

## ***Conclusion: Beyond Road Safety?***

This thesis has pushed beyond three paradigmatic approaches within criminological and criminal justice scholarship. Through an examination of the imagined capacities of road safety advertisements the thesis has forged new boundaries for scholarship around significant offending, the fear of crime and otherness. This was achieved by exploring how the technology of fear *works* in attempting to manage drivers en masse and what this strategy can *do*. In this way the thesis has been true to its aims to go beyond what is delimited and nuanced by charting a new kind of thinking about offending, the fear of crime and the Other. However it is necessary to also explore whether this research, which intersects the boundaries of offending, fear and otherness, is actually delimited by the road safety paradigm.

First, the thesis has navigated the forgotten path of road traffic offending within criminological scholarship using a bio-political perspective. This exploration is significant, not only because it coincides with the *Decade of Action for Road Safety* (2011-2020) but also because the effects of road traffic offending impact more of the population and does so more regularly than any other crime on the offending spectrum (O'Malley, 2010b, 797). From the perspective of crime prevention the thesis showed how road safety advertisements, as a strategy that attempts to fashion well-being in populations, cannot be completely controlled. Through an analysis of what the selected texts can *do* the thesis revealed how governmental messages about crime can sometimes be controlled and sometimes evade control. The thesis explored how a relational encounter with a road safety message may produce compliance, resistance, or it may follow a line of flight and produce something-other. Chapters Two through Five explored four of these potential lines of flight that could emerge from such an affective encounter, namely: unproductive fear (Chapter Two); inter-textual parody (Chapter Three); dysfunctional fear (Chapter Four); and surveillance

(Chapter Five). This analysis revealed the unremarked that emerges from the space between a spectator and a text which highlights the impact of excess on crime prevention strategies.

Bio-political strategies attempt to counteract human behaviour, not through force but through efficient and widespread mediums like television advertising. These techniques aim to control large populations on issues that affect community well-being. However, as has been exposed in this thesis the meaning making of a text can be corrupted and therefore the text cannot be completely controlled. This raises the question as to whether there is a certain level of naivety behind this bio-political strategy because the excess that may emerge between the spectator and text can prove to be unproductive, even dysfunctional, or merely something innocuous that still detracts from the bio-political message (like parody or surveillance). Acknowledging the capacity of excess in meaning making allows crime prevention scholarship and practise to ask: *what else is not being controlled?* In this way the tracing of excess can be a useful methodological tool in order to explore where and how a textually based crime prevention strategy might go astray. Pre-empting this capacity has the potential to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of crime prevention strategies of this kind. Therefore there are practical lessons to be learned from the methodical tools utilised in this thesis that can both assist road traffic regulation and go beyond the realm of road safety.

Secondly, the thesis has explored the space that the fear of crime occupies by examining how road safety advertisements function as a technology of fear. The thesis explored how late modern governments, through a representation of possible unwanted futures, use fear as a strategy to change driver behaviour. As discussed in Chapter One previously scholarship concerning the fear of crime as a bio-political strategy has been delimited by the perspective of the victim. Through an examination of fear inducing road safety texts that engage the failed subject, the thesis has extended the boundaries of fear of crime scholarship by revealing that fear is a technology that is used to transform both the ethical subject and the failed subject. While the thesis has allowed space for the fear of

crime to no longer be marginalised by victimology, it is necessary to question whether this space is big enough to venture beyond road safety.

