitement of risky behaviour is an escape from boredom and so decisions to go to places where danger may be present can be made, despite full awareness of the threats to which they will be exposed (Sutton, Cherney, & White, 2008).

Familiarity also has an effect upon perceptions about crime prevention measures. Crime prevention can be viewed as a routine, banal behaviour. It has been suggested that tools and strategies aimed at preventing crime have become such a part of everyday life and

routines that they do not have the strong links to crime fear which have been demonstrated in existing research (Goold, Loader, & Thumala, 2013; Lupton, 2000; Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Recent discussion of crime prevention in the UK has indicated that measures such as CCTV, burglary alarms, and the access controls used in buildings and public transport systems have become banal in nature; something mundane, routine, and unworthy of attention or interest (Goold, Loader, & Thumala, 2013).

This phenomenon is not dissimilar to the idea of familiarity with signs of crime and saturation with crime information leading to an awareness of crime over a fear of crime. There is potentially even an inverse relationship, where crime risk awareness leads to the implementation of prevention strategies, and the constancy of these practices in response to the incalculable risks of crime victimisation eventually renders them banal and unworthy of attention from the general public. It is possible that the same familiarity which leads to lessened FOC is at work where prevention banality occurs. This is supported by research indicating that familiarity with indicators of crime and disorder can reduce crime fear (Lorenc et al., 2013; Riger, LeBailly, & Gordon, 1981). For example, if measures such as CCTV and police presence are indicative of higher likelihoods of criminal activity in an area, it follows that a strong familiarity with these means of prevention may develop, reducing their link to conscious thought.

Overall, ambiguity surrounds the ideas of familiarity and banality, with literature both supporting and refuting these phenomena. The constant presence of crime risks in daily life can increase familiarity with risks and signs of crime, reducing fear but working to maintain AOC. Crime prevention at the individual level does not seem to merit deliberate thought in some contexts, yet in other circumstances, conscious attention is devoted to reducing the potential for victimisation through preventive strategies. The demographics and experiences of different individuals may explain these variances, where personal characteristics and histories stimulate awareness as a response to crime risks.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Savvy**

Further explanations for the shift from ‘fear’ to ‘awareness’ may be attributable to the nature of the social and physical environments in which people live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

and the extent to which they are attuned to it. The influence of environmental contexts supports the present hypothesis that crime fear and crime awareness are two different concepts. In particular, the relationship awareness holds with trust and the social environment suggests its existence as an entity separate to that of crime fear. For example, while prior research has established that FOC is detrimental to the proliferation of generalised trust in others and feelings of safety (Conklin, 1975; Jackson & Gray, 2010; Visser, Scholte, & Scheepers, 2013), it is possible that awareness of crime has the same impact. Like AOC does not automatically create FOC, being aware does not make a personal distrustful or feel unsafe.

Lower levels of crime fear are potentially attributable to social trust and integration within communities. Proponents of the social integration explanatory model of crime fear have argued that strong social networks can reduce perceptions of personal vulnerability and disorder within a community (Chadee & Ying, 2013; Lorenc et al., 2013; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Skogan, 1986). However, the sharing of information which occurs between community members could be expected to perpetuate awareness about crime risks, as people learn about victimisation possibilities and experiences via face-to-face social networking. Encounters with crime victimisation might potentially temper AOC in the same way that they have been found to act upon FOC. Fears about being a victim of a particular crime type tend to increase immediately following victimisation, but lessen within a few months of the incident (Russo & Roccato, 2010). Since awareness and fear are both influenced by some of the same erroneous beliefs in the prevailing crime fear logic, individuals might also perceive an unrealistically high risk of victimisation after experiencing a direct or vicarious crime incident.

Communication about crime threats also occurs through face-to-face means, and awareness about crime and disorder in specific areas is likely influenced by information shared among residents. Learning of crime risks and the general safety of their neighbourhoods may occur through friends and neighbours who recommend the use of prevention behaviours. This effect could be particularly strong for those communities which are socially and physically cohesive, such as university campuses. Given the tendency for greater sharing of information about local events and stories than any other type of news (Bouchillon, 2014; Rosengard, Tucker-McLaughlin, & Brown, 2014; Yardi

& Boyd, 2010), members of these communities might have a higher awareness about the goings-on in their area than residents of more dispersed neighbourhoods.

Higher levels of community cohesion have been found to mediate increased levels of crime fear, while reduced social networks and having few friends living in the same community have been linked to increased crime fears (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Lorenc et al., 2013; Oh & Kim, 2009). This suggests that trust, socialisation, and community membership reduces feelings of vulnerability, despite the fact that a wider social network would result in a wider pool of information and anecdotal accounts of crime victimisation. It is also demonstrative of the idea that it is possible to be aware of crime risks but not feel fearful of these. For this reason, the sense of vulnerability which has been found to be a component of FOC (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; Rader & Cossman, 2011) is not thought to be at play for crime awareness, supporting the notion that they are dichotomous in nature.

Furthermore, while FOC and trust have a bidirectional relationship, there is a less concrete relationship between trust and AOC. Trust reduces crime fear and perceptions of vulnerability, but the extent to which it affects awareness of the potential for victimisation is unknown. However, since awareness represents a less emotional response to crime than fear, there is a potential for social trust to have a more powerful impact on AOC. Awareness of crime may potentially be overruled where high levels of trust are present. For example, partying at a friend's house might not generate the same situational awareness afforded when partying at a club or bar due to greater feelings of safety and a sense of trust in the environment in which the party is being held, and the people who are able to attend it. Natural guardianship may also play a role in shaping awareness in trusted environments, where awareness of risk to the owner of the property is weighed against the risk of discovery an offender might face in taking it. The guardianship available in given physical environments has been found to shape the routine activities of those using the spaces (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Sutton, Cherney, & White, 2008) and may contribute to a reduction in crime fear. It remains to be seen as to whether this effect also occurs for AOC.

Receiving indirect information about crime risks appears to be an influential factor in the development of both crime fear and crime awareness, drawing a causal commonality

between these phenomena. Pre-existing works emphasise the role that mass media coverage plays in the way in which people socially construct crime risks (Devereux, 2014; Heber, 2011; Innes, 2003). Key theoretical approaches argue that the 'mean' worldviews of news media audiences are shaped by the type, manner, and amount of coverage to which they are exposed (Gerbner et al., 1986). The life experiences of the individual can also affect the extent to which media impacts upon these worldviews through the process of mainstreaming. However, while literature tends to find that the nature and saturation of crime reporting in news media increases feelings of fear and unsafety (Burney, 2009; Heber, 2011; White, 2012), in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is scepticism of the accounts this type of discourse provides about criminal offending.

