Samuels, R. (1994), Criminal Victimisation
Literature Review

Fear of Crime, and the Experience of being Victimised

Victims, not unlike criminals, act in rational ways. An understanding of fear of crime and criminal victimisation must include socio-situational experiences both *before and after* the victimisation experience. Besides affecting actions before a crime (via projections/suggestions of individual and/or community vulnerability) fear often also immobilises victims after crimes, and helps explain low rates of reporting. Similarly, it has been shown that one of the main effects of victimisation is to enhance *awareness* of crime (Herbert and Darwood, 1992) - victims over-estimate the prevalence of crime; and are especially sensitive to news of disorder or crime, and critical of the justice system (Fischer, 1984).

The experience of being victimised constitutes a radical threat to and disruption of a victim's sense of self, sense of order, sense of community and sense of place. The development, in the victim, through phases of suspicion, fear, helplessness, anger, making-sense and ultimately, hopefully, resolution have been documented in phenomenological studies (Fischer & Wertz, 1979; Fischer, 1984). Such studies document and describe what was going on prior to the crime (living routinely), what the *essential experience* of the victimisation was like (being disrupted, violated), and what happened afterwards (re-integrating, adapting).

It is critical not only that environmental design helps pre-empt crime but also that the environment and the community can demonstrate that the victim's extreme sense of vigilance and sense of helplessness are no longer necessary. In a sense it is fortunate that victims do not know of criminological research such as Yockelson and Samenow's (1976) that showed criminals perceiving of victims as impersonal objects, or as 'one of them' deserving to be attacked !

Fear of crime on American university campuses crystallised during the 1980's. Situational remedies adopted included 'blue-light telephones' located throughout the campus, from which threatened women could call security services (Princeton now has about 70), whistles handed out to women students, and 'walls of shame' - lists of alleged date rapists pinned to bathroom walls or distributed on campus - also popularly referred to as castration lists! Social remedies included Take Back The Night Marches and speeches, sexual harassment peer-counselling

groups and the distribution of pamphlets giving sample date-rape scenarios or entitled "Is Dating Dangerous?"

However, certain commentators are sceptical of the emphasis placed on rape on campus, however defined. Gilbert (1992), questioned the way rape was measured in the *Ms*. magazine study of date rape on campus (Warshaw, 1988). 73% of the 1 in 4 women who were categorised as rape victims in that study did not themselves define their experience as rape, and this, it is claimed reveals more about sexual politics than about sexual behaviour. The fact that date and acquaintance rape is an area of notorious confusion for women is not, however, acknowledged, nor that women today are more willing to recognise the existence of this problem, or that might indeed have been subjected to events that involved *a lack of consent* that they would now view as sexual harassment. Roiphe (1993) believes that this 'fascination with sexual harassment' and date rape is a 'feminist preoccupation' which sees women as victims, or as 'survivors' of victimisation, and that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing their vulnerability, 'officially' multiplying their fears, unnecessarily limiting their freedom. Moreover, the campus rape-crisis culture denies natural female desires and infantilise them, perpetrating myths about female innocence. Women are afraid to walk around campuses at night, unnecessarily so, Roiphe claims, and quotes statistics of 2 reported rapes at Princeton between 1983 and 1992, hardly a convincing argument. More relevantly, she reminds readers that men are not immune to assault, that danger and fear are not an exclusively female domain.

It is important to remain as objective as possible when dealing with a subject as fraught as sexual relationships. Obviously, we must avoid labelling miscommunication and insensitivity as acquaintance rape; nor must we use words to describe events that women do not themselves use. At the same time, to deny that sexual harassment is a phenomenon that must be consciously avoided by women is naive. In reality, however unfortunately, some places should be avoided, some times of day are less safe than others; some lifestyle activities increase vulnerability to victimisation, and one way or another women are going to have to carefully manage their relationships with men, both those known and those unknown to them, if they want to avoid situations in which control over their self is relinquished. The data described in this paper bears testimony.

Reporting Rates

Different crimes have different reporting rates. Vehicle thefts, for example, are reported about 86% of the time (a requirement for lodging an insurance claim), while crimes of violence are reported only about 45% of the time (US National Crime Survey 1979).

