An Investigation into the Fear of Crime: Is there a Link between the Fear of Crime and the Likelihood of Victimisation?

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Abstract

The fear of crime has received an unprecedented amount of attention in the form of research in recent times; however there is a great deal which remains unknown and unanswered. The purpose of this dissertation is to attempt to extensively analyse existing research into the fear of crime, and to uncover new ideas and trends concerning fear and victimisation. In particular, the relationship between fear of crime and likelihood of victimisation is investigated.

Many interesting findings emerged from this research, although some results are contradictory. The elderly, for example, were discovered to be generally more fearful than younger adults due to their feelings of isolation and vulnerability. However, research occasionally suggested otherwise; that the elderly were less fearful since they knew their likelihood of victimisation was lower than younger people. Ultimately, the research consulted provides little evidence to suggest that there is a link between fear of crime and the likelihood of victimisation. Fear can be induced by a variety of factors and circumstances and may not necessarily be purely a consequence of one socio-demographic variable. In other words, it is wrong to assume that all women are fearful of crime due to their gender.

The impact of fear of crime on lifestyle can be both positive and negative: an individual's likelihood of becoming a victim will be affected by a variety of factors, some of which are almost impossible to quantify. This is a challenge to be addressed in future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation concentrates on the complicated global phenomenon known as the 'fear of crime'. The possibility that an individual's fear of crime can impact on their chances of being victimised is also subject to substantive analysis throughout this research. Aristotle (cited in Kennedy, 1991: 141) suggests that the state of mind of those who fear is 'accompanied by an expectation of experiencing some destructive misfortune…'. This may explain both the fear of a negative experience, such as victimisation, or even phobias. Aristotle defines fear as 'a sort of pain or agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive of painful evil' (ibid) and Alison (2005: 214) argues that 'the potential to avoid aversive conditions bears a close relationship to negative reinforcement'. The issues of fear association and negative reinforcement are discussed in Chapter 3.

Fear, according to Ditton *et al* (1999: 83), is a term 'encompassing a confusing variety of feelings, perspectives, risk-estimations, and thus means different things to different people'. Crime is an inevitable feature of civilization. Durkheim (cited in Ferraro, 1995: 1) suggests that 'crime is normal because a society exempt from it is utterly impossible'. Fear is merely a natural response to crime.

Lee (2007: 1) argues that over the past four decades the fear of crime has become 'an increasingly significant concern for criminologists, victimologists, policy-makers, politicians, policing organisations, the media and the general public'. Lee emphasises the emergence of the fear of crime by suggesting that there has been an 'extraordinary proliferation of research and literature' in the field (ibid). This 'proliferation' is also highlighted by Crawford (cited in Newburn, 2003: 139) who suggests that since the 1970s 'crime and the fear of crime have come to occupy a new salience within everyday life'. It has been suggested by Walklate (2007: 88) that the 'growth in sensitivity' to the fear of crime 'parallels the growth in sensitivity to the victim of crime more generally'. She also implies that this 'growth' was 'boosted' by media coverage of muggings in the early 1970s, and that rising recorded crime rates throughout this decade contributed to the introduction of the British Crime Survey (BCS) in 1982. Karmen (2004: 7) suggests that 'in the past, the lion's share of (media) coverage was devoted to offenders', whereas now accounts are more 'balanced'; allowing 'nonvictims to better understand and empathise with the actions and reactions of victims'. The considerable attention given to fear of crime by researchers over the last two decades is a result of attempts to identify why certain social categories have reported levels of fear higher than others (Ferraro, 1995).

The central aim of this research is to identify whether or not there is a genuine link between fear of crime and the likelihood of victimisation, thus to fully address such a principal issue, several factors must be examined; firstly, what is meant by the term 'fear of crime' and how should it be defined? The second research objective involves examining the use of theoretical approaches by criminologists, and how such perceptions have been utilised to explain fear of crime. Victimisation itself is then evaluated, along with socio-demographic variables within victimisation, such as gender, age, locality, social class, and race, and potential patterns are acknowledged and explored further. What influences an individuals' perceived likelihood of victimisation and is there a link? This concluding and ultimately most significant research objective is answered in the analysis section of the report.

Fear of crime has become 'very salient in both politics and the media' (Vanderveen, 2006: 9) thus fear of crime is now a 'socially relevant issue' (ibid) as opinions and concerns regarding crime and deviant behaviour are 'prominent in social life' (ibid), therefore justifying the need for further research on the issue. Much of Vanderveen's work is cited throughout and it must be stated that it is largely based on research from The Netherlands. Although this dissertation is predominantly based on and considered relevant to the UK, a range of literature published abroad is also included.

It is perhaps inevitable that crimes which impact immediately on individuals (such as robbery and burglary) engender greater levels of fear than larger-scale and longer-term crimes. Crimes such as mis-sold pension plans, the dumping of sewage and chemicals into rivers and the sale of under-tested pharmaceuticals to developing nations all have a significant aggregate impact on society but are unlikely to provoke as much fear in individuals (Kershaw *et al,* 2000).

To date there appears to be no universally accepted definition for the fear of crime and it is this very lack of certainty which has prompted a variety of authors to propose their own suggestions. Vanderveen (2006: 4) cites two contrasting definitions. The first, provided by Conklin (1971) defines 'fear of crime' as the 'sense of personal security in the community'. A subsequent proposal from Covington & Taylor (1991) suggests it is the 'emotional response to possible violent crime and physical harm', whilst Ferraro & LaGrange (1987, 1992, cited in Ferraro, 1995: 4) suggest that fear of crime is 'an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime'. Such variances in descriptions highlight the difficulty surrounding the subjective nature of the notion; however, this research attempts to provide a rational and coherent account of the phenomenon and its significance to the discipline of criminology.

The dissertation is divided into six chapters as follows: the first two chapters comprise the introduction and methodology. The latter offers an overview of the approach taken to the gathering and analysis of relevant literature, highlighting both the advantages and possible disadvantages relating to secondary analysis. The third chapter, Victimisation, explores the perception trends discovered between socio-demographic groups, and explains the nature of research and the influence of victim surveys in fear of crime analysis. Theoretical Explanations, the fourth chapter, offers further accounts of fear of crime and draws upon informal communications with Victim Support to develop arguments. The fifth chapter, Analysis, considers some of the influences behind creating fear of crime, attempts to reduce it and the confusion surrounding how it should be measured. The sixth chapter concludes this research by summarising the key findings and making appropriate recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This dissertation references a wide range of secondary data, including journal articles, books, the Internet, research reports and news articles. Secondary data was considered to be the most efficient means of accessing information. A small number of informal communications were, however conducted with Victim Support, in the form of attending ad hoc presentations, in order to acquire evidence to support arguments already formed, as well as to provide possible discussions on contradictory elements and an alternative insight into the area. Before utilising any of the information obtained it was essential to substantiate the agency's willingness for the data to be used in such a manner thus consent was actively sought and gained through a series of follow-up phone calls and emails. This specific data aside, however, the research objectives were predominantly addressed in this dissertation through the acquisition and analysis of secondary data.

