

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The premise of this book is that crime statistics are widely used to analyse and develop theories of fear of crime. The goal of my investigation is to demonstrate how the misinterpretation of vehicle crime statistics influences the media, motor insurance and security industries, as well academic research concerning crime reduction. I will analyse vehicle theft statistics and by doing so, aim to provide an opportunity for debate about the need for more accurate crime statistics and their analysis. Furthermore I aim to provide the opportunity to debate issues such as the role of trust and risk, the effect on people's behaviour and responsibilities of the state in areas such as insurance.

The theoretical discussion will embrace the concepts of risk society and actuarial practice which can be found in the works of Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996); Burchell, Colin and Miller (1991) and Beck who argues that "risks always depend on decisions – that is, they presuppose decisions. They arise from the transformation of uncertainty and hazards into decisions and compel the making of decisions, which in turn produce risk" (1999:75). With regards to risk management and crime, Rigakos (1999a) argues that irrational fears can only be satiated by even more expert intervention. This is what Ericson and Carriere (1994) describe as the logic of controlling the irrational by rational means.

In terms of expert intervention and control, the finance and insurance practice of identifying districts and towns populated by low income residents are used to minimise economic risk, these decisions ultimately marginalise and exclude these residents from obtaining insurance and thus finance for goods and services. Similarly, statistically based 'policing' decisions are made daily about 'dangerous' populations that tend to be located in the same areas as those identified as insurance and/or finance risks (Rigakos, 1999a). Crucial to these classifications made either by insurance or by police are the statistical data providing the 'evidence' that risk categorisation or risk management (in the form of crime reduction technology) should be warranted.

According to Abraham Maslow (1943) we all have a basic need for security and unless this basic need is met, we cannot concentrate on the 'higher order' of needs such as achievement and self-fulfilment. Personal security in Western society is closely linked to fear of crime. The recognition of fear of crime as a distinct area of enquiry raises theoretical problems about what it is we mean by the term (Zedner, 1997). Fear of crime is generally interpreted as perceived threats to personal safety rather than to property or more generalised perceptions of risk (Maxfield, 1984). However, reactions to fear of crime frequently lead to a desire for protection, either through support for more police and/or Neighbourhood Watch schemes; the purchase of products that provide a feeling of safety and security such as alarms or locks and/or the purchase of insurance as prevention against the risk of loss of life or property.

Giddens (1999) believes that the notion of risk is central to modern politics and the current debates in post-socialist politics across the world, though Weber (1922/1968) argued that risk is mainly about time, and how future time is calculated. He considered western capitalism to be quite different from other kinds of economic systems, because it embeds itself in the future. He contended that it does so by calculating profit and loss and thus, calculating profit and loss involves risk assessment.

There is growing criminological interest in the importance of risk: Beck (1992) acknowledges that risks are phenomena mediated by people's dependence on social institutions. In terms of control and displacement, risk management can be identified in the rearrangement of the

distribution of offenders in the community (Feeley and Simon, 1992). The link between risk assessment, risk management and reported crime can be detected in the interpretation and manipulation of crime statistics (Currie, 1999). Beck (1999) and Davis (1998) have both identified connections between the manipulation of fear and risk. However, while they have moved the discussion forward, there are aspects missing from existing theories, one of these aspects is the perpetuation of the fear of crime by those with a vested interest in creating and sustaining this sentiment.

Since the 1970s, there has been a plethora of surveys to quantify levels of fear of crime. (Sparks R. et al (1977); Figgie H. (1980); Kinsey R. (1984); Koss M, et al (1987); Jones T. et al (1986); LaGrange R. and Ferraro K. (1989); Mayhew P. and Hough M. (1991); Hough M. (1995). These surveys are at the heart of crime reduction strategies by government and law enforcement agencies. Maguire questions the intent and purpose of the claim of these surveys including the “accumulation of data about unreported crime as the gradual unveiling of more and more of the complete picture” (1997:142). The results of research by Farrall et al. (1997) and Ditton and Farrall (2000) contest the evidence of fear of crime from these surveys.

Garland has identified a relationship between crime reduction policies and the “present day world of private-sector crime prevention, that exist in a reflexive relationship to the theories and prescriptions of situational crime prevention” (2000:366). In this sense, these policies heighten public awareness about crime and the reflexive relationship as described by Garland, simultaneously enhances the public perception of crime through the purchase of products to protect against crime. Thus fear of crime appears to have become an element of the process ultimately leading to insurance and security industries to feed off this process for their own interests. In this respect, motorcycle insurers and security companies appear to have utilised statistical data relative to motorcycles theft in Great Britain to justify increases in motorcycle insurance and the subsequent sale of security devices.