A friend or relative is deemed to be a more reliable and accurate source of information than the mass media, a pattern that appears to be consistent for the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This is due to the tendency for media reporting to exaggerate and sensationalise crime news (Devereux, 2014; Jewkes, 2011; White, 2012), and at present it appears there is a general acknowledgement that an indirect goal of crime reporting is to instil and perpetuate crime fear in the general public. An awareness of the media's nature as a commercial information source and its need to sell news contributes to critical views of the risk information disseminated via this type of social discourse (Devereux, 2014). Further, the growing number of alternative sources and increasing ease of access to these via the Internet encourages audiences to seek out information themselves and critically consider the stories they encounter (Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Tapscott, 2009). Consumers of crime news, rather than passively observing news stories through television, radio, or print media, can now more actively involved in the news consumption process than ever before (Buckingham, 2006; Devereux, 2014; Selwyn, 2009). This indicates that perhaps mass media is no longer as significant in the way crime is constructed and learned about as in previous literature.

People may be more heavily influenced by the victimisation experiences of significant others, and by information they learn about crime through verbal communication with others in their social networks. This mirrors the tendency for socialisation to play an important role in learning and constructing ideas about the world and is consistent with Net Generation literature concerning the consumption and processing of information by

young adults (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014; Doster, 2013; Smith, Skrbis, & Western, 2012; Tapscott, 1998; 2009). As with the reliability attributed to victimisation accounts given by family and friends, this tendency represents a continuity from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Violent victimisations of close family members or friends can make people feel more fearful that similar events could happen to them. The significance of these accounts can be inferred in that more importance has been ascribed to avoiding situations where this type of victimisation might occur. The ability to see and hear about the victimisation experience and its effects in greater detail could be expected to encourage a feeling of sympathy stronger than what might be felt for a stranger in a media account. Vicarious victimisation through the accounts of close friends and family could also increase the perception of personal victimisation due to the increased salience of crime risk.

The tendency towards reliance on personal and vicarious accounts of victimisation rather than media accounts potentially explains variation in levels of crime fear and awareness. Differences in social relationships and communication with others will be similarly reflected in the nature and amount of crime victimisation experience and information attained from these networks. The knowledge, perceptions, and understanding about crime events vary depending on who is in the social network and the discourse they share, and this is argued to play a role in determining the nature and extent of crime fears (Walklate, 1998).

It is likely that there is far more difficulty in applying mass media information about crime risks to the self in comparison to information from significant others. Gender differences in empathy and perceptions of vulnerability may impact these comparisons, especially when considering the mass media's preference for innocent young women as suitable victims in reporting crime stories. Stories about crime victimisation which appear to emphasise the victim status of young women may have the effect of reminding females of their increased physical vulnerability to attack in comparison to male counterparts. This suggests that crime news coverage may continue to have some influence in shaping female perceptions about victimisation, and that AOC may be shaped by these.

Likewise it is possible that the location of reported crimes affects judgements about likelihood of crime victimisation. This has been demonstrated in extant research revealing increases in perceived crime risk when a local crime was covered in the media in

comparison to crimes committed outside the local community (Kohm et al., 2013; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Further, chronically high coverage of crimes occurring in particular areas can worsen FOC within these communities (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Kohm et al., 2013; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). As awareness of crime risks is a necessary condition for the formation of crime fear, this shows that despite scepticism towards mass media reporting and an understanding of the need to sell crime stories, this type of social discourse can contribute to crime awareness.

The role of social media in dissemination and sharing of crime news and experiences must also be considered in any examination of social discourse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The recent preference for receiving news in this way is evidenced by the fact that social networks are currently the fastest-growing method of news referrals, and that “increasingly the window through which the public views the world is...the Facebook news feed, and especially so for the increasingly active 18 to 30 age group demographic.” (Gleason, 2013, p. 1058). Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have led to a proliferation of selectively sought content, differently from traditional broadcast and print media (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Murthy, 2012; Weeks & Holbert, 2013; Yar, 2012). These sites encourage offer more freedoms and encourage engagement with news stories where this might not otherwise occur. For example, the public nature and brevity of Twitter allows for a quick, conceptual understanding of news events and can draw any user into a discussion they might not normally have entered (Murthy, 2012; Yardi & Boyd, 2010).

Users may become privy to news they would not have received if relying on broadcast and print media alone, as social media encourages the spread of news through social networks. It has been found that the more people receive and consume news via social media, the more news they tend to share with others (Weeks & Holbert, 2013). Furthermore, endorsement of certain stories can increase the rate with which these are disseminated and discussed with members of the same social network (Messing & Westwood, 2014; Weeks & Holbert, 2013). Collective consideration of these factors indicates that users of online social networking become exposed to a greater array of news and are able to engage more with various stories, rather than the passive consumption permitted by broadcast media. It follows that with more exposure comes greater

awareness of crime risks, and suggests that the emergence and domination of social media as a means of interpersonal communication may be a powerful contributor to the formation of crime awareness.

Social media influences awareness and fear in that it affects the way in which crime risks are understood and constructed. News about local events is shared more often than other information, and people tend to share with similar others in their online networks (Bouchillon, 2014; Rosengard, Tucker-McLaughlin, & Brown, 2014; Yardi & Boyd, 2010). Certain crime issues may hold greater salience if shared by many members of the same friendship network, and the ability to comment on crime news means that the opinions of peers can help shape ideas about these. People tend to share those experiences and stories which are important to them, and hence a certain crime type or a particular event can become focused on to the exclusion of other news.

Sharing in this manner not only changes the context in which the reading of the news occurs, but can influence “how people spread information, how they mutate it, who they talk to, and what they say” (Yardi & Boyd, 2010, p. 325). It is possible for information to become skewed, misrepresented and misinterpreted, particularly on Twitter (Murthy, 2012), and this will then impact upon perceptions of news by later readers. This would lead to a greater awareness of crime. However, the potential for concern or fear in relation to incorrect or exaggerated reporting of news events may develop in these social networking systems where much of the content is user-generated and fact-checking is the onus of the audience.