By far the most widely used framework for analysing qualitative data is 'Grounded Theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which Strauss & Corbin (1998: 12) describe as 'theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another'. Grounded theory was used to analyse much of the data whilst coding and textual analysis were also utilised to highlight recurring themes that would otherwise go unobserved, thereby 'bringing together a measure of organisation to the data…' (Noakes & Wincup, 2004: 130). A process found to be useful was the underlining of key words and quotes which could later be rediscovered, and either cited or subsequently rejected.

Secondary research was crucial to this research, thus academic texts, journals, the Internet and research reports were widely used throughout. Secondary data analysis is advantageous as it is both cost and time-effective and is more likely to provide high quality, reliable data. This means, for example, that in studies involving respondents, 'the sampling procedures have been rigorous', thus more likely to be representative and accurate (Bryman, 2004: 202). Government websites such as the Home Office, used in this research, are nationally renowned and the information available is up-to-date and often conducted on a wider-scale than possible if collected individually. Such secondary data, therefore, creates the opportunity for longitudinal, subgroup and cross-cultural analysis (Bryman, 2004), and allows more time for data analysis since with no time-consuming collection of raw data it is possible to concentrate fully on a larger selection of secondary materials. It is possible to analyse secondary data even if it has well known problems and limitations: 'problems with the data set are not a reflection on the researcher using secondary data analysis' (Royce, 2004: 213). The analysis of secondary data also enables the researcher to compare statistics and trends across different areas and nations (Royce, 2004). Silverman (2000: 45) argues that 'secondary analysis of other people's data is to be commended rather than condemned'.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned advantages, secondary data analysis, like any methodological approach has limitations. Secondary researchers have no control over the data they use which may be dated and not directly relevant. Similarly, the potentially complex nature of data may render it inaccessible to those who are unfamiliar, a point made by Bryman (2004) when he refers to the need for a period of familiarisation with the data.

Researchers need to be aware of the authenticity and credibility of internet resources which can sometimes be factually incorrect. Secondary researchers must be cautious and utilise only those sources considered to be valid, such as those provided by criminal justice agencies, allowing readers to adhere to the 4 principles highlighted by Scott (1990: 6): authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning.

While academic books contain a wide range of useful information, even very recent books tend to become dated very quickly due to the length of time it takes for them to be written and published. Journal articles can be used to counter this problem as they are published more frequently, contain research by both practitioners and academics and thus are more likely to reflect current trends or issues.

After serious consideration it was decided against the use of a questionnaire survey. This form of primary research would have been time-consuming, could have been expensive and ethical issues could have arisen, such as respondents not wanting to reveal certain information or leaving sections blank. Any information obtained through primary research may not necessarily have been particularly useful. There is no guarantee that data obtained through questionnaire surveys can support any arguments. Tosh (1991: 33) argues that 'many primary sources are inaccurate, muddled, based on hearsay or intended to mislead…', highlighting the potential flaws of primary research.

Whilst primary and secondary analyses both have advantages and disadvantages, in this example secondary research proved to be more appropriate and beneficial. Bryman (2004: 202) suggests that 'secondary analysis should be considered by all social researchers'. Moreover, Champion (2006: 321) argues that 'the strengths of using secondary sources far outweigh any limitations or disadvantages'. The next chapter analyses emerging trends amongst socio-demographic groups within society.

Chapter 3: Victimisation

Williams *et al* (2000, cited in Lee, 2007: 4) suggest that criminologists now recognise that victimisation is an important 'dependant variable' within crime. This means that much can be learnt through the study of victims and their conduct and rather than being an element within the study of victimisation, it is arguable that fear of crime has become an independent field. Whether or not an individual has been victimised, fear of crime can have several implications; including decreased social integration, out-migration, restriction of activities, added security costs and avoidance behaviours (Ferraro, 1995).

Chadee *et al* (2007) stress that an individual's general (group) level of risk is not the same as their actual personal risk. They assert that 'far more people believe that they will become a future victim of a nominated offence than…transpire to become so' (Chadee *et al*, 2007: 133). A Trinidadian study revealed that levels of fear were disproportionately high (particularly for murder) in relation to the National Crime Statistics (Chadee *et al*, 2007).

Victim Surveys

In the USA in the mid 1960s interviews were carried out by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (CLEAJ) to gain an insight into personal experiences of crime and to obtain more accurate estimates for the levels of unreported crime; also known as the 'dark figure'. Public perceptions were prioritised as a response to preceding concerns expressed in polls and political circles, with The Bureau of Social Science Research in Washington (Biderman *et al.* 1967), The National Opinion Research Center (Ennis, 1967), and The University of Michigan (Reiss, 1967) between 1965 and 1967. Lee (2007: 64) argues that 'these pilot surveys and their subsequent reports led to the emergence of National Crime Surveys'. According to Hope and Sparks (2000) and Ditton and Farrell (2000), fear of crime was 'discovered' in 1967 following these surveys (Lee 2007: 7).

Vanderveen (2006: 11) suggests that 'since people constrain their daily activity patterns, 'fear of crime' influences the quality of life'. He also claims that those affected by this may succumb to social isolation or exclusion, since being socially isolated may lower confidence levels and increase fear of crime. Vanderveen argues that fear of crime can also have an adverse affect on health. Anxiety can harm a shared sense of trust, cohesion and social control within a community, and contributes to the incidence of crime (Jackson, 2006). There is perhaps a bias amongst previous research towards the negative impacts of fear of crime.

Understanding fear of crime and whether it can affect the chances of victimisation is of particular significance in the UK. The BBC (19.7.2007) claimed that 'despite crime statistics having dropped for the last decade, British people are among the most fearful in Europe'. This was confirmed by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, who conceded that 'one of the biggest challenges we face is that public perceptions of crime levels remain high' (ibid). The importance of statistics is questionable, as they often mislead the public and evoke inaccurate perceptions of crime. Similarly, inability to understand statistics can lead to a loss in confidence, thus the BBC also highlighted a recent urgency exhibited by the Home Office to 'boost public confidence in statistics because 65% believed crime was rising' –

erroneously. Povey *et al* (2003) confirm that latest BCS data suggest that despite a decrease in overall crime levels since the mid-1990s the public continues to believe otherwise.

Ramsay (1989) explains the results from one of the first city-centre victim surveys, carried out in Coventry. The victimisation rates for interviewees appeared to decrease with age thus it was asserted that 'people's lifestyles contribute to their chances of victimisation; young people who go out a lot, especially at night and at weekends, are more at risk than older stay-at-homes' (Gottfredson 1984, cited in Ramsay 1989: 3). Despite the fact that the victimisation rates during the previous year for being insulted/bothered by strangers (12%), assaulted (2%) and mugged (3%) were fairly low, the levels of fear that these incidents might occur were considerably higher. In fact, 37% declared that they were worried about being insulted by strangers, 50% worried about being assaulted and 59% were fearful of being mugged, whilst in addition, 60% of women interviewed were fearful of sexual assault. Ramsay (1989: 4) acknowledges that the rates of fear increase with the seriousness of the offence as; 'the commonest but the most trivial form of victimisation investigated in this survey (stranger insults) aroused the lowest level of fear', with the more serious offences, although 'less widely experienced, all engendered substantially higher levels of fear'. It can therefore be argued that the general pattern for fear extent of an offence 'mirrors' its' perceived seriousness (ibid). The inability of questionnaire surveys to measure fear of crime has provoked criticism. Ditton *et al* (1999: 83) note that the questions asked of respondents 'seldom vary' and that the settings applied 'seldom change'. This implies that there is a familiar format too frequently employed.