Estimates of only 5-7 % are common for rape reporting in many developed countries. In the USA, for instance, the Lott, Reilly & Howard study (1982) of students and staff on three Rhode Island University campuses indicated that only 7% of serious sexual assaults were reported to the police; and the *Ms.* magazine study (Warshaw, 1988) found that date and acquaintance rape victims were reluctant to report these incidents (5% reported the event, 42% told no-one at all about it). Ms. Daley, of Suzanne Daley's Self-Defence for Women, Melbourne, has confirmed that only about *1 in 20* of the thousands of post-trauma sexual-assault women she has counselled over many years have reported the event to the police *(personal communication)*.

A range of reasons why victims *fail to report* have been suggested (Kidd & Chayet, 1984). Victims tend to view reporting as ineffective/futile (perceive the police as powerless) and inconvenient (time and money will be lost as a result of following through a report). A fear of recrimination/retaliation (where the offender is known - very relevant in situations of acquaintance rape or domestic violence) is of course very real; and added to this is a fear of indirect and further victimisation by the authorities themselves (depersonalisation and embarrassment at the hands of hostile defense attorneys/prosecutors, unsympathetic judges, incredulous police). Most importantly, a victimisation experience represents a situation where personal control was ceded/lost and a victim's understandable psychological reaction is to avoid feeling pain and anxiety or fearful and vulnerable again. In order to regain/preserve their self-esteem they would want to forget and rationalise the experience, not reinforce it by reporting it and thus re-live the situation again and again by explaining, describing, and recounting it, and/or having contact with any persons or organisations that might treat them as victims. It is also interesting that Burgess and Holstrom (1975) found that the majority of women in their rape study who had contacted the police had done so only because someone else made the decision for them.

Since often the victim's fear is not reduced by reporting crime to authorities, an alternative available to a victim is to report the incident to friends, neighbours and family. Indeed, the 1979 US National Crime Survey revealed that a substantial proportion of personal crimes were reported to such persons. This 'in-community' reporting, in turn, generates a kind of secondary victimisation, a 'vicarious experience with crime' (Lavrakas, 1981), where the social networks of victims experience emotional reactions similar to those of the victim (Friedman et al, 1982).

Minorities are also less likely to report rape, particularly to the police (Feldman-Summers and Ashworth, 1981). This could have important implications for reporting on Australian university campuses, given the percentage of foreign students enrolled. At UNSW, for

instance, about 12% of the student body is made up of international students, of which a very large proportion are from Asia.

Ultimately, failing to report has a knock-on effect, since one arrest can often help solve numerous outstanding crimes, and remove habitual perpetrators from the streets (Petersilia et al, 1978, for example, reported that 49 habitual offenders they studied had committed over 10,500 crimes).

Criminal Victimisation Surveys

Given the unreliability of recorded offences, what is required to adequately reflect the realistic situation are victimisation surveys, particularly micro-scale surveys such as those conducted recently for the London boroughs of Hammersmith/Fulham and Islington (see Painter, 1992). Small, inner city epidemiological studies address the specific temporal, spatial and social characteristics of crime and harassment at a local level, and many findings from these surveys have proved to be at odds even with national victimisation surveys, which are themselves at odds with police reported rates. For instance, women were found to be disproportionately more likely to be the victims of crime than men (reversing the national victimisation trends), and the surveys revealed a much higher incidence of sexual assault than the national survey estimates.

One out of every two households interviewed, in all three surveys mentioned above, had been 'touched by serious crime within the previous twelve months '. And American Bureau of Justice Statistics (1983, eg) indicate that almost 30% of all households in the United States contained at least one family member who was a crime victim (during 1982). But, between one half and two thirds of all crimes are not reported.

Overview: Criminal Victimisation Studies in Australia

Extracts relevant to this paper, relating to offences against the person are outlined below.

1. *First Australian National Crime Victim Survey /1975 (*Braithwaite and Biles, 1980).

Offences against the person were shown to occur predominantly *at night* - robbery with violence 83% of the time, assault 70% of the time, and rape/attempted rape 60% of the time. 53% of the robberies with violence and 42% of the assaults occurred in a public area / outside, while 31% of the rapes / attempted rapes were located in a public area but 62%

occurred inside or near the victim's home. Perpetrators of the sexual offences were categorised as a close friend 17% of the time, an acquaintance 40% of the time and a stranger 43% of the time. In other words, persons were *known to the victim 57% of the time*. This has obvious implications for the investigation into date/acquaintance rape in the campus security study currently under investigation by the author.