The tendency for people to more actively broadcast information and experiences which have had an emotional impact on them may also serve to generate fear, as well as milder responses such as worry and anxiety. Emotional arousal and the desire for communication is often stirred by traumatic events, and stories which are more arousing tend to be spread more widely among immediate, secondary, and even tertiary social media connections (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014; Harber & Cohen, 2005). Even if the information shared is a personal account, rather than a widely acknowledged news event, these accounts can “serve as bulletins about major events or cautionary tales about hidden hazards and risky choices” (Harber & Cohen, 2005, p. 384). Furthermore, victimisation experiences might



be more commonly shared through online social networks than through face-to-face interactions, since young people may perceive these channels as an open means of communication through which otherwise humiliating stories can be shared safely (Awan & Gauntlett, 2014).

If applied to crime events or personal victimisation experiences, this could contribute to a spread of crime fear or concerns about personal safety. The perceptions of those within the social network of the original story-teller may be altered, and assessment of risks and routine activities could be expected to change in response. Behavioural change may result, as people “often adopt more adaptive attitudes and behaviours after listening to others’ traumatic stories” (Harber & Cohen, 2005, p.386). This is supported by the increased salience of indirect victimisation experience gained from family members and friends in comparison to that which is learned about from mass media reporting of crime. The tendency towards awareness of crime may also in part be perpetuated by the ease with which people can now share these stories with vast audiences via social media.

### **Hierarchical Nature of Risks and Fears**

Crime awareness appears to share a link with the hierarchical nature of crime risks. The way in which crime threats are prioritised has been seen to vary based on factors including gender and prior victimisation experience. The role of seriousness in judging crime risks further appears to dominate assessments of interpersonal crimes as being more threatening than property crimes. The expected impacts of victimisation for the former are perceived to be far more serious than those of the latter, generating increased fear, as well as awareness of victimisation risk (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Franklin, Franklin & Fearn, 2008; Tseloni & Zarafonitou, 2008). However, property crimes are seen to be a more pervasive risk in day-to-day life than violent victimisation is (Alper & Chappell, 2012). This suggests that crime threats exist in two separate hierarchies of seriousness and frequency, rather than a singular one. Whichever factor is more salient in a given context may then determine which crimes merit the most awareness in that context. Variations in the intensity and regularity with which people report being fearful of certain crimes is consistent with this hypothesis, as fear is less intense but more frequent for

property crimes than for interpersonal violence (Alper & Chappell, 2012; ABS, 2011b; Moore & Shepherd, 2007).

The two factors of seriousness and frequency may be the main basis on which individual hierarchies of crime threats are constructed. Information received via social discourse and news media interplays with prior victimisation experiences, demographic characteristics, environmental contexts and personal traits in making judgements about which crimes are most serious and how likely people are to be affected by these (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Tulloch & Lupton, 2001). As affective responses towards crime risks are based on individual perceptions of these risks, this complex and dynamic relationship between contributing variables may explain the variations in both AOC and FOC. This also demonstrates the ambiguity of crime awareness, crime fear, and risk assessments, as well as the flexibility and variance involved in the construction of personal hierarchies of crimes.

As with awareness responses to perceived crime threats, it is to be expected that people choose *how* they assess crime risks based on individual characteristics, personal experiences, and contextual factors. This mirrors the overwhelming tendency towards individual variance in FOC that pervades the extant research. It appears that assessments of crime risk change dramatically based on the attitudes and perceptions of the individual. In some instances, the likelihood of victimisation appears to win out over seriousness of victimisation impacts. For example, if there is a strong desire to socialise in an entertainment precinct, awareness of victimisation risks does not necessarily prevent engagement in this behaviour. It may stimulate the use of certain prevention strategies, thereby creating the sense of control which is argued to be important in minimising FOC, yet the behavioural restrictions that FOC can often result in are not observed.

Contrarily, in determining which crimes are deserving of the most awareness or fear, the seriousness of victimisation appears to be the dominant factor. There is an understanding that the impacts of being a crime victim are an essential part of crime risk assessment, and a general consensus that violent crimes are worthy of fear, whereas property crimes generate less of an emotional response (Alper & Chappell, 2012; Moore & Shepherd, 2007; Roberts & Indermaur, 2009). While hierarchies can vary, it appears that seriousness of victimisation outcomes is more dominant in making judgements about interpersonal

violence risks, whereas likelihood of victimisation is more dominant for property crimes. This indicates that rationality is a part of risk assessment, where individuals tease of the level of harm versus the frequency or likelihood of becoming a victim.

The hierarchical nature of risks can further be extended to encompass those threats beyond crime victimisation. The risk society thesis' argument that the world is full of hazards and risks beyond individual control allows for the possibility that some of these will be more salient than others (Beck, 1992; Yates, 2003). It follows that these more salient risks will generate more awareness and fear. For example, the threat of terrorism could be cause for greater concern than being robbed. The decline in FOC in recent times may be due in part to this prioritisation; people may be as fearful as the empirical literature suggests they have always been, yet this fear may have shifted from a fear of crime victimisation to a fear of larger, less manageable risks. The latest generation of adults might still be concerned about or fearful of crime, but consider this threat minimal or unimportant in comparison to more significant and less manageable hazards, such as war, climate change, and global economic crises.

Further, the statistical patterns of crime fear in extant research might be attributable to fears of these more significant threats, where fear is displaced and directed towards more controllable, individual-level risks such as personal crime victimisation. This explanation is supported by one study which, as noted earlier, indicates that crime fears can be a manifestation of more general fears about socioeconomic uncertainties and inequality (Veino, Roccatto, & Russo, 2013). The crime fear which has drawn so much academic and political attention over the last few decades could be misplaced, attributable to insecurity about the ongoing and ever-changing risks which pervade the outside world, rather than the smaller ones which are seen as part of day-to-day life.

As these bigger and more severe threats become increasingly salient in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the potential outcomes of crime victimisation might no longer merit the fear responses they once did. Governance and omnipresent information sharing about crime serves as a constant reminder of the need to be aware, but fear is now more the domain of global issues such as terrorist threats, climate change warnings, and warfare. This is because these risks do not lend themselves to individual-level management and control in the way that crime threats do. There is no effective prevention method one person can perform to

reduce the risk of an attack on their country, an economic crash, or the outbreak of war. The feelings of insecurity and uncertainty which stem from this may have shifted to smaller risks which can be easily managed, thereby restoring a sense of agency and self-efficacy and ameliorating fears.