Fear and Gender

The consistent finding regarding fear of crime and gender is that women are more fearful than men despite being less likely to be victimised. Lee (2007: 116) stresses the significance gender has as an independent variable in fear of crime research, and points out that 'empirical studies have repeatedly found that women are more fearful of crime than men and yet are less likely to become the victims of most categories of serious crime'. Allen's (2006) Home Office-funded report into the findings from two recent British Crime Surveys showed that in 2004/05, 4% more women than men have a high level of worry about burglary. Ramsay (1989) also found that while 71% of women were fearful of being mugged in Coventry, only 47% of men shared this anxiety.

It has been suggested by Jefferson and Hollway (2000) that fear of crime means different things to men and women. While men are more likely to be most fearful of assault, women are more concerned about sexually-motivated attacks. Nevertheless, fear trends between the genders are generally not reflected by likelihood of victimisation. Young men are often unaffected by violent crime despite statistically being the most vulnerable group. Maxfield (1984: 47) confirms this paradox by suggesting 'the differences in fear by sex (and age) are so substantial that something other than direct victimisation experience must be involved'. Ramos and Andrade-Palos (1993) in their study in Mexico City also found gender to be the clearest predictor for fear of victimisation. Goodey (1997: 401) claims that boys suffer from an 'emotional vulnerability', which 'triggers a form of masculine bravado or fearlessness…' This causes boys to behave aggressively towards others, and also prompts the denial of vulnerability; explaining why young males are often undeterred by their likelihood of victimisation. An exception to this trend was confirmed by the BCS (2000). It was found that young men are more fearful of car-related theft: the young are financially

less capable of replacing vehicles (Williams, 2004). Nevertheless, young people are more likely to be driving than older people.

Ferraro (1995: 86) introduces a concept known as the 'shadow of sexual assault' to explain female fear. Women are undoubtedly fearful of being raped or sexually assaulted, but Ferraro believes that they are more fearful of other offences as a consequence. For example, women may be more fearful of being burgled whilst at home than men, because the incident may also include a sexual attack. Rape is a high profile offence which attracts extensive media coverage. Ferraro believes that this can have a shadowing effect on women's perceptions of other types of crime. Ferraro (1995: 99) concluded that 'when hoping to reduce fear of crime among women, reducing fear of rape must be a priority'.

Fear and Age

Moore and Shepherd (2007) acknowledge a shift in findings about fear and age. They claim that while previous research highlighted elderly people as the most fearful in society, more recent studies have started to report the opposite. Whether or not the elderly have collectively altered their perception over time, findings have been contradictory.

Ramsay (1989) found a correlation between feelings of vulnerability and fear levels. Although older interviewees were less frequently victimised, 'respondents over 60 were significantly more fearful…of strangers' insults and muggings' (Ramsay 1989: 4). Older women were less fearful of sexual attacks than younger women, and were only marginally more fearful of being assaulted. Ramsay (ibid) argues that 'the anxieties of the elderly were tempered by a degree of awareness', that both assaults and sexual attacks typically involve comparatively youthful victims. Ramsay (ibid) concludes by suggesting that elderly people are not 'so much at risk from crime as younger and more able-bodied people'. To investigate if and how people modified their behaviour in order to minimise likelihood of victimisation, Ramsay explains that interviewees were asked whether they ever avoided the city-centre entirely, travelled with a companion for safety, avoided certain people, or avoided certain streets and other such factors. It was discovered that older people were more likely to avoid the city-centre altogether. Surprisingly, however, once in the city-centre, older people were less likely than younger people to adopt any of the other crime prevention strategies – despite being more fearful. This paradox may be due to the elderly's comparative lack of 'street' awareness.

Ferraro (1995) argues that despite their inability to defend themselves, older people are less fearful than younger people since by going out less at night they are less exposed to potential victimisation. Young people spend more time outdoors and are more likely to be fearful of assault. This portrays fear as something experienced when 'beyond one's territory' Ferraro (1995: 11).

Elderly people are generally aware of their frailties and vulnerability, and this may justify fear as a 'realistic response' (Lindesay, 1991: 55). O'Bryant *et al* (1991: 166) explain that because older people have 'neither the health nor time to recoup physical or financial losses, the effects of crime are more devastating to them'. This explanation may be logical but such a generalisation cannot account for all elderly people, as many may still be very healthy – physically and financially.

Two key factors likely to influence fear are the feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Skogan (1987: 141) argues that 'surveys indicate that socially isolated people are more fearful'. This explains why elderly people, particularly those living alone, may feel more afraid. Mobility can be a key feature of vulnerability. Older people who are wheelchair-bound or disabled may be fearful knowing they are powerless to retaliate. 'The environment, or the context in which you find yourself…plays a large part in determining levels of vulnerability' (Goodey, 2005: 74).

Age aside, those who are alone (in any situation) are inevitably more susceptible to victimisation as they represent a suitable target and lack the security of a capable guardian. This, together with the presence of a motivated offender can result in a crime occurring according to Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activities Theory. Greenberg and Ruback (1992: 3) suggest that by staying at home, 'people make crime less risky for the criminals and more likely to occur, further reinforcing the public's fear of crime'. This contradicts any notion that staying at home ensures security and safety while going out may lead to victimisation.

Fear and Geography

One of the key features of fear of crime surveys has been geography-related questions, to establish where people feel (less) safe. Research from Bursik (2000), Bursik & Grasmick (1993) and Sampson (1988 & 1991) has suggested that having residential stability increases the likelihood of 'social organisation, social cohesion and informal surveillance of the neighbourhood', all of which help prevent crime (Vanderveen, 2006: 13). Sampson (1991: 51) considers fear of crime to be 'a powerful force in decreasing community bonds', yet another example of the negative social impact of fear of crime.

Ramsay (1989: 2) suggests that general incivilities in an area, such as public alcohol consumption or drunken behaviour can have an 'adverse effect' on the inhabitants, thereby contributing to fear. Matthews (1992) reinforces this by suggesting that according to BCS data, drunks, beggars, litter and vandalism are all linked more heavily to the fear of crime than one might expect. Hopkins Burke (2005: 204) suggests that older people may be more affected by street incivilities such as beggars (who deliberately choose to base themselves in an urban environment), 'while cosmopolitan young professionals might consider it to be just a colourful segment of the rich tapestry of life'. Following research in the USA, Ferraro (1995) found neighbourhood incivility to be the most important predictor of perceived risk. He also discovered that those individuals living in areas of incivility were more likely to have adjusted their daily activities during the last year, providing evidence of constrained behaviour. This mirrors Alison's theory that negative reinforcement of crime causes fear and alters behaviour. The idea of certain areas possessing unattractive and hostile characteristics is consistent with Wilson and Kelling's (1982) 'Broken Windows' theory, which suggests that (negative) features of the physical environment are somehow related to deviant behaviour. Doran and Lees (2005: 9) claim that 'areas characterised by poor natural surveillance…provide opportunities for disorder or crime to get a foothold'. This explains why people may, for example, be reluctant to walk through an underground subway alone or have reservations about purchasing a house situated next to an alley. Increasing the natural surveillance of such areas may reduce the opportunity for crime as well as fear (Doran and Lees, 2005).

