PART I

In Part I we locate the fear of crime within a wider set of debates surrounding crime and social order in Western societies. This touches on several sets of debates not just in criminology, but also in survey research and question design. It explores not just what the fear of crime 'is', but also unpacks the history of the fear of crime as a concept and object of enquiry. Such debates mean that our journey is not a straightforward one: along the way we shall encounter debates about popular punitiveness; the uses to which politicians have put public anxieties about crime over the years; the latest thinking on the psychology of answering survey questions; the incidence of emotions in everyday lives; and the sorts of processes criminologists have alighted upon when trying to theorise the causes of crime fears. But by the end of Part I we will have outlined the wider background to debates surrounding the fear of crime, described 'where', 'why', and 'when' it emerged, and considered a number of positions on what the fear of crime is and how best to make sense of it.

1

Introduction

'We must travel in the direction of our fears.' (John Berryman, 1942, *A Point of Age*, in *Poems*).

The fear of crime remains a pressing social and political issue in any number of countries across the world. Hundreds of journal articles, books, and book chapters from a variety of social scientific perspectives have been devoted to the issue. Much of the attention is predicated on the status of fear of crime as a negative influence on individuals and communities (see *inter alia* Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Hale, 1996; Lee, 2007, 2009; Heber, 2007). Pervasive insecurity about crime erodes well-being, promotes precaution, restricts movement, encourages 'flight' from deprived areas, and harms social trust, inter-group relations, and the capacity of communities to exercise social control (Hartnagel, 1979; Lavrakas, 1982; Skogan, 1986; Dolan and Peasgood, 2007; Stafford et al., 2007; Jackson and Gray, 2009).

Criminal justice systems look to reduce crime, render justice, and provide citizens with a sense of safety and fairness. Yet the fear of crime has emerged as a problem *in its own right*—quite separate from crime itself—and this raises some thorny questions. Should governments try to reduce crime-related fears which are out of line with the (for many) 'real' problem of crime? If so how ought this to be achieved? If the fear of crime is caused by a media-inflated (and maybe politically-inflamed, see Loo, 2009) sense of the crime problem, should governments be trying to downplay excessive anxiety (which may only serve, in turn, to fuel punitive sentiments)? If the fear of crime is linked to the perception of and intolerance to anti-social behaviour and so-called 'disorder,' should governments jump on the bandwagon too? If fear of crime is a more acceptable way of expressing intolerance and prejudice towards certain groups in society, how should governments respond? In short, ought the fear of crime to be discounted by

governments, or ought it to be embraced in order that it might more readily be addressed and tackled?

Our argument in this book is simple: that the fear of crime is, at once, a more diverse experience and a more expressive phenomenon than has so far been empirically demonstrated. The thesis we develop—first through our assessment of the political and academic debates surrounding public insecurities about crime (Chapter 2); second through our reorganizing and reinterpreting of key literatures (Chapters 3 and 4); and third through our analysis of an extensive and diverse set of data (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) —begins with the idea that the fear of crime manifests in two principal (although not mutually exclusive) 'streams' of everyday experience. Previous survey research has tended to treat the fear of crime as one 'thing'. Yet we show that public emotions register as both a diffuse anxiety and a tangible worry over victimization.

Among those who lived in high crime areas, who had extensive direct and indirect experience of victimization, who were especially concerned about local neighbourhood breakdown, fear tended to present itself as concrete episodes of worry. These were short-lived and thankfully rare events in many people's lives. No matter how frightening, and no matter how much they resonate with and inform subsequent events, they were emotional events isolated in time. And contrary to received wisdom, these worries tended to cluster in individuals who lived in high crime areas. For those who lived in more protected areas (akin perhaps to 'middle England' or 'middle America'), with less experience of crime and less concern about local incivilities or neighbourhood stability, 'fear' was best displayed as a diffuse anxiety—something that Hough (2004) captures nicely when he describes unease and concern as mental states rather than mental events. Such a generalized social attitude is, we argue, more akin to an awareness of risk and a convenient metaphor regarding numerous but connecting social insecurities.

That is the core finding on the 'experience' of fear of crime. But we also argue that fear of crime 'expresses' a specific form of value-laden social perception. We propose that public perceptions of crime articulate a whole set of relational concerns about group values, normative consensus, and moral authority. Trust knits us together. Trust allows us to go about our daily lives in a seemingly secure manner. The data presented in this book are

consistent with the idea that public concerns about the threat of crime emerge when citizens lose faith in the local structures of social control, in the shared commitment and connections between people that hold communities together. Thus, at the root of fear of crime may be public unease about the health of local neighbourhood order, as well as broader anxieties about the pace and direction of social change exemplified by concerns about social decline, community fragmentation, and moral authority.

We draw most heavily in this book on data from the British Crime Survey (BCS). But we also report findings from a local crime survey and a series of qualitative interviews that strengthen our conclusions. Building upon the analyses of BCS, the results from our local crime survey suggest that individuals who hold more authoritarian views about law and order—and who are more concerned about long-term deterioration of local community—are more likely to perceive disorder in their environment, and more likely to link these physical cues to problems of (a) social cohesion and consensus and (b) declining quality of social bonds and informal social control. Turning to the qualitative data—and consistent with a number of qualitative studies that we shall encounter in the following pages—we also find that when people talk about crime, they talk about the people who inhabit public space, about the health and stability of their neighbourhood, about the norms, values, and levels of trust that underpin group relations, and the pace and direction of social change more broadly understood.

In short, we argue that people do not separate out the issue of crime from general unease about the state of social stability and the pace and direction of a rapidly changing society (a by-no-means original point, see *inter alia*: Taylor and Jamieson, 1998; Girling et al., 2000). People associate 'crime' with the breakdown of society, the flouting of society's rules, with the erosion of local neighbourhood cohesion and order. To be afraid of crime may therefore be to show disapproval for the way society seems to have loosened its moral standards, and the way society has dampened its shared expectations to conform to a set of traditionally understood rules. Emotions about crime may consequently be bound up in public concerns about social change and the health of the norms and values that are seen to underpin our society. These concerns have spread across

society; they have become part of cultural practices and public sensibilities; and crucially, they also affect those who do not face crime on a 'daily' basis, who do not find themselves in threatening situations.

We thus propose that fear of crime operates less as an irrational and misplaced public sense of the crime problem and more as a lay seismograph or barometer of social cohesion and moral consensus (Jackson, 2006). This is not to say that 'fear' does not play a part in clouding judgement and exacerbating distrust—'it' may even be part of a feedback loop that heightens the sense of the crime problem (Lee, 2001; Lee and Farrall, 2009; Stafford et al., 2007; Jackson and Stafford, 2009). Rather, concerns about crime emerge out of these broader concerns about the health of society and the stability, cooperation, and moral consensus of one's community (see *inter alia,* Biderman