### **Controlling Victimization Risks**

The perceived effectiveness of personal crime prevention is a subsidiary contributor to the emergence of AOC. This is because adopting such strategies increases actual and perceived control over victimisation risk, demonstrating an awareness of this risk and creating a sense that it has been minimised sufficiently as not to warrant fear. The less frequent use of self-protective strategies in comparison with other prevention types lends support to the notion that crime prevention is mostly performed to exercise control over the possibility of becoming a crime victim. For example, a person cannot be involved in a fight outside a nightclub if they are not in the entertainment precinct. Similarly, property is at a lesser risk of being stolen if it is locked away or supervised, thereby making it far more difficult for a perpetrator to steal.

Even where a crime is unlikely to occur, it is possible that engaging in such behaviours provides a *sense* that victimisation probability has been reduced. Lower FOC and stronger self-efficacy among males in regard to preventing their own victimisation may be due to a sense of security which arises from the belief that they are capable of preventing and escaping violent situations. Females with experience or training in self-defence techniques may also possess similar feelings of empowerment and control over crime threats. This implies crime awareness and that the selection of appropriate prevention strategies as a response minimises fear, because now the threat which might have warranted fear has now been controlled for. Even if the risk is only perceived as being controlled for, FOC can be reduced. The idea that people would not be fearful of risks they believed they had control over supports this, as does the tendency towards engaging in risky behaviours or visiting risky areas even where an awareness of these risks has been expressed. Deliberate risk-taking among young people may be tied to a sense of invulnerability to crime victimisation and a belief that they are adequately protecting themselves from crime through whichever preventive strategies are used.

Furthermore, it is possible that having a sense of control over personal victimisation risks may have a direct impact upon awareness of crime. The sense of self-efficacy in regard to successful crime risk management could alter judgements about the likelihood of victimisation, where perceptions of risk are lower than actual risk. This would potentially explain the fear-victimisation paradox, where those most likely to be victimised tend to be least fearful of crime, while those less likely to be victimised are more fearful. Extant tendencies of higher FOC and lower self-efficacy among women are consistent with this (Cops & Pleysier, 2010; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; Rader & Cossman, 2011; Scarborough et al., 2010; Snedker, 2006). Such a view also supports the notion of fear and awareness as distinct from one another. While the emotive aspect of FOC has been demonstrated to influence decision-making and behaviour, the impacts of awareness on these are based on contextual judgements of victimisation risk. This highlights the difference between fear as a strong affective response and awareness which is grounded in cognition and does not involve an emotional aspect.

### **The Responsibilisation of the Individual**

The tendency towards the responsabilisation of crime prevention to the individual presents a second subsidiary explanation for the emergence of crime awareness. There is an increased need for awareness of personal victimisation risks if the onus is on each person to protect his or her self from crime. Being aware represents a far more adaptive response to the threat of crime, as it lacks the potentially paralytic negative emotional outcomes of being fearful (Jackson & Gray, 2010). Therefore, it is possible that even people with high crime fear may have become more focused on being aware of crime, rather than fearful of it, since awareness allows greater personal agency and appears not to constrict behaviours in the way that FOC does.

AOC makes for more efficient and effective consideration and adoption of crime prevention strategies than do fear or ignorance about crime, consistent with the risk management focus that is argued to characterise 21<sup>st</sup> century Western cultures (Beck, 1992). This is congruent with the notion of a decline of crime fear despite the new and ever-changing risks with which humankind is faced. FOC is simply not a useful or adaptive means of responding to and managing individual-level crime risks anymore.

Institutions and the state are taking less responsibility in ensuring the safety and security of the citizenry, and so cultivating a realistic and ongoing awareness of crime becomes necessary in order for individuals to prevent themselves from being victimised. Hence, while FOC declines, AOC becomes increasingly important in day-to-day life.

Such an explanation implies that the neoliberal styles of governance which characterise many post-modern Western communities may be a key contributor to the emergence of crime awareness over crime fear in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Neoliberalism promotes the idea of the responsabilisation of crime prevention at the individual level and hence the increased need for awareness. However, there is potential for such approaches to perpetuate crime fear, since awareness is a necessity for this to develop. Feeling as though they are being held responsible for protecting themselves against the many different crime threats which exist may make people more aware of the potential risks which permeate their everyday lives.

Extant research has found that information about crime prevention and local crime risks can increase fear and perceptions of vulnerability (Kohm et al., 2013; Norton, 1982; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003). Combined with individual factors such as sense of self-efficacy, gender, and residential status e.g. living alone, living in an upper/lower class area, it is possible that heightened awareness could lead into a heightened FOC. For example, if perceived vulnerability is high and self-efficacy in regard to prevention is low, knowing about relevant crime risks could create a feeling of constant threat to safety or property. The establishment of this link in the development of crime fear and crime awareness is indicative of a commonality between these two phenomena, contrary to the idea that these are separate concepts.

On a broader level, disseminating information about crime may be having a desensitising effect due to general distrust and scepticism towards sensationalised media reporting. It is also possible that the tendency towards victim-blaming may be representative of a macro-level shift towards awareness of crime in Western cultures. The widespread view that a victim of crime is someone who has failed to adequately protect themselves indicates an overall attitude that it is important to have knowledge of crime risks and adopt appropriate preventive strategies. Furthermore, the implementation of personal

and/or community crime prevention is arguably an overt behavioural marker of crime awareness at the individual and societal levels.

Neoliberal approaches and the individual responsabilisation also perpetuate practices of victim-blaming, where victimisation becomes an expected punishment for those failing to adopt adequate prevention measures. Offenders receive only some of the blame, while the onus on police and the state to prevent victimisation is minimised (Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). This practice has become so ingrained that it is possible for victims to blame themselves for their victimisation, especially in the case of property crimes. Victim-blaming might also increase AOC so as to avoid becoming the subject of blame if an incident of personal victimisation should occur. Practicing situational awareness is recommended as a crucial component of successfully preventing crime, whereas being ignorant to one's surroundings is seen as a foolish and risky action (see Chapter Five).

Lack of belief in the ability of the police and criminal justice system to prevent crime and apprehend and punish offenders adequately could also be expected to contribute to crime awareness, since it has been found to add to FOC (Collins, 1991; Dupuis & Thorns, 2008; Johnson, 2005). The diminished sense of trust may also affect perceptions of individual vulnerability to crime victimisation, further adding to both awareness and fear. This tendency is reflective of the pattern of reduced trust in the state and institutions to help and provide for the needs of younger adults (Cops, 2010; Tapscott, 1998). Generalised trust is thought to be strongly influenced by the worldview of the individual (Salmi, Smoljev, & Kivivuori, 2007). Victim-blaming and individual responsabilisation then, while helping to stimulate AOC, has the potential to exacerbate the already reduced social trust in government and law enforcement.