Crime rates are invariably higher in inner cities (The Chicago School), and one might expect city residents to be more fearful of crime. The British Crime Survey (2001) found that those living in inner-city and council estates and areas with high levels of victimisation and social/physical disorder (graffiti, vandalism) were generally more fearful. Smith and Torstensson (1997) also found that respondents living in privately rented accommodation in Stockholm were generally more fearful than those who owned their homes. However, Silberman (1981, cited in Ramos & Andrade-Palos, 1993: 43) argues that 'evaluation of personal safety is enhanced by familiarity with the surrounding area'. This suggests that people living in high crime areas do not necessarily feel a high risk of victimisation. However, it is also possible that people living in such areas are active in criminality themselves. Ferraro (1995: 111) agrees with Silberman and suggests that urban residents 'learn' to survive by avoiding certain areas, effectively becoming streetwise in the process. Interestingly, Ferraro also found that those who have lived in their properties for longer are less likely to be fearful and more likely to install additional security devices.

There has been a 'tendency to consider crime as an urban rather than a rural issue because rates are far lower in the country than the city' Yarwood and Gardner (2000: 403). This has resulted in a focus on fear of crime in urban areas. However, Yarwood and Gardner (2000) studied the fear of crime experienced in a village in Worcestershire. Their findings confirmed the consensus that those in the countryside are less fearful as they have less to fear. A massive 91% of respondents claimed they felt safe when home alone and more significantly 65% felt safe when walking alone after dark.

Fear and Social Class

Ramsay's (1989) research offers an insight into social class as a predictor of fear of crime. Although members of the less-skilled/unskilled socio-economic groups interviewed had similar rates of victimisation to the professional/managerial groups interviewed, the former groups 'were significantly more fearful' of being insulted and mugged (Ramsay, 1989: 5). The results show this to be paradoxical. An explanation for this could be that the less-skilled/unskilled individuals felt more vulnerable as they were more frequently exposed to dangerous environments and deviant people (neighbourhoods, work locations). Nevertheless, both groups shared high levels of fear, well above the actual rates of victimisation, particularly for more serious offences. The BCS (2001) also suggests that those who are less affluent, live in social housing and those employed in unskilled occupations are more likely to be concerned about crime (Hancock, cited in Muncie and Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, BCS (2004 & 2005) findings revealed that fewer individuals with good educational qualifications worried about violent crime (11%) than those with no qualifications (20%).

Fear and Race

British research into the relationship between fear and race has consistently found that members of ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be fearful of crime than Caucasians. Allen (2006) concluded from BCS (2003/5) data that people from an Asian background and Black respondents were likely to have higher levels of worry for burglary, car crime, violent crime and crime generally.

Fear and Risk

Ferraro (1995: 11) defines 'risk' as anything which '…involves exposure to the chance of loss or injury'. If an individual is fearful of something happening they are likely to perceive

their level of risk as high. Vanderveen (2006: 153) describes the increasingly pessimistic attitudes towards 'risk' over time, with it now being 'associated only with losses, negative or unwanted outcomes'. Conversely, drawing on research in Australia in 1997-1998, Lupton and Tulloch (2002: 331) show that people acknowledge that risk can have a positive outcome as well as negative. On the negative front risk can be 'frightening' and involve a 'step into the unknown'. Once choices have been made, Lipton and Tulloch describe a 'sense of fatalism' and a 'loss of control over the outcomes' is experienced, which could include physical danger or financial loss (ibid). Nevertheless participants cited positive examples of risk, including 'voluntary risk-taking for purposes of personal gain' (ibid). This could be broken down into either financial gain or 'as a contribution to a more exciting life or self-actualisation' (ibid), and can explain why gambling remains so popular. Lupton and Tulloch (ibid) deduce that risk is 'predominantly represented as an ever-pervasive part of life and also strongly tied to individuals' life experience', suggesting that situations involving risk are an inevitable feature of life. It is often debated whether or not an individual's perceived risk is similar to their actual risk. Vanderveen (2006: 147) describes this as the 'fear-victimisation paradox' as the actual and perceived levels of risk often fail to correspond.

Risk is generally viewed to be multidimensional by researchers, with social and cultural influences affecting how risks are selected. Garland (2003, cited in Vanderveen 2006: 149) argues that everyone has a unique 'risk thermostat', therefore, 'risk is not 'objective', but produced, negotiated and manipulated within social interaction'. Some people are generally more willing to take risks than others and this is reflected in patterns of lifestyle.

Perceived risk, defined by DuBow *et al* (1979: 3) as 'people's assessments of crime rates and the probability of victimisation', represents an element of fear of crime which has evaded many studies (e.g. Liska *et al*, 1988). Ferraro (1995) feels that (perceived) risk plays a significant role in evoking fear, and highlights that in studies which include risk or perceived risk, it is influential in explaining fear of crime; suggesting that 'any scientific approach to the subject of fear of crime should give explicit attention to the risk interpretation process' (Ferraro, 1995: 7).

Terms such as 'fear', 'worry' and 'anxiety' are often used interchangeably in literature (e.g. CLEAJ, 1967); minimising the subtle differences between them. In a study involving London taxi drivers by Mourato *et al* (2004, cited in Vanderveen, 2006: 10) it emerged that a third of the drivers cited fear of crime as the most pressing issue affecting their jobs (58% were most concerned by traffic congestion). This is supported by Crawford's (1998) view that crime is one of the principle anxieties shared by the public, second only to unemployment.

Jackson (2006: 261) recommends that 'future research should examine emotion and the psychology of risk'. It has emerged that an individual's perceived risk may be significantly lower than their level of fear. Despite this, many studies fail to differentiate between the concepts. Equally, a person may judge their own risk to be high but not necessarily be afraid (Ferraro, 1995). In the next chapter, further explanations regarding fear of crime and the role of Victim Support are discussed.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Explanations

Fear of crime as a criminological term has only recently been coined. Its emergence in the last 40 years as a phenomenon would appear to be part of a proliferation in, 'criminology and criminological research more generally' (Lee, 2007: 7). Lee (2007: 1) explains how the fear of crime has 'assumed an empirical validity and a social scientific respectability…and became normalised as a socio-cultural term used to describe an element of life experience in late modernity'. Garland (1996: 2) describes fear as an inevitable consequence of living in a crime-prone world since 'the threat of crime has become a routine part of modern consciousness'. People, according to Ditton *et al* (1999: 98) are statistically more likely to be angry about the prospect of criminal victimisation than actually to fear it. This anger may stem either from general perceptions that crime is ever-increasing, the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is 'too incompetent', or the courts 'too lenient'. Unfortunately, many victims often divert their frustration and anger towards the police, leading to a loss in confidence in the CJS.

