Introduction: Situating Road Safety

In the past criminological and criminal justice scholarship has ignored road traffic offending, preferring to look at more serious offending paradigms like violence, murder, property and white collar crime. However, as O'Malley has stated:

> *traffic policing has been mistaken for something marginal to criminology…traffic is a site of policing and sanctioning, having a direct impact on far more of us, and far more often, than almost any other branch of 'justice' (O'Malley, 2010b, 797).*

In this sense criminology has somewhat marginalised the offending paradigm to exclude road traffic offending. Similarly, Ferrell has asked:

> *Why have critical criminologists, so adept at seeing through conventional ideologies of crime and justice, at exposing the arrangements of power that hide some crimes while inventing others, devoted so little time to exposing the everyday crimes of the automobile? (Ferrell, 2002, 193).*

Even critical criminologists, who are theoretically predisposed to push beyond the margins, have neglected this substantial and rich area of research.[1] The significance of this criminological context is evident in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaiming 2011 – 2020 as the *Decade of Action for Road Safety*.[2]

Officially launched on 11 May 2011, the justification for this intervention was based on global injury statistics suggesting that nearly 1.3 million people are killed on the world's roads each year and up to 50 million are injured and many remain disabled for life. Moreover, road traffic related injuries are cited as "the number one cause of death for young people worldwide"(Road Safety Fund, 2011). While all of these injuries cannot be said to be the result of a traffic

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[1] There are of course exceptions, most noteworthy being Halsey's work in the area of youth and high speed pursuits (Halsey, 2008).

[2] Resolution 64/255.

offence excessive speed, alcohol (and drug) consumption and failure to wear a seatbelt play a significant role in these statistics. This has led the UN to promote the following local government based initiatives:

> *effective speed management by police and through the use of traffic-calming measures; setting and enforcing internationally harmonized laws requiring the use of seat-belts, helmets and child restraints; [and] setting and enforcing blood alcohol concentration limits for drivers (UN et al., 2011, 5).*

It is suggested that this international intervention and initiative indicates that criminological research into road traffic offending - particularly in the area of excess speed, drink and drug driving and failure to wear a seatbelt - is both timely and essential.

While mainstream criminological research rarely discusses road traffic offending, cultural studies scholarship has addressed automobility and car culture in a rich and nuanced way. Stemming from the notion of autonomy and mobility, automobility scholarship addresses the car as a cultural product (Featherstone, 2004, 1). It moves beyond notions of the car as an object of consumption and sees it as a system of practices that have shaped civil society (Urry, 2000, 57-64). The car is acknowledged as a symbol of national identity (Edensor, 2004; Kriznar, 1993), individuality (Featherstone, 2007; Featherstone, 2010), youth (Redshaw, 2004; Carrabine et al., 2002; Redshaw, 2006), gender (Jain, 2005; Walsh, 2011), cultural capital (Miller, 2001) and also a communication device (Noble et al., 2001; Laurier, 2004). While this thesis does not address the cultural dimensions of the car, it supports the cultural studies notion that the car is something which pervades civil society. The car is particularly noteworthy because it is the way that most members of the public interface with the police. The car; along with the extensive system of road networks; the saturation of traffic signals and signs; and the proliferation of images of dangerousness conveyed through advertisements all converge together and do something. It is this convergence that this thesis intends to explore.

This thesis intends to explore this somewhat forgotten path in criminology from the perspective of prevention. Pillar four of the implementation program for the *Decade of Road Safety* framework calls on member states to "develop comprehensive programmes to improve road user behaviour"(UN et al., 2011, 16). The UN suggests that this can be achieved through

> *sustained or increased enforcement of laws and standards, combined with*
> *public awareness/education to increase seat-belt and helmet wearing rates,*
> *and to reduce drink-driving, speed and other risk factors (UN et al., 2011, 16).*

The public awareness and education campaigns that attempt to improve driver behaviour are the focus of this thesis. This study relies on the pretext that public awareness and education campaigns concerning driver behaviour have a prominent place in people's lives. Worldwide there is a proliferation of government based messages about driving behaviour conveyed through television, radio, internet, signs, billboards, posters, bar mats and drink coasters. Through these and other mediums drivers are regularly exposed to images and texts that speak to the issue of desirable and undesirable driver behaviour. Primarily this study looks at government based driver safety campaigns as an effective *biopolitical* tool that can and does change driver behaviour. This approach aligns with Criminology's increasing concern with the relationship between image and spectator (Ayers et al., 2012; Carney, 2010; Carrabine, 2011; Carrabine, 2012; Greer et al., 2007; Hayward, 2010; Linnemann et al., 2013; Linnemann et al., 2013; Young, 2000; Young, 2007; Young, 2009; Young, 2010). This thesis is not a prevalence study based around a statistical analysis of whether this *biopolitical* tool is effective on populations. While the thesis is deeply interested in how, why and when this road safety strategy works the central tenet is not one of prevalence but rather capacity.