## Eschewing of Negative Fear Labels

A final subsidiary explanation for the emergence of AOC and the decline of FOC relates to the negative perception of fear as an emotional state. Many studies focus on the detrimental aspects of fear and the general negative connotation that the word ‘fear’ and its related terms e.g. ‘fearful’ have acquired in general verbal communication (Damousi, 2010; Dobbs, Waid, & Shelley, 2009; Herbert, Beate, & Pauli, 2011; Kircanski, Leiberman, & Craske, 2012; Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2012). This negative perception could create a bias against describing crime concerns in this way and leading to the use of less negatively associated words. Descriptions of ‘worry’ or ‘concern’ may be attributable to the less extreme negative associations these terms have in comparison to the word ‘fear’ and its derivatives. Such an explanation is supported by prior works exploring the brain and its word processing functionalities. For example, research into emotional processing of language indicates that the affective content of a word can be linked:

*...to all aspects of its perceptual properties, its usage and emotional connotations. Thus, the word ‘fear’, for example, not only represents the concept of fear, but includes links to the word’s purpose, operations and physiological consequences, possibly reinstating feelings of pleasure/displeasure and arousal even in the absence of a concrete emotion-eliciting external event. (Herbert, Beate, & Pauli, 2011, p. 2948)*

Similarly, negative imagery plays a powerful role in conditioning an emotional response to a given word. One study paired meaningless strings of letters together with positive and negative images and successfully created negative emotional responses to the letter strings that had been paired with the aversive visuals through the process of classical conditioning (Fritsch & Kuchinke, 2013). If an association exists between the word ‘fear’ and pre-existing negative mental imagery, this could increase aversion to the word and its meaning, prompting a preference for a less emotionally-charged and more ambivalent term. ‘Worried’, for example, may have less negative imagery than ‘fearful’. The idea of awareness does not carry with it the strong negative connotations of fearfulness, offering



another explanation for why people describe being aware and not fearful of crime victimisation.

If such a tendency to reject negative fear labels is at play in the decline of crime fear, it is possible that socialisation and gender roles affect this pattern. Males could be expected to be more likely to report themselves as not being fearful of crime than females, as to admit fear would be to defy the expectations surrounding masculinity as these exist in many modern Western cultures. Identifying as the protector of a spouse and or other family members, such as young siblings, or children, might also have a similar effect. This notion is supported by extant findings that self-reporting of crime fear among males dramatically increases when these men are told that falsities in their reports can be easily identified (McLean & Hope, 2010). Contrarily, levels of FOC reported by females remained largely the same (McLean & Hope, 2010).

This indicates the importance of gender socialisation in admitting to being fearful of crime, where it is more acceptable for women to be afraid than for men. The increased vulnerability to violent and sexual attacks for women similarly contributes to more female than male crime fear. In relation to crime awareness, these extant social tendencies suggest that AOC could be expected to be higher among men, while FOC might still prevail for female populations exclusively. However, young people both today and in previous decades have tended to see themselves as being at low risk of victimisation, and thus AOC may not carry the same gendered patterns as FOC. Further investigation is required to test this possibility and further explore the eschewing of negative fear labels and how this practice may have contributed to the emergence of the crime awareness concept.

### **Paradoxical and Counterpoint Issues**

While there appears to be strong evidence that awareness plays a significant role in how young people understand crime victimisation risks, some findings stand contrary to the idea that this awareness is more salient than crime fear for this group. For example, though the majority of studies exploring age and FOC suggest that younger people have irrationally low levels of crime fear in comparison to their actual victimisation risks, there

are also instances in which this age group has reported higher feelings of unsafety than the elderly (Johnson, 2005). The perception that their own lifestyles place themselves at greater risk of attack by a stranger has been found to be a cause of heightened crime fears among young adults (Lupton, 2000). In some cases, female tertiary students have reported high levels of fear in regard to being sexually victimised, and been more fearful of their personal safety when compared with older women (Rader & Cossman, 2011; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007).

In refutation of this countering evidence, it is important to consider several factors. Firstly, while young people may report heightened feelings of unsafety, feeling unsafe does not necessarily equate to feeling fearful. This is an example of the problems with defining and operationalising the crime fear concept which continue to affect research in this field. Awareness, while slightly more uniformly defined than fear of crime, lacks a singular definition to stretch across all psychological and sociological literature. In regard to high levels of fear of sexual victimisation among young women, this finding in itself is not entirely contrary to the wider body of crime fear literature. This type of crime has been consistently found to be that which women of all ages tend to be most fearful of, or at least concerned about. Heightened levels of sex crime fear are consistent with the 'shadow of sexual assault' hypothesis described in Chapter Three.

There are also counterarguments which suggest that AOC is not the explanation for declines in crime fear in recent years. FOC reduction could be attributable to increased trust among members of the same social group, whether physical or online. Trusting in friends on the Internet may lead to a widening of an individual's social network, where trust in one friend extends to that person's other friends and so on. The very nature of the Web means that a certain level of trust in others not to offend against you is required in order to use it (Andrejevik, 2005; 2011), and the ubiquity of online business, entertainment, and communication for the majority of first world countries suggests that this type of trust would be widespread among such populations. Since generalised social trust has been found to reduce crime fear (Oh & Kim, 2009; Sommerfeldt, 2013; Zanin, Radice, & Marra, 2013), perhaps it is this tendency which partially explains the shift from FOC to AOC.

Finally, it is possible that modern preoccupation with risks and risk management has cultivated a more rational, rather than emotive, reaction to crime. It has been previously recognised that fear is often unhelpful in managing crime risks and implementing preventive strategies (Jackson & Gray, 2010; Skogan, 1986). This tendency may be being accompanied by a growing understanding that a logical, calculative approach is more likely to generate suitable means of reducing victimisation risk than fear does. Furthermore, a focus on identifying and calculating risks is a cognitive, rather than emotional process; it does not lend itself to a fear response.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Caveats, Criticisms, and Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, the concept of fear of crime has been examined and analysed in order to construct a reconceptualization of this phenomenon for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From this exploration, a case has been made for the emergence of the concept of awareness of crime as an alternative descriptor for how the possibility of crime victimisation is responded to at the individual and societal levels. The pervasiveness of risk in general, combined with technological advances, shifts in social attitudes and styles of governance, and strong scepticism towards crime news reporting suggest a form of desensitisation towards the threat of local crime. This is underscored because of greater attention to global threats such as terrorism, climate change, and mass migration. Young peoples' established ambivalence towards risk, low levels of fear in the face of heightened likelihood of victimisation, and their constant connectedness via online social networks are argued to lend some of the strongest support for the idea of the AOC concept.