To fear crime may not always be a negative thing; it may encourage assertiveness and prompt the implementation of preventative measures. The Home Office (1989: 12) explains that 'an element of fear can be considered helpful in persuading people to guard against victimisation' but feels that this is better defined as 'awareness or concern'. The Home Office also portrays fear as totally negative when it states that 'fear itself can slide into hopelessness or terror' (ibid), but qualifies this with the suggestion that 'either of which can be counter-productive in terms of taking responsible precautions' (ibid). Hope and Sparks (2000: 13) suggest that the fear of crime is a 'dominant popular tool', which serves several functions, including the conceptualising of vulnerability, assessing risk of victimisation and even measuring anxiety regarding the possibility of encountering violence.

Victims of crime do not necessarily go on to be more fearful of crime, and it is common for those most fearful not to have been victimised at all. Moreover, 'there is no direct relationship between victimisation and the fear of victimisation' (Ramos & Andrade-Palos, 1993: 43), implying that fear can be 'irrational' and 'unfounded' (Ramos & Andrade-Palos, 1993: 42). This is largely the view of criminologists, police officers and the criminal justice field (Williams, 2004). Skogan (1987: 135) argues that criminal victimisation and the fear of crime may only be 'weakly correlated' due to the numerous 'anomalies in the distribution of fear', revisiting the suggestion that fears are often irrational, disproportionate and in need of change. Hough (1995) suggests that those who worry about crime also worry about non-criminal mishaps, such as illness or redundancy, implying that some people are predisposed to worry. This suggestion is flawed as it is perfectly possible for an individual to be fearful only of crime.

Skogan (1987: 138) reaches the rational conclusion that 'if victimisation leads to fear-related behaviours, it may reduce victims' exposure to risk and thus lower their chance of victimisation in the future'. This positive portrayal of victimisation, minimising future victimisation and increasing confidence, is however, proved unrealistic by repeat victimisation statistics. Skogan (1987: 138) also notes that researchers have used this

'exposure to risk' hypothesis to justify the low victimisation rates among high-fear groups such as women (Riger, 1981) and the elderly (Cook and Skogan, 1984).

After analysing a series of empirical studies carried out in Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Boers (1997: 299-301) argues that there are 3 levels of explanation for being fearful of crime. The *victim perspective (micro level)* suggests that it is the consequence of personal victimisation. The *social control perspective (meso level)* explains fear as the result of a loss of informal social control and the *social problem perspective (macro level)* suggests that fear emerges as a consequence of 'dramatisation of disorder and insecurity' (ibid) which might mean moral panics or alternative social threats, other than crime. This theory may be limited in universal application as it is based on a nation which at the time was experiencing radical changes.

Lee (2007: 180) comments on the proliferation of closed-circuit television claiming that 'while CCTV started life as technology used largely by the private retail sector, it has now become omnipresent in public spaces, spurred on by government interest into reducing the fear of crime'. The public demand for security 'has become a dominant feature of contemporary life' (Crawford, cited in Newburn, 2003: 140). Additionally, Hope & Sparks (2000) introduce 'trust' as a factor in fear. Moreover, Vanderveen (2006) also implies that not being able to trust, for example, the police or neighbours, increases the likelihood of being fearful.

Fear of crime has developed an association with crime reduction, a recent government initiative; 'in modern crime prevention literature fear of crime is as important an objective of governance as crime itself' (Lee, 2007: 136), a view shared by Clemente and Kleiman (1976). It has become 'part of the normal language of crime prevention' and has been described by Garland (2001 cited in Lee, 2007: 135) as a 'prominent cultural theme'. Indeed, Ferraro (1995: 3) argues that the 'most widely accepted premise for fear of crime has hinged on the formidable task of reducing crime'. The connection between crime prevention and fear of crime is highlighted by Crawford (1998), arguing that fear is actually inadvertently heightened by crime prevention strategies, as they serve to remind people of their vulnerability. This would appear to be yet another paradox: fear is perceived by the government to be a major factor which is an initial incentive for crime prevention. If this notion has even an element of truth it seriously undermines the value of crime prevention and the government may be wasting valuable resources on such programmes.

Lee (2007) provides two explanations for the development of the fear of crime. The first is that it was discovered as a result of the aforementioned American surveys. This notion proposes that crime fear increased as a consequence of increasing recorded crime rates. The second proposition provided by Lee (2007: 202) is that fear of crime has always existed, but was only identified through 'the evolution of technological and social scientific innovation'. This latter explanation seems more accurate. Although the American surveys uncovered a great deal, they did not create a new phenomenon, as the fear amongst respondents existed prior to participation.

Symbolic Interactionism is a theoretical perspective associated with fear of crime by Ferraro (1995). Individuals use the limited information available to interpret situations and the world around them, and people do not act solely on facts (Thomas and Thomas, 1928). This is an accurate assertion as information available is a combination of objective (facts)

and subjective (opinions), yet both types of information can be influential. People cannot be entirely sure of their likelihood of victimisation but are still capable of making a judgement. Blumer (1969: 2) explains that 'human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them'.

The 'reduction of fear' is a phenomenon directly influenced by the rise of the fear of crime, and governments and are now devoting more time and money towards it (Vanderveen, 2006). The Home Office (1989) admitted that attempting to reduce people's fear of crime had become a major policy goal. If a community safety project fails to reduce crime but manages to reduce fear among citizens its success is debatable. Crawford (1998: 199) admits that fear reduction in such instances is often wrongly viewed as a 'consolation prize'. This is a negative outlook and fails to appreciate the significance of minimising fear.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a small number of informal communications were conducted with Victim Support – in Maidstone, Chatham and Nottingham. Lin Smith, District Manager, Mid-Kent Office, revealed that around 97% of victims are referred to Victim Support by the police. The police therefore play a pivotal role, as there are very few independent approaches by victims. This might suggest that Victim Support is not accessible or approachable enough for direct contact. Shirley Watts, District Manager, North Kent & Medway Office, explains that it is the police who make victims and Victim Support aware of each other's presence. Victim Support contacts victims via telephone or post only if and when permission is granted. This permission is given or rejected when the police ask victims if they think that they require the help of Victim Support and this choice is outlined in the victims' Code of Practice. Stacey Chapman, Deputy Branch Manager, Nottingham City South Office, confirmed that the police's knowledge of victims' interest in receiving support is gained through a tick box section of a form. Victim Support is the only victim service working parallel to the police service.