While the thesis has shown that governments use fear to transform both the ethical and failed subject in the area of road safety, it has not spoken to the issue of whether this strategy is or can be used to address the offender in other aspect of the offending paradigm. On the surface it appears that crime prevention strategies for offences like homicide, rape and robbery, which are the traditional focus of fear of crime scholarship, address the fearful subject and not the feared offender. It is likely that this is the case because modern governments foresee the wide spread implications of road traffic offending on the community, or perhaps because it appears more manageable than violent crimes like murder, rape and robbery. Interestingly, there have been numerous television campaigns around the world that attempt to address the failed subject in regard to domestic violence related assaults.<sup>1</sup> Why this kind of offending but not homicide, rape and robbery is attended to in the same way as road traffic offending would make for an interesting analysis. While there is little scope to adequately address this question here, superficially it would appear that domestic violence, like road traffic offending, is seen as more manageable because the offender is accepted as someone who oscillates between good and bad. Logically, in the alternative it could be suggested that the murder, rape or robbery offender is viewed by late modern governments as the fixed and unchanging criminal *other*. Perhaps this is the case because the harm is considered irretrievable, therefore categorising this kind of offending as a 'point-of-no-return'. If this is the case then the technology of fear as a strategy to address the failed subject is unlikely to go too far beyond road safety regulation.

Lastly, the thesis has traversed the notion of *otherness* within crime prevention theory and practise. The thesis explored how bio-political texts rely on the binary subject positions of *self* and *other* in order to prompt behaviour change. The thesis particularly addressed how subjectivity emerges at the

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<sup>1</sup> A good example is the national campaign that aired in Australia in 2006 which addresses domestic violence offenders by exposing their behaviour as criminal (primator2006, 2007).

intersection of fear and spectatorship and the implications this has on the road. Chapter Six of the thesis contended that *otherness* is merely a fleeting and transitory state and not an essence to be possessed. It argued that when a driver intentionally or inadvertently changes from travelling within the speed limit to travelling in excess of the speed limit they are passing in and out of the vicinity of *otherness*. In this way, as drivers transition so regularly between modes of ethical subjectivity and failed subjectivity on the road, we are all *other* some of the time. Moreover, each time a driver ventures onto the road they plug into the driver assemblage and are therefore infinitely connected with all other road users. Within this system of connections, relational encounters on the road intrinsically connect each driver to the *other*. As such the divide between *other* and *self* on the road is compressed in a way that tolerates an understanding of the subject as sometimes good and sometimes dangerous; an emergent subject. In this way the thesis has gone beyond the nuanced functioning of the *other* by allowing the driving *other* to be perceived, not as outcast, but as sometimes *self*. It is acknowledged that the notion of an emergent subject as an explanation for offending can endure the road safety paradigm because of the prevalence of road traffic offences. This begs the question as to whether emergent subjectivity is delimited by road safety or whether it can be transposed as an explanation for more serious types of offending?

There is potential for the notion of emergent subjectivity to be taken out of the closed context of road traffic safety. This explanation for offending has the capacity to move into the domain of more mainstream areas of criminological offending scholarship like homicide, rape and robbery. For example, an affective encounter with a person could produce an aesthetic of jealousy that may or may not result in a person murdering their spouse. Likewise, *molarised* by the over coded abstract machines of poverty, greed, habit or peer pressure, a person may emerge as a rapist or robber. However, they could just as easily be *molecularised* by fear, counselling or religion and desist from a pattern of violent offending. Alternatively, they may follow a line flight that could cause a robbery

or rape to become-other, such as homicide or even love and marriage. Similarly, this notion of excess may help to explain anomalous offending like the law-abiding parent who murders their severely disabled child or the relative who assists an aged family member in an act of euthanasia. In this way the conceptualisation of the emergent subject and the notion of excess could translate into offending explanations for other areas of criminology and criminal justice and thus move beyond the boundaries of road safety.

Fundamentally this thesis has performed upon three delimited paradigms, allowing: the significant offending paradigm to become-other; the fear of crime to become-other; and the notion of the outcasted *other* to become other than it was before. However, through this process it has emerged as knowledge which by its nature delimits. While emancipating the notions of offending, fear, and *otherness* the thesis, as text, also acts upon those concepts in other delimiting ways. As such this thesis, like subjectivity and spectatorship, can follow a line of molarity that confines it to the realms of road traffic safety. Alternatively it can follow a line of molecularity that pushes it beyond the road safety paradigm. Inevitably however, it may also follow a line of flight and emerge as something entirely *other*.