However, while it is posited that a shift from FOC to AOC has occurred, exactly *what* AOC is requires definition. It is important to understand that the two concepts do not exist independently of one another. It is impossible to fear a crime without first having an awareness of that crime, from which a perception of the risk it presents is then derived. Yet it would be inaccurate to describe FOC and AOC as two points along the same continuum. The opposite of fearfulness is not awareness but rather fearlessness. Thus, it is clear that determining the nature of the relationship between crime fear and crime awareness is complex, as is still the case in defining FOC.

The final chapter of this thesis presents a critique of the crime awareness concept and provides alternative explanations to the patterns which support its existence in contemporary Western societies. This is followed by a discussion of the potential future of AOC in both academic and socio-political contexts. To close, a summation is given of the arguments and issues surrounding AOC, including further exploration of the nature of its relationship to FOC, and predictions for the future of the concept and its impacts for individuals and the wider community.

## **Caveats of the Awareness of Crime Concept**

The position argued in this thesis is that a case can be made for AOC occurring for young people in socially cohesive communities. However, it is possible that crime fear may still be pervasive for the elderly or those with less social support and peer interaction. Perhaps the constant connectedness and ubiquitous online networking practices of the Net Generation have allowed for this group to enjoy stronger social bonds and support from friends and relatives, whereas interpersonal relationships could be expected to differ in number and nature for older demographics or those without access to the same digital technologies. Likewise, it is to be expected that the AOC concept would not carry over to countries where political or economic instability is rife, and where the potential for crime victimisation represents a far more severe threat than that faced by those living in relatively developed, safe and stable communities. It is likely that crime awareness would manifest differently depending on socioeconomic status, although all socioeconomic groups could be expected to experience AOC given the pervasiveness of information sharing about crime news in contemporary times. However, exactly how class would temper awareness remains unknown. Those with limited access to security measures might be more aware of potential risks, or even be fearful of being victimised, as opposed to the upper classes. Alternatively, familiarity with the signs of crime and disorder (which tend to be more common in neighbourhoods of lower socioeconomic status) might cause this group to become desensitised to such threats. Differences in culture and attitudes towards crime, punishment, offenders, and victims are also likely to affect the applicability of AOC to a given society. So AOC is at this point in time considered to be largely a feature exclusive to modern neo-liberal communities.

Another caveat of the present thesis is that the formation of the crime awareness concept arose from discussions conducted with young people during a previous research project on FOC. The concept was then built on findings from empirical literature, and extant theories of crime, risk, and human behaviour. AOC is not an idea driven by data, but by careful consideration of these sources, and has not been tested or extrapolated to more diverse groups than young people living in affluent Western nations, specifically university students in Australia. However, the seminal Australian study which informs this thesis similarly noted the possibility of being aware rather than fearful of crime,

lending some credence to the notion of AOC (Lupton, 2000). References to phenomena such as perceptions about the banality of crime prevention measures and familiarity with signs of crime and disorder also indicate that the idea of AOC has some substance (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Goold, Loader, & Thumala, 2013; Lorenc et al., 2013).

In future, the concept should be tested and examined for different populations and cultures in order to determine its veracity. As AOC is easily as complex and varied a social science concept as FOC, there is the potential for some of the same difficulties to arrive. Establishing a universal definition of AOC in future may prove to be as challenging as defining FOC has been to date. The working definition provided by the current thesis identifies awareness as ‘consciousness of external events’, and AOC as ‘consciousness of the risk of one’s own crime victimisation in a given context’, yet the ambiguity of what it means to be ‘aware’ and what constitutes ‘consciousness’ is expected to invite criticism and point to ways in which can be developed further in the AOC concept in future.

### **The Future of the Awareness of Crime Concept**

When considering the impact of FOC upon policy, practice, and several fields of research, the importance of the AOC concept becomes clear. Awareness replacing fear as the dominant response to the possibility of crime victimisation represents a paradigmatic shift in how crime risks are perceived, understood, and responded to. The ramifications are significant, as the emergence of AOC could encourage new approaches in researching these aspects, and present new avenues for reconsidering older theories constructed around the FOC concept. Given the uncertainty and dynamism which characterises the modern world, such revision could help to ensure the relevance of existing theories including Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) and Cultivation Theory (Gerbner et al., 1986), as well as the formation of new ones. Victim surveys in first-world democracies characterised by AOC may also present a different picture of crime victimisation than that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, given the role of FOC in the formation and use of this type of crime-data collecting tool. For example, a reorientation of questionnaire items might be required where these ask about feelings of fear versus safety. Victim surveys such as the International Crime Victims Survey may prove useful in teasing out

further differences between crime awareness and crime fear in the future, given their global nature.

The possibility of a departure from negative fear labels on responses to crime threats also encourages new research to investigate the role of word association in self-reporting of FOC or AOC. Further study could help to identify whether FOC truly is in decline as opposed to AOC, or whether semantics and maintenance of social desirability by individuals are partly responsible for this tendency. Research focusing on different age cohorts could help to identify the influence (if any) of age in regard to issues of language connotations in self-reporting responses to perceived crime risks.

Another recommended avenue of AOC research concerns the concept's links with social networking and information sharing processes. Social networking technology is becoming ever more ubiquitous, and may continue to play a part in how current and future generations construct their perspectives on crime and victimisation risks. Given the salience of crime news and experiences acquired through personal connections and social circles, this type of media and how it cultivates attitudes about crime should be explored in future. Such investigations could represent a new facet of the original Cultivation Theory which focused on television broadcasts and how these contribute to the construction of worldviews at individual and macro levels (Gerbner et al., 1986).

The current thesis helps to fill gaps in extant knowledge about FOC, offering potential reasons for variance in individual-level fear and presenting an alternative explanation for how perceptions of crime risk are experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Suggesting a reconceptualisation for such a widely-researched notion as crime fear encourages future works to look at FOC in a new light, and challenges some of the ideas which form the existing crime fear logic. An AOC perspective argues that FOC is not irrationally high across modern Western communities, that young people are not ignorant of crime risks, and that media reporting of crime does not necessarily make people more fearful of crime. This stands contrary to many existing arguments about the nature, causes, and manifestation of crime fear across different groups.