Victim Support offers both emotional and practical support. The emotional support includes interacting with victims while the practical element includes administrative issues such as the completion of criminal injury compensation forms as well as providing crime prevention advice. Prior to interaction, Victim Care Units carry out assessments of all victims. An official statement reveals that the Kent service aims to provide 'appropriate recognition, support and information' as well as 'a consistently high level and quality of service throughout the County Area' (Victim Support Kent Annual Review, 2006: 4). They also signpost victims to alternative organisations if necessary. Victim Support offices also have Witness Centres, and the Kent service supported 18,429 witnesses in 2005-2006. Victim Support makes it clear that it is less of a counselling service and more of a listening service. Watts admits that many people are confused by what the organisation actually offers. Victims have wrongly assumed that Victim Support would be able to finance the replacement of stolen goods, and installation of street lightening. In Kent there is a council-run service, HomeSafe, which offers free services such as locks and bolts to victims of burglary. HomeSafe's goal is to reassure burglary victims and to 'make the elderly and vulnerable feel safer in their own homes' (Kent County Council, 2008).

More priority is given by Victim Support to repeat victims. The organisation has a database which highlights those victimised within the last 4 years – making it simple to identify those repeatedly victimised. More priority is also given to those victims perceived to be particularly vulnerable. In cases of repeat victimisation, volunteers are allocated to victims

immediately. Chapman clarifies that support given to repeat victims is often ongoing. Victim Support would also appear to prioritise victims of ABH, GBH, common assault, burglary and sexual offences.

As Victim Support cannot help financially it is difficult for them to advise regarding security devices. The organisation can only recommend particular burglar alarms. However, personal alarms can be provided by the organisation and are also offered by many local policing units, a potentially effective deterrent which can also boost victim confidence.

Volunteers carry out the bulk of the face-to-face interaction with victims to create a sense of community, rather than purely professional, support. Watts explains that volunteers undertake a 6-day training course which covers basic listening and communication skills, details about what the organisation offers, the role of the Crown Prosecution Service and so forth. There is also further training to enable volunteers to work with victims of sensitive offences such as domestic violence and rape. The role of volunteers is crucial to the organisation but it could be argued that this dependence on them makes it vulnerable. Interestingly, elderly people tend to be more likely to reject the offer of Victim Support, suggesting that they may be less affected by victimisation, consistent with evidence that older people are less fearful of crime.

Smith stated that the idea of increasing police foot patrols is popular amongst victims, but would be difficult to maintain for financial and logistical reasons. This idea proved popular amongst BCS respondents (2003/4/5); 82% declared that seeing more officers on foot patrols would make them feel safer. Box *et al* (1988: 353) argue that a greater police presence, with officers exhibiting a 'willingness to be seen moving along groups of troublesome teenagers' would increase public confidence in them as a force, particularly amongst the elderly. Although increasing police foot patrols seems rational, it arguably makes more sense for the police to be proactive rather than simply respond to crime as and when it occurs, thus necessitating the use of police response vehicles. Of course, Community Support Officers are now largely designated for the role of reassurance policing, although they undergo far less training than full time serving officers and it may be perceived as a superficial attempt to placate the public.

When commenting on statistics which give the impression that crime levels are decreasing, Smith suggested that people are generally negative when it comes to crime. The public tends to be sceptical about positive statistics. This could explain why newspapers focus predominantly on negative news. Positive statistics should demonstrate that government is achieving its goals, thereby raising the public's confidence in the CJS.

In surveys such as the British Crime Survey offences are often grouped together in categories. Sometimes these categories can include a wide range of offences and the statistics may consequently be misleading. 'Violent crime' often includes a variety of offences from harassment to wounding with intent. Smith believes that changes made to the terminology of offence categories would not make a significant difference to public perceptions. Not enough people read the BCS for such changes to have an impact. Chapman suggests that sub-categories of offences would often be a more appropriate and accurate way of displaying statistics. Of course national crime statistics are widely viewed as having lower crime rates than in reality. Nevertheless, although such statistics may not

reflect the true volume of crime they are reliable enough for identifying trends (Nettler, 1974). Similarly, Karmen (2004: 81) notes that 'yearly victimisation rates might lull some people into a false sense of security'. Annual rates can give the impression that crime is rare. Ultimately, statistics such as those in the BCS are subject to sampling errors and are effectively estimates.

Watts suggests that raising the awareness of real risk should reduce incorrect perceived levels of risk. Newspapers are selective in what they publish, revealing only certain statistics. Moreover, the newspapers themselves differ and can contradict each other. The British Crime Survey (2003-5) showed that significantly more tabloid readers (18%) reported being very worried about violent crime than broadsheet readers (9%). The influence of the media cannot be under-estimated. Nevertheless, newspapers 'represent just one source of information that people receive about crime' (Williams and Dickenson, 1993: 51).

Statistics are open to interpretation and often unhelpful; fuelling unnecessary or additional worry. According to the Home Office the overall risk of becoming a victim of crime in 2006/07 was 24%. This statistic has a limited value as it is a national ratio and victimisation rates clearly vary in different geographical areas. Ditton and Innes (cited in Tilley, 2005: 610) criticise the lack of locally orientated fear of crime surveys and admit that 'the field remains dominated by large-scale national' surveys. They also argue that 'fear management requires a knowledge of what is triggering the problem in the first place'. This implies that national statistics are unable to reveal what is causing the fear, while local statistics may be easier to break down and analyse.

Both Smith and Watts point out that ultimately people are self-centred when it comes to crime, and have to prioritise worrying about themselves ahead of others and the bigger picture. It is important to realise that Victim Support is funded by the Home Office; it is dependent on and answerable to it. Chapman explained that not long ago there were a disproportionate amount of offender advice-oriented charities; highlighting the absence of support for victims. There are disproportionate funds allocated to the differing areas of the CJS. In 2002-03 the government spent £933 million on legal aid for offenders or those charged with criminal offences, but only spent £19 million on Victim Support and £210 million on criminal injuries compensation. Victim Support is currently undergoing radical changes, and a National Centre will be introduced which will effectively merge and standardise the existing 94 UK offices. The organisation's aim is to raise its profile sufficiently to be acknowledged as the first choice option for victims.

The whole phenomenon of fear of crime is constantly evolving. In a fast changing society organisations working to support victims have to reflect these changes and adapt to meet the new challenges. In the next chapter, the influence of the media in fuelling public anxiety, the governing of fear of crime and the confusion surrounding its measurement are discussed.

Chapter 5: Analysis

Fear of Crime is at last being recognised as a serious issue, which can impact significantly on an individual's lifestyle and sense of wellbeing, and there seems to be a newfound urgency to reduce it. 'The Sharp End' magazine has highlighted the action taken by the West Yorkshire Police Authority in reducing the levels of fear and increasing the awareness of its inhabitants. A website (Beat Crime Info, 2005) provides up to date statistics for the prevalence of specific crime types in areas across the county. Residents simply enter their postcode to gain instant access to the breakdown of incidences of particular crimes in their neighbourhood over a fixed time. League tables demonstrate how areas across the police division compare. There are also crime maps indicating the exact locations of offences; known as 'crime pictures'. Fiona Kinnear, Research Manager, West Yorkshire Police Authority concedes that 'a massive motivating force for setting up the site was to tackle this fear of crime and offer reassurance to the community' (Diggines, 2008: 7). She emphasises the irony of the media picking up on 'nasty, gruesome crimes but, in reality, there may be virtually none in a neighbourhood over a year. The result is that some people may worry that they're more at risk than they really are' (ibid). Yet this rational and useful service remains exclusively available to West Yorkshire citizens. Although statistics for other counties are available on the Internet, the wide range of facilities accessible on the West Yorkshire site has not been replicated elsewhere. This is inconsistent as a nationalised police service might be expected to provide similar facilities across the country, although, it could be argued that the West Yorkshire Police are more innovative in their approaches and the impetus is on other forces to follow.