By comparing compulsory ‘third party’ motor insurance in Great Britain and the Netherlands which is based on a permutation of actuarial calculations, with compulsory third party motor insurance in Australia (in which each state in Australia operates its own compulsory third party (CTP) insurance scheme<sup>2</sup>), I suggest that the differences between these two systems can not only influence government decisions on crime, but also how the insurance industry can influence public perception of ‘risk’ and crime, specifically in Great Britain.

The comparison of criminological data throughout the world suggests that the countries such as Great Britain and Australia are perceived to have amongst the worst crime records in the developed world (2000 International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS), published by the Dutch Ministry of Justice). Countries such as the Netherlands however, are described as having moderate levels of crime, while Japan is considered to be a low crime society. However, analysis of data sets from the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (1995, 1999 and 2003) offer alternative considerations as to the nature and extent of crime due to differences in the counting methods in each of these countries<sup>3</sup>. I will endeavour to identify how these variations can create cultural perceptions.

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<sup>2</sup> These schemes are strictly regulated by the state governments and the premiums for motor insurance are calculated by using two variables: the type of vehicle and area of habitation with the exception of New South Wales (which includes the age of the driver in the premium calculations).

<sup>3</sup> European Handbook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics 1995, page 28: Theft of a motor vehicle  
40. The differences in levels between countries can be related to the definition of these offences. For example, at least seven countries did not include joyriding, whereas five countries included only joyriding or an equivalent offence (vehicle theft being included within total theft). In addition, some countries mentioned that data referred to all vehicles (including bicycles) and other countries that it referred to cars only. The number of offences is also dependant on the number of vehicle owners.

In this book I examine the enormous interest and social concern with the crime issue, referred to in the literature as 'The Fear of Crime'. In particular, I develop my book to investigate the relationship between the private sector and the government in the formulation of vehicle theft policy. I use motorcycle theft, insurance and security as a case study to develop my argument.

I examine situational crime prevention theories and the private sector, focusing on vehicle theft. I expand this investigation to include an overview of the development of government policy in relation to law and order and the development of policies from the previous Conservative's policies to New Labour's Third Way.

I analyse comparative international crime statistics to identify methodological variations between countries. In this context, I analyse the governance of safety and the development of 'crime prevention' in the Netherlands to complement my findings from the surveys I carried out in this country and in Britain. I examine the findings of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS), the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics as well as national vehicle crime statistics, specifically, Great Britain, The Netherlands and to a lesser degree, Japan and Australia to determine whether perceptions of crime may influence the outcome of these surveys.

The objectives of this book are in the first instance, to develop the debate in relation to 'fear of crime'. In the second instance, to determine whether the findings of criminological statistics can be influenced by 'geo-historical settings' as identified by Edwards and Hughes (2005). They argue that "the concept of governance alerts us to the exercise of political authority beyond the nation state and compels an understanding of how other statutory, as well as commercial and voluntary actors, seek to govern places within and across national territories" (2005: 346).

In this context problems of order and social reactions to them, imply a consideration of the role that "comparative analysis can play in the development of the criminological thought" (ibid). In accordance with comparative analysis "beyond the national scale of criminal justice practices" (ibid), this book aims to add to the debate surrounding the applications of comparison "that are compelled by the power-dependent character of governing safety" (ibid).

### **Structure of the Book**

In chapter two, I consider the debate of 'fear of crime' in consideration of my choice of motorcyclists for my surveys. I commence with a review the literature of 'fear of crime' which finds its roots in surveys such as the British Crime Survey (BCS) and situational crime reduction theories by 'Right Realist' criminologists (see Tonry and Farrington, 1995). Studying the 'fear of crime' is a research field that has grown enormously in the past two decades. I evaluate the opinions of sociologists who believe that 'fear of crime' is generally interpreted as perceived threats to personal safety rather than to property or more generalised perceptions of risk and crime.

In chapter three, I consider the implications of New Labour's policies in relation to the changes in legislation in law and order, which are identified in their 'modernization' project. I examine the development of law and order in Great Britain. I expand this discussion by analysing the governance of crime in the Netherlands principally through the work of Rene van Swaaningen, in order to identify any influence of government policy in relation to the perception of crime in these countries. To develop this comparison, I consider the changes in crime, crime reduction policies and the management of fear. I conclude this chapter by considering the advent of public-sector managerialism, specifically in Great Britain, which

has according to Chan (1999) brought with it a new principle of police accountability (...). He argues that the new accountability gives emphasis to managerial rather than legal or public-interest standards. He contends that it favours external oversight combined with self-regulation rather than centralized control and that it promotes risk management rather than rule enforcement.

I continue the theoretical discussion in chapter four by examining the debates on modernity and risk in relation to crime and insurance. I evaluate such writers as Giddens (2002), who argues that the notion of risk is central to modern politics. I evaluate the debate on private insurance as a market-based alternative to dependence on the state for managing risk.