Furthermore, the concept of awareness may have the potential to resolve issues and explain phenomena not accounted for by the FOC paradigm. For example, AOC may

have the power to explain variance in crime fears at the individual level – a question which FOC researchers have sought to answer for decades (Farrall et al., 1997; Warr, 2000). The present thesis also addresses the limitations of some extant crime fear research by taking a qualitative and eventually conceptual approach which examined crime risk responses to their fullest extent.

Beyond future research endeavours, the idea of AOC has broader societal and criminological implications. Firstly, it suggests a different interpretation of and relationship with news reporting than that which has been argued to shape attitudes to crime and more general worldviews. Crime stories from mass media channels are not accepted at face value so much as considered with a degree of scepticism. The ubiquity of the Internet in daily life allows for seeking out further information about specific crime events and discussion of these with others, so understandings of the stories are informed by various sources. Thus, people are able to take a more active role in shaping their exposure to and knowledge of crime news, and constructing their attitudes about crime.

Secondly, an AOC paradigm might encourage an even more risk-management-focused orientation of modern communities. The awareness of day-to-day risks of crime might stimulate the purchase of more comprehensive security systems and insurance policies, in keeping with ideas surrounding the responsabilisation of crime risks at the individual level. There is also the potential for local neighbourhoods to be better cared for if the need for awareness of crime risks and disorder is impressed upon residents, since a tidy neighbourhood with high community engagement could be expected to be less of a target than a run-down, rarely guarded one (Jackson & Gray, 2010; Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Scarborough et al., 2010; Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

A modern society where awareness, not fear, is the dominant response to crime risks might also mean greater wellbeing for its members, given the detrimental impacts that can result from FOC. Furthermore, spending on criminal justice policies and practices could be affected in the sense that less fear would mean a reduced demand or expectation from the state or police forces to ‘crack down’ on crime and criminal offenders. At present, there is a sense of logic to punitive policies in handling the problem of crime where it is perceived that tougher penalties and greater law enforcement presence will lead to less offending, and therefore reduce the fear of crime victimisation reported by



the general public. A pre-eminence of crime awareness over crime fear would call for a critical review of these types of policies and their utility beyond creating an outward semblance of stability and control for the political parties who design and implement them. This is supported by the growing tendency towards the individualisation of responsibility for crime prevention in neoliberal societies. Awareness represents a more rational and logical way of looking at crime victimisation and risks to the self and property, in comparison to fear, which is a powerful emotional reaction. Thus, there might be less of a perceived victimisation risk and by extension reduced calls for tougher sentencing and more police presence, for example. Resources allocated to these efforts in earlier decades could then be allocated elsewhere or devoted to a more rehabilitative approach to handling offenders, potentially further reducing crime rates for the future and improving reintegration of these people into the wider community.

## **Conclusion**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the understanding of FOC as a social phenomenon has changed, broadening and improving with a greater focus on teasing out the complexities of the concept. Perceptions and understandings of crime risks have also changed in recent years, and pro-responsibilisation styles of governance have contributed to an increasingly individualised approach to the prevention of crime victimisation. Political interests continue to play a role in informing public attitudes towards crime and victimisation, and are presently shaped by an accompanying preoccupation with risk management and securitisation. Under this government mentality, the responsibility for protecting the self and personal property appears to have shifted to rest largely on the shoulders of the individual. People can be expected to adopt effective strategies of crime prevention for their own lifestyles, and can be saddled with the blame should their efforts prove insufficient to stop victimisation.

The news media and their style of crime reporting continues to perpetuate the idea that the world today is one of risk, in which threats and danger are inherent and all-pervasive in daily life. Much political discourse follows a similar thread. This represents a point of continuity from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, where Gerbner's cultivation theory suggested that

television media in particular encouraged a 'mean world' view (Gerbner et al., 1986). However, for younger generations of adults, there is a reduction of trust in governments and state institutions which appears to be extending to the mass media and its reporting of crime events. This growing scepticism is feeding into a tendency to believe vicarious accounts of victimisation from friends and family over those publicly disseminated via news media channels. The preference for self-selected information sources and learning through online social networking and digital media is a key component of crime awareness as it applies to young people. Cultivation perspectives continue to have relevance in this respect, as the treatment of broadcast media as ritualistically-viewed messages which impact upon audience worldviews can easily be extended to online social networking sites, which have become all-pervasive especially in the lives of young people. Socialisation through interpersonal communication continues to remain a powerful force which shapes and influences the way in which people construct their ideas about crime, presenting another point of continuity from the 20<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This is expected to persist as social media and interconnectedness become ever more ubiquitous in present times.

In a 21<sup>st</sup> century risk-obsessed social climate, the issue of crime fear may be superseded by the concept of crime awareness. The potential of crime victimisation has become all-pervasive and so people have become increasingly familiarised with the possibility of being a victim of crime. This leads to a lessened sense of fear coupled with the need to be alert and aware of crime risks, given the serious consequences that can result from victimisation. Age, gender, socioeconomic status, community cohesiveness, prior victimisation experiences, and information received from those within the social network of an individual have the power to significantly impact how people think, feel and act in regard to crime victimisation risk.

The current thesis expands upon the work of Lupton (2000), whose findings also indicated an understanding of crime risks as pervasive in daily life. While Lupton did not go so far as to suggest a paradigmatic shift in responses to potential crime victimisation, it was apparent that this threat was "routine...an everyday risk to be assessed and managed" (Lupton, 2000, p. 33). The concept of crime awareness draws from this perspective, as awareness is argued to result in part from a familiarisation with and desensitisation to

crime victimisation. This seminal study identified that people could be aware of crime without being fearful of it, and this notion is one of the key bases upon which the AOC concept is advanced here. Where Lupton found that crime was seen as something both inevitable and preventable, this attitude was reflected among the young people in previous research work by the candidate, which helped to orient the current thesis (Jarrett-Luck, 2013). Furthermore, the 'routine' nature of risks as reported in Lupton's (2000) work and the regular use of personal crime prevention strategies described in the findings from the candidate's previous work both link back to Routine Activity Theory, where the routine activities undertaken at the individual level affect exposure to crime victimisation and thus risk of being victimised (Cohen & Felson, 1979). These points of congruence demonstrate the fundamental importance of Lupton's (2000) work and existing criminological theory to the reconceptualization of FOC and the formation of AOC in this thesis.