Interestingly, the survey also indicated that poor mental health (both self-rated and indexed by number of visits to mental health professionals) is a good predictor of victimisation, ie of a victim personality.

2. *Crime in Australia: as measured by the Australian component of the International Crime Victims Survey 1989 (Walker, 1991)*

Figures presented in this survey were factored to produce estimated projections for the entire Australian population, over 16 years old, for 1988. Again, relevant figures for crimes against the person are extracted.

60% more personal theft was apparent from this survey than from published police figures. No comparable figures were available for sexual incidents, but the factored estimates suggested that over 1,000,000 sexual incidents would have occurred in Australia in 1988, of which only 7.6% would have been reported. Around half the sexual offenders would have been known to the victim, (similar to the 1975 survey), with one in eight being described as a 'close friend'.

With regard to assaults, estimates suggested that almost half a million <u>actual</u> assaults and more than half a million <u>threatened</u> assaults would have occurred in 1988, of which about 36% would have been reported. Published police figures for 'serious assaults' (not the same category, however) were only 14,769 - about 30 times less than the actual assault estimates. Estimated incidence rates for actual violence were similar to those for sexual incidents, although here males (16-19 age group) were victimised most often. *Threats* of violence, however, were largely directed at women, most often in the 20-29 (and 16-19) age groups.

Rates of victimisation for all personal crimes showed that sexual incidents (experienced by women) was the most prevalent. Similarly, the estimated incidence rates (per 1000 population/16+) showed that 184 sexual incidents would have occurred (the next highest rate being 63 for theft from person - some three times less). Most victims fell into the 16-19 age group; particularly vulnerable were those individuals who have 'outdoor visits' at least once a week - a clear reference to a situational contingency.

Another situational contingency brought to light by this crime victim survey is the relationship between leaving lights on at home and household burglary. Some 85% of respondents leave lights on as a crime prevention measure, yet there is little difference in the percentage of households victimised, irrespective of whether they *'always, sometimes or never'* leave lights on. Roughly equal percentages of all three groups had experienced one, two and three incidents. As a preventative strategy, thus, leaving lights on seems to have no impact. Robbers might well recognise this tactic as a ploy, and ignore it. Perhaps the random systems (turning on/off a light for different periods at different times) might be more effective? As it is, it is without obvious deterrent benefit, and is, simultaneously, an energy wasteful behavioural response.

3.   Crime and Safety Surveys (ABS and NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research). Undertaken annually, throughout NSW (other surveys have been conducted in South Australia in '91, and Victoria in '86 and '87).

Findings from the 1992 Survey indicated that the proportion of victims of personal crimes was highest in the 15-24 age group, with more males than females being affected. This reflects findings from the national crime survey (Kelly, 1991). [Painter's (1989a/b) micro-surveys of London boroughs reversed this common finding - see below].

In the sexual assault category, sexual harassment was excluded and only females 18+ years of age were asked the question - both of which distort the 'criminological reality' (Painter, 1992). For instance, while 184/1000 sexual incidents were estimated to occur in the Australia-wide survey (Walker, 1991) only 13/1000 were estimated here.

> Interpretive problems obvious with such victim surveys are associated with: definitions & meaning of crimes investigated (legal vs. community definitions of crimes, sexual harassment excluded/included, etc), the ages of victims surveyed (over 15 or over 18, eg), generalisations from samples to populations, and the scale of the survey (micro-surveys showing distinctly different patterns from national victim surveys).

Overview: UK Criminal Victimisation Surveys

National victimisation surveys were developed in Britain throughout the 1980's. Conducted in 1982, 1984 and 1988 the British Crime Surveys (BCS) found that nationally fear of crime is more of an issue than the actual occurrence of crime. The BCS also showed that crime was

focused spatially, by area of residence and housing tenure, with council tenants on poorer estates and inner city multi-racial areas experiencing increased risks of victimisation (Hope and Hough, 1988). The Grade Report (1989) classified residential neighbourhoods and found that the poorest council estates had the highest percentages of victims, of people worried about crime, and of people stating that crime was the worst feature of the area. Non-family areas, albeit of high-status, were also classified as high risk and displayed the second highest rates of victimisation and worry/dissatisfaction - which highlights the importance of lifestyle. Interestingly, people who lived in poor quality, old *terraced housing* had much lower rates of victimisation, and worry/dissatisfaction.