As previously acknowledged, much research still needs to be conducted, and Vanderveen (2006: 5) criticises existing literature by arguing that 'to a certain extent, research on fear of crime so far has failed to produce a cumulative body of knowledge…due to the failing relationship between the theoretical concept and its empirical realisation in the form of its measurement instrument'. Osgood (ibid) acknowledges that 'more complex statistical models have been developed' in explaining fear of crime but calls for interdisciplinary research, echoing Jackson (2006) and Vanderveen (2006). This would mean a 'specific type of theoretical integration', allowing new 'avenues' of research, innovative findings and knowledge, and would inspire researchers to collect new forms of data (ibid). Although having a high risk perception is seen as undesirable, Vanderveen (2006) points out that in certain contexts including smoking and condom use campaigns to heighten the public's perception of risk are commonplace.

Governing Fear of Crime

Lee (2007: 136) devises his own analysis of how fear of crime is and should be 'governed', suggesting that one method has been to 'attempt to supply the citizenry with knowledge of the relatively low risks of becoming a victim of crime, suggesting instead that one's risk of victimisation is usually overestimated'. The government therefore makes it a priority to portray the likelihood of victimisation as low. Lee (2007: 137) also includes locally targeted crime prevention strategies as a method of governing fear. In such strategies the responsibility is often divided amongst several players (local authorities, police officers,

probation officers); often described as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements partnerships in the UK.

Hancock (2004) argues that following Labour's election victory in 1997 there have been numerous attempts to increase the public's awareness of crime and the CJS. She suggests that the fact that the BCS has been extended to include around 40,000 interviewees and is now annual is evidence of this initiative. Hancock (cited in Muncie and Wilson, 2004: 52) stresses the importance of such surveys in 'evaluating the effectiveness of government policies to reduce crime, fear of crime and to increase public confidence in the CJS'. 'While being a problem for government, fear of crime has also become political…it is now seen by many researchers and policy-makers as being as serious a problem as crime itself' (Lee, 2007: 4). Moreover, Hough and Mayhew (1983: 26) concede in the British Crime Survey's first report that 'fear of crime appears to be a serious problem which needs to be tackled separately from the incidence of crime'.

Just as public perceptions can influence specific political policies, major political changes can inadvertently increase crime as well as fear of crime among citizens. Lemanski (2006) explains that in post-apartheid South Africa (predominantly white) residents of Cape Town became more anxious following the changes. 'As the protective environment of apartheid's social and special laws have rescinded it is not surprising that those previously sheltered have become increasingly concerned and fearful' (Lemanski, 2006: 788). Although this is an extraordinary case, it nevertheless demonstrates the potential for political change to alter perceptions and increase fear. Isolated crime events can also increase fear among residents of affected areas. Hanson *et al* (2000) investigated the impact of exposure to traumatic events on fear of crime. A series of civil disturbances occurred in Los Angeles in 1992 following the acquittal of four white police officers accused of beating up an African American, Rodney King. The disturbances resulted in thousands of arrests, 53 deaths and 2383 injuries. It was discovered following a study that respondents who lived nearby were 'significantly more likely' to report fear for their family's safety than respondents from elsewhere in Los Angeles (Hanson *et al*, 2000: 616).

Influence of the Media

The last few decades have seen the fear of crime 'increasingly become a topic of interest' in the media, just as crime is itself (Lee, 2007: 25). Innes (2004) emphasises the impact that media coverage of a small amount of high profile violent crimes can have on the public's perceptions and fears. He describes how vivid memories of high profile violent offences are formed and this contributes to rising fear. However, 'the reality is that serious crime is less common than is portrayed by the media' (Williams, 2004: 103). Nevertheless, Shotland *et al* (1979) recognise the irony that it only takes a few noteworthy crimes to be committed and reported in the media to increase the public's fear and to alter their behaviour, despite no increase in the probability of them being victimised.

Lee (2007: 188) depicts a harsh reality that 'crimes involving violence make good 'bad' news stories'. Unfortunately, a common trend in the media is to 'sensationalise deviance', 'glamorise offending' and to 'undermine moral authority and social controls…' (Reiner *et al*, cited in Hope and Sparks, 2000: 107). These traits have been acknowledged by policy-makers, who see the media as a major source of the problem since they succeed in 'stimulating unrealistic and irrational fears' among their audience (ibid). Quinney (1970: 284) explains that crime coverage by the media is 'not only selective but is a distortion of

the everyday world of crime'. Moreover, Warr (1982: 187) attributes this distortion to an 'overemphasis on violent crime, the creation of artificial crime waves…misleading reports of crime statistics, and police control of crime news'. Warr (ibid) also implies that often crime news is used as a 'filler'. Perhaps the best explanation of this trend is that 'fear sells' (Lichtenstein *et al,* 1978: 575). While acknowledging the media's role in heightening fear, Ferraro (1995) feels that the idea of the media distorting all crime news is an oversimplification. Yet serious crime merits the level of publicity it receives.

Measuring the Fear of Crime

One of the key problems in understanding the fear of crime is the difficulty in measuring it. Lee (2007: 5) highlights this: 'to suggest that there has been methodological confusion over how to measure fear of crime is an understatement'. Hale (1996: 84) suggests that confusion over the measurement of fear of crime is a consequence of the lack of a universal definition. Ferraro (1995: 21) agrees and reveals how the 'dearth of explicit definitions for it…' was one of the main reasons he began his research. Nevertheless, Yin (1980: 496) feels that fear of crime should be 'implicitly defined as the perception of the probability of being victimised'. The confusion over its meaning has resulted in 'fear of crime' being used loosely and casually in research. The fact that it has 'acquired so many divergent meanings' means that it is in 'danger of losing any specificity whatsoever' (Warr, 1984: 681). For this reason, Warr (ibid) prefers the term 'fear of victimisation', perhaps a less ambiguous phrase.

Whilst its exact impact level is unknown, 'crime fear can shape the way we treat crime and those we criminalise; it can have effects on the machinations of the justice system' (Lee, 2007: 6). It has been suggested by Warr (1985: 238) that like criminal victimisation, the consequences of fear are 'real, measurable, and potentially severe, both at an individual and social level'.

Many crime prevention measures are commonplace throughout society, such as burglar alarms and Neighbourhood Watch schemes, but can these measures really be considered a consequence of the fear of crime? Whether or not someone is fearful, it is perceived as irresponsible for someone not to use either of these measures.