In understanding the shift towards crime awareness it is vital to establish clear definitions of this concept. Issues in conceptualisation have, as noted earlier, affected FOC research for decades, and awareness is similarly complex and multi-faceted in nature. Awareness of crime and fear of crime indeed share several similarities, especially in that both appear to be largely informed and perpetuated by the existing crime fear logics. A key part of this logic is that public crime fear is irrational in the face of actual victimisation statistics, given the relatively low likelihood that any individual, even those in susceptible cohorts, will be a victim of crime. While this notion drives research and discussion into FOC and rationality, awareness follows this pattern of reasoning in the more rational approach it takes to the assessment of crime risks.

Another part of the crime fear logic that holds true for FOC and AOC alike is the notion that what is familiar is also what is safe, and that crime victimisation is perpetuated by strangers in unfamiliar or public locations. While this idea is paradoxical to the reality of patterns of victimisation in Australia, it feeds into fear of crime by perpetuating fear of strangers and an assessment of increased risk in public spaces. Awareness is similarly affected, where there is a belief that precautions against crime are more necessary in public or in the presence of unknown others than in familiar territory with family or friends. This contradicts the otherwise rational approach incorporated within the crime

awareness concept and demonstrates the similarities the concept shares with its predecessor.

A separate facet of AOC is that it is based in cognition and personal judgement. This is different to the emotionally-based crime fear, which focuses less on a rational consideration of risk and more on the potential outcomes of victimisation. Assessment of risk is interwoven into both the fear and awareness concepts, however in AOC, assessment of one's likelihood of being victimised is just as important as assessment of the possible harms associated with that victimisation. This rational assessment of victimisation is congruent with Routine Activity Theory, where decisions about activities and behaviours are made with consideration of available information and perceptions or shared experiences (Rountree & Land, 1996; Yar, 2005). It could thus be argued that while FOC may be irrational, especially at the macro-level, AOC does not share this characteristic. Contextual factors appear to temper crime awareness as with crime fear, however the specific impacts of these factors remains to be seen.

The present thesis argues for the presence of common links between fear and awareness, and simultaneously asserts their mutually exclusive characteristics in regard to rationality and emotional versus cognitive approaches to crime victimisation risks. However, FOC and AOC are neither dichotomous, nor do they represent two points along the same continuum. Being aware of a crime risk is not an oppositional response to being fearful of that risk. Likewise, the two concepts do not exist independently of one another. For example, FOC cannot occur without first being aware of crime. This means that crime awareness represents a necessary condition for FOC to manifest, at both the individual and macro levels of explanation. However, awareness alone is not sufficient to trigger fear of crime, given its basis in rational judgements of risk and desensitisation to signs of crime and public stories of victimisation. Furthermore, the formation of the crime awareness concept has arisen as a product of the present thesis' attempt to reconceptualise FOC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this way, FOC can be seen as both a predecessor to and potential descendant of AOC. Awareness may indeed lead to fear, but it is also the product of changes in the experience and manifestation of public and individual FOC over time. Overall, AOC and FOC are two deeply interwoven concepts, sharing many points of similarity and dissimilarity, as well as a strong bi-directional relationship as noted above.

A shift towards awareness of crime may be most apparent among younger generations, given their ambivalent attitudes towards risks and the routine activities which characterise their day-to-day lives. Being aware but not afraid may equip young adults with a sense of control over their own victimisation risks without restricting their behaviours as part of limiting exposure to crime. Further, young people accept the responsibility of protecting themselves from victimisation and take deliberate preventive steps. However, crime prevention strategies are seen as instinctive behaviours derived from personal experience or drawn from those of their extended social networks. This indicates that the behavioural aspect of AOC (implementing personal crime prevention strategies) aligns with the principles laid out in Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activity Theory, as these actions become an integrated and subconscious part of an individual's routine. They are put in place to give the perception of adequate control over perceived crime risks. The importance of the behaviour rests not in whether the personal crime prevention controls for victimisation in actuality, but in its ability to provide young people with the illusion of control over this risk.

There are many potential reasons behind the posited shift from fear to awareness over crime fear. It could be that due to their lifestyles, young adults are more familiar with cues of crime risk and what the consequences of victimisation are than other age groups. This familiarity creates an awareness of the possibility of victimisation, but also leads to minimal associated feelings of fear. Another feature is that the other areas of risk, uncertainty, and insecurity in the lives of young adults, may be considered much more important than the less likely risk of becoming a crime victim. Financial security, seeking of stable employment, and tertiary education options may represent greater sources of concern for this group than potential victimisation.

The broader, macro-level impacts of AOC upon the understanding, policies, and discourse about crime are important to consider in the context of the global risk society. FOC among the general public has in the past been fundamental in driving and informing criminal justice, crime control, and prevention in Australia and overseas (Lee, 2007). Contrarily, social constructions of crime fear have been partly influenced by the need for political parties to gain favour for populist agendas throughout the last five decades (Lee, 1999). However, a paradigmatic change towards awareness of crime should accordingly

call into question the relevance of the rationale behind decision-making and policy in these areas. Approaches to handling offenders, victims, and dissemination of information about crime could be expected to shift under the new awareness parameters, potentially adopting a more rational and less alarmist response towards these issues. Cognitive judgement could encourage a 'cooler' attitude towards emotionally 'hot' topics such as victimisation and punishment. The cognitive basis of AOC calls for this style of criminal justice, which would involve careful considerations of the actualities of risk and victimisation. Accordingly, there would be less emphasis on being 'tough on crime', and increased police presence and harsher sentencing would not be automatic political responses to specific crime issues. This would represent a significant departure from populist ideas about how to manage crime and public safety which still exist for many governing bodies today.

Overall, exactly what impacts the awareness of crime will have upon individuals, communities, and Western societies in general remains to be seen, but there are grounds for cautious optimism. Should the shift away from fear of crime towards awareness of crime continue on a large scale, there may be concordant changes in public attitudes towards crime control, prevention, and victimisation. At the very least, movement away from FOC could be expected to result in a reduction of the negative impacts this phenomenon enacts on the psychological well-being of individuals as well as the cohesiveness and cooperation of communities on a broader spectrum. Indeed, the different lens through which crime is viewed now is indicative of a less sensationalised, fear-driven, emotionally-based response. There is potential for a more rational approach to crime and justice policy and a more accurate and considered public attitude towards crime victimisation through this concept of awareness of crime.

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