This study endeavours to understand the imagined capacities of road safety advertisements as texts through a poststructuralist frame. In its simplest form the thesis is a study that looks at the creation of governmental messages concerning road safety by analysing the assumptions they make, unpacking the truth games at work and mapping the projected impacts of the texts. More

significantly, the thesis looks at: how spectators make meaning of the texts; why spectators of these texts are affected; why they feel what they do; and under what conditions it occurs. In this way the thesis grapples with how these texts address the spectator through a reliance on the binary subject positions of *self* and *other* in order to prompt driver behaviour change. This is achieved by asking two key qualitative questions: how do these texts *work* and what can they *do*? The thesis is premised on the idea that the texts can change driver behaviour but can also have the capacity to do something *other*. In this way the aim of this thesis is not to discern the overall effectiveness of this biopolitical strategy in a statistical sense but rather to explore how textual meaning making can sometimes be controlled and sometimes resists control. Through a careful analysis of selected texts of this type the thesis explores how unintentional meaning can be created from an encounter with these texts using the Deleuzian notion of excess. In this way the thesis is fundamentally concerned with the unspoken and the unremarked that emerge from the space between a spectator and a road safety text. Principally, the study confines itself to the capacities of such texts that converge on the notion of fear.

This thesis is primarily situated in the domain of crime fear. It delves into the space that fear occupies in order to examine how fear can be enlarged by texts in this space. In this way the thesis is built around several case studies that explore significant televised road safety advertisements that use filmic techniques to induce fear in the viewer. The thesis engages with each filmic image in a rich and nuanced way. The notion of fear is explored, not only through sound, narrative, characterisation, and mise-en-scene but also through its capacity to be heightened or emerge as something-other in the course of an affective encounter with a spectator. In this way each chapter deals with the capacity of each text, exploring how an affective encounter might play out and what significant themes emerge from the texts. Chapter Two through Five of the thesis each explore a different emergent theme. Chapter Two explores how an affective encounter with the televised commercial *Creepers II* can emerge as an unintended and unproductive fear of crime. Chapter Three addresses three

separate texts (*Pinky, Texting, and Legend)* which, while fear inducing, inter-textually emerge as comical parodies. Chapter Four speaks to another set of separate texts (*Pram, Hurry, Mess* and *Shame)* which bear a particularly potent notion of fear that can emerge as a dysfunction aversion to the text. Finally, Chapter Five focuses on the emergence of surveillance that can remain from an affective encounter with *Creepers I*. This themed exploration attends to the question of what these road safety texts can *do*. As texts, government funded road safety advertisements can *become* a site of resistance or a site of capture and compliance. Alternatively, these texts can *become* something unexpected which causes the emergence of something else, and in this sense the texts can *become-other*.

The notion of becoming-other is integral to the exploration of how these texts *work* and what they can *do*. This is not only the case because it can speak to how the texts can affect changes in driver behaviour but also because it exposes the lack of control that governments have over the texts they deploy to manage populations. In order to address this issue the thesis engages, at appropriate points, with the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Of particular importance are the concepts of governmentality, affect, becoming-other and excess. These concepts - amongst others explored in Chapter One of the thesis - are utilised to explore the intersections of fear, governance, subjectivity, resistance, monstrosity, trauma, parody and surveillance at play in spectatorship and on the road. Methodologically the main data set that assists this exploration is a selection of Australian and international televised road safety commercials which form the basis of the case studies. Interviews with the creators of two of the campaigns (*Creepers I* and *Creepers II)* are also drawn upon, as are blogs and other internet based responses that relate to each of the advertisements that feature in Chapters Two through Five. These data sets contribute significantly to the analysis of the subjectivities that can emerge from an encounter with a fear inducing text. This approach not only addresses the underpinning questions of how the texts *work* and what they can *do* but also serves to extend fear of crime theory by showing that within road safety

regulation fear is not just used to manage potential victims (the ethical *self*) but also potential offenders (the criminal *other*). In this sense the thesis makes way for the fear of crime to become-other as well as mapping how the subject becomes-other through fear.

The thesis is fundamentally concerned with the subject positions of ethical *self* and criminal *other* and how each becomes-other. Relying on Foucaultian and Deleuzian approaches to subjectivity the thesis rejects the binary distinction of *self* and *other* while still recognising its utility in the management of road traffic populations. Each of the case studies in Chapters Two through Five addresses the problematic representation of the *self* and *other* present in the texts. This address provides the space for an examination of the conceptualisation of *becoming* as a more appropriate model for discussing the subject of road traffic regulation. Chapter Six of the thesis does this through an analysis of subject position during spectatorship and on the road which reveals the inadequacy of the binary notion of the criminal *other*. The thesis explicates a conceptualisation of the subject which sees bodies as not being defined by moments of failure or moments of ethical behaviour but rather as bodies that move into and out of the proximity of criminal *other* and ethical *self* at every juncture. In this way the thesis attempts to go beyond the binary of *self* and *other* within criminological theory and road traffic offending discourse. In doing so the thesis endeavours to create a force of becoming in fear of crime theory, the criminological offending paradigm and in the nuanced notion of *otherness*.