The BCS indicated that young men were more likely to be victimised, and risk was associated with lifestyle, eg the number of evenings spent outside the home, particularly on weekends, and frequenting pubs all increase the risk of street robbery. Where women follow similar lifestyle patterns their risks are similar to those of men (Gottfredson, 1984). Smith (1989) concludes that crime is both socially linked with the routine practices of an urban lifestyle, and is spatially coincident with urban deprivation [1].

With regard to rape and sexual assault, the BCS found that the heightened fear unearthed could not be explained by the actual risks, which were negligible.

However, criticisms levelled at the BCS include arguments that high and low rates in different areas were aggregated, thus masking the real geographical spread; and that the concentration on women's fears, and on legally defined crimes, led to an exclusion of their everyday, commonplace experiences of racial/ethnic abuse and offensive behaviour directed at their sexuality in public places. Albeit not criminal, this phenomenological reality constitutes a form of victimisation which impacts significantly on their quality of life or their 'lived reality of social experience' (Painter, 1992).

Furthermore, it is now generally accepted that women are involved in hidden and unreported violence which occurs in private places, and that large-scale victimisation surveys are not appropriate instruments with which to unearth the true extent of family (and acquaintance) harassment (Stanko, 1988; Kelly, 1987).

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[1]	Signs of neighbourhood deprivation/deterioration/malaise can be:broken windows, litter, vandalism and graffitti, or behaviour such as loitering or drunken and/or abusive threats. As such incivilities increase so a sense of community begins to break down, which in turn renders an area more vulnerable to crime. A heightened sense of fear and awareness of crime accompany this (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Coleman, 1985, Hope and Hough, 1988).

In the latter half of the '80's, micro-surveys were devised which concentrated on small areas in inner city boroughs (at the level of streets and estates), which led to a mapping of criminal victimisation by locality, time and gender (Painter, 1988; 1989a; 1989b). These local victim surveys showed that in the inner city areas surveyed (Islington, and Hammersmith/Fulham) and on peripheral council housing estates, women were proportionately more likely than men to be the victims of crime - which finding justifies their fear of crime as being realistic. For instance, in Islington women were 40% more likely to be a victim of a street robbery than men, (equally likely in Hammersmith and Fulham), and twice as likely to be assaulted (and violently). Sexual assault in Islington was 14 times higher than the BCS averages, and was particularly prevalent amongst 16-24 years olds. Moreover, women experienced greater levels of threatening and abusive behaviour in public places (reported by 43% of respondents in Islington, eg).

It is thus not surprising that women express wariness of poorly lit areas, open spaces, parking garages and lots, and are reluctant to go out alone after dark or to use public transport or the streets at such times (Crawford et al, 1990). Even 55% of the men respondents in Hammersmith/Fulham avoided certain streets (compared to 78% of women), and similar proportions (of both genders) indicated this avoidance strategy in smaller studies undertaken in both the West Kensington and Ladywood housing estates (Painter et al, 1990).

Evidence from the American National Crime Survey on fear of crime (Hindelang et al, 1978) indicated that 46% of those interviewed in 8 American cities had made adjustments to their normal activities because of fear of crime. Jones et al (1986) documented *non-criminal* sexual harassment/street violence, for instance, and it was clear that this type of behaviour constituted a 'commonplace and inhibiting feature of women's lives, restricting their access to and freedom of movement within public places' (Painter, 1992).

Despite illuminating previously unacknowledged levels of victimisation experienced by women, even local surveys cannot adequately reflect on their lifetime experience of sexual threat and innuendo, since they refer merely to the past 12 months, and cannot adequately reflect the sense of intimidation women generally feel in public places. Furthermore, the experiences of middle-class women are tempered by their access to private transport, and working class women are generally more vulnerable as a result.

Kate Painter succinctly sums up the issue: 'To put it bluntly, the women surveyed do not fear crime, they fear men '.

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