Research into the fear of crime has been criticised for a variety of reasons. Vanderveen (2006: 7) highlights the scrutiny diverted towards 'conceptualisation and measurement'. Vanderveen is also critical of the overuse of surveys and numerical data in analysing fear of crime, suggesting that not enough is known about the variety and nature of fear of crime experienced and how it affects lives. It would therefore make sense to carry out more qualitative research including in-depth interviews and focus groups to uncover more about individual differences and their possible significance. Gabriel and Greve (2003) are also sceptical about the reliance on surveys and the lack of theoretical clarification of the meaning and measurement of fear of crime. They argue that 'previous interpretations of empirical results lack the theoretical background necessary for sensitive conclusions to be drawn' (Gabriel and Greve, 2003: 600). Vanderveen (2006: 7) highlights the lack of longitudinal research performed to date, and argues that research has been 'too narrowly focused' due to the 'historical development' of the concept 'fear of crime'. Nevertheless, Vanderveen does concede that the social relevance of fear of crime is indicated by results from public opinion polls but is sceptical about traditional research into fear of crime. Ferraro (1995: 7) criticises the lack of 'a clear theoretical framework' in much of the

previous research. Garofalo and Laub (1978: 246) criticise previous research by asserting that 'what has been measured…as the 'fear of crime' is simply not fear of crime'. This implies that the vague nature of the term makes it impossible for criminologists successfully to research it exclusively.
As demonstrated in Chapter 3, surveys and subsequent literature have been able to identify a weak correlation between fear of crime and the likelihood of victimisation, 'most notably among women, the elderly and people living in low crime, rural or suburban areas' (Crawford, 1998: 12). Mayhew and Hough (1988: 16) have labelled this as an 'apparent paradox that those who are most fearful are least often victims'. Rifai (1982) feels that there has been no convincing evidence that victimisation causes greater fear of crime than a lack of it. Moreover, 'people do not simply assess their likelihood of victimisation and respond accordingly with low or high levels of fear' (Goodey, 2005: 76). Balkin (1979: 343) concludes that 'individual perceptions often provide an unreliable basis for predicting the actual magnitude of social problems, including crime'. Additionally, Hough (1995: 2) identifies that 'people can regard crime as a very serious social issue without themselves having any concern about becoming a victim'.

Individuals can become fearful without having been victimised themselves. Ferraro (1995: 2) points out that 'the social consequences of crime extend beyond those who are directly victimised…' Moreover, Greenberg and Ruback (1992: 3) advocate that 'crime affects not only its victims, but also relatives, neighbours, friends, and society'. With this in mind, Amerio and Roccato (2005: 26) argue that the 'principal predictor of fear of crime is victimisation' (direct and indirect). Yin (1980: 498) strongly agrees with this and found that amongst the elderly, crimes experienced by their peers were an 'even stronger predictor of fear' than the individual's own experience. Mawby (1986: 305) concludes that those who are living in 'age-heterogeneous areas' are more fearful than those who are living in nursing homes, 'where neighbourhood experience of being a victim is less common'. Dammert and Malone (2003) found insecurity to be the best predictor of fear of crime in Chile, closely followed by victimisation, trust in the media and population of home city. A Japanese survey revealed that over 50% of the residents in a particular area were fearful of being burgled despite the likelihood of victimisation being less than 1% (Ito, 1993). Although this evidence supports the weak correlation between fear and risk, it may not be applicable to British research since Japanese crime rates are far lower. Ainsworth (2000: 26) argues that although BCS figures reveal that property crime is more common than personal, many people's fear of crime 'centres around a dread of becoming a victim of violence, especially at the hands of a stranger'.

There are many inconsistencies in the findings of fear of crime. Skogan (1987: 135) blames the many 'incongruities' for this irregularity. In a study Waller and Okihiro's (1978) found that burglary rates were not linked to residents' levels of concern. This evidence is unable to support any suggestion that fear of crime is related to victimisation. Skogan (1987) criticises the fact that some research has opted to study only victims of crime, thereby eliminating opportunity for comparative analysis between the responses of victims and non-victims. Skogan also recommends that all fear of crime research cover all crime categories, which would generate a more comprehensive analysis. The final chapter concludes findings and summarises recurring themes emerging throughout the course of this research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The fear of crime is now a leading area for research within criminology. Criminologists have accepted its significance and potential negative impact on lifestyle. A wide range of research was referenced throughout this investigation and, as anticipated several patterns have emerged with regard to fear trends and perceived risk. However, many of these trends remain ambiguous. It would seem that results obtained will continue to surprise, as trends are unlikely to remain consistent.

In terms of recommendations for future research, the inclusion of perceived risk in fear of crime research would be beneficial. Fear and perceived risk are clearly two separate concepts and this should be reflected in research. As with all criminological terms, fear of crime should have a universal definition. This would facilitate research, removing the possibility for debate over meaning. Fear of crime should be prioritised by the CJS. As well as conducting research, the CJS should provide information and help to those who need it. An organisation independent of Victim Support should be formed to help people who are fearful of crime yet have not themselves been victimised.

The measurement of the fear of crime has proved a troublesome issue. To claim that it is impossible to measure would be an overstatement, but there is a general consensus among criminologists that governments rely disproportionately on national victimisation surveys. Such surveys are vague and seek statistics rather than detailed responses, a consequence of an emphasis on closed questions. Whilst they are subject to sampling errors and effectively consist of estimations, the statistics are often misleading, national rates differing from local rates. There should, therefore, be an emphasis on local surveys which produce relevant statistics. The media, and particularly newspapers, can also play their part by clearly explaining the context of statistics. It should also be compulsory for the media to explain its interpretation of statistics. This may be an unrealistic goal as newspapers thrive on drama and may be unwilling to comply. Nevertheless, the perceptions of the public are deeply affected by the media. The media should acknowledge its collective responsibility to convey the truth and take steps to ensure that its reporting is balanced and accurate.

Many researchers have called for more interdisciplinary research in future. This is a rational approach as it would allow a less restricted approach to research. It may enable new techniques of research to be developed, potentially uncovering new insights and more accurate data. There should be greater emphasis on qualitative research, particularly unstructured interviews and focus groups; which would allow respondents to give detailed yet natural responses. While new facilities such as those on the West Yorkshire Police website can only be commended, they have highlighted a worrying inconsistency between the constabularies. The public should be entitled to a consistent level of information and support across the country. While the Beat Crime Info website is an effective use of modern technology which demonstrates the relevance of local crime statistics, it has yet to be adopted nationwide.

From the research investigated there is little evidence to suggest that there is a link between fear of crime and the likelihood of victimisation. It has been proven that people are just as capable of being fearful of crime if their likelihood of victimisation is low or high.

Numerous perception patterns have emerged, including the fact that women and the elderly are disproportionately fearful due their feelings of vulnerability. However, other variables such as locality and social class have also produced interesting findings. From this it is possible to deduce that there is no individual factor which is the best predictor of fear. As evidence has suggested fear of crime can have positive and negative implications, there is, as yet, no conclusive evidence to confirm the impact of fear on the likelihood of victimisation.

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