In chapter five, the application of the theoretical approach considers measurements of crime. I link the discussion of risk in chapter four through an analysis of Japanese crime statistics and the criminological discussion of cultural hegemony and risk. I also consider the International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS) and comparisons with police crime data in relation to concepts of governance which include 'safety' and 'risk' and the association with the prevention of crime in policy making. By concentrating on four countries, specifically, Great Britain, Australia, the Netherlands and Japan, I compare the findings of the ICVS to develop the debate on how certain countries are identified either as 'High' or 'Low' Crime societies. I evaluate crime data in the Netherlands and Great Britain through Police Statistics and in the case of Great Britain, through the British Crime Survey (BCS).

Chapter six is an analysis of the motor insurance industry in Europe, specifically third party insurance, focussing on Great Britain and the Netherlands. I outline the determinants used by the industry in these countries to identify risk.

I discuss motor insurance and whether compulsory third party insurance is a service for the public good, or a profit making product for the insurance industry. The reason for this is to establish the conceptual principles of insurance in terms of risk management and community. I compare these to the practices of Australian compulsory third party (CTP) motorcycle insurance to evaluate whether the interests of the private sector in Britain define government policy in relation to the general motoring public. I investigate the reasons why the cost of motor insurance policies differs so greatly between these two countries by examining the mechanisms to determine risk. I do this in consideration of the 'fear of crime' discourse and because a motor insurance policy for a young person which is costly in Great Britain, may act as a deterrent to private transport and may not only create social exclusion but act as an incentive to be uninsured and 'outside the law'.

I conclude that private sector insurance sets out parameters to identify risk and by its very nature, seeks the exclusion or limitation of high risk clients. Whereas insurance which is regulated and controlled by government is based on the principle of inclusion and therefore seeks to ensure that those more at risk are protected and are included in the community. Motor insurance is an interesting mechanism to test this theory.

In Chapter seven, I discuss the evolution of my research of motorcycle theft through the Motorcycle Action Group UK (MAG UK) and my choice of motorcycles and motorcyclists as my cohorts. This is in part due to the number of registered motorcycles in this country which is relatively small compared to other forms of transport and therefore much easier to monitor. Equally relevant is the 'risk' element of motorcycling and a certain stigma attached to motorcyclists in Britain. As a pressure group, MAG UK is highly influential in the motorcycling community in this country. Due to the perceived high levels of motorcycle theft, I evaluate the 'fear of crime' discourse in relation to the phenomenon of motorcycle theft that has been utilised by this voluntary organisation to actively promote security, to raise

awareness of motorcycle theft amongst its members and ultimately to seek to increase membership from campaigns to combat motorcycle theft.

The focus of my research in chapter eight is security. I analyse data from the survey of 922 motorcyclists which I carried out with the support of MAG U.K. I asked questions about theft and security in Britain and I collected information from 174 riders who had their bikes stolen and 748 of those who did not, for comparison. The relevance of these comparisons is that the data identify “fundamental issues of consumption and the ‘perfect images’ it enables people to contemplate” (Campbell 1987:213). I consider the arguments by Loader (1999) that the purchase of security cultivates a view in which the individual is capable of participating in the fight against the bad criminal ‘Other’. I also consider his view that the dynamics of disappointment and fear are sentiments which “the crime control industry has a vested interest in cultivating and sustaining” (1999:382).

In chapter nine, I analyse the results of two parallel surveys of motorcyclists who were predominantly members of the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG UK) and of the Motorrijders Actie Groep Netherlands<sup>4</sup> (MAG NL). The reasons for the surveys were to identify whether there was any difference in perceptions of crime in Britain and the Netherlands and to understand whether security, insurance or government policy on crime reduction had influenced riders and whether similar groups of people with similar life styles, habits and customs can be strongly influenced either positively or negatively through regulation and crime control policies as to how these people perceive and react to crime statistics and the reporting of crime.

In chapter ten, I complete my book and draw together the results of my theoretical and practical investigation. My conclusion aims to present an alternative vision of the manner in which ‘fear of crime’ surveys and crime statistics determine government policy and profit for the private sector. I suggest that perception and reality are not necessarily the same and that the ‘fear of crime’ discourse is complex and not only open to interpretations that are susceptible to generalization, but are ultimately a reflection of culturally specific values of place and history. I conclude by considering the implications of corporate power and regulations by government and how these two issues influence policy decisions which affect the individual and communities in terms of trust and ‘fear of crime’.

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<sup>4</sup> These two groups are Riders’ Rights organisations that in their respective countries promote and defend the freedom and right to ride motorcycles without interference from government or industry. These sister organisations are both represented in the Federation of Motorcyclists in Europe Association (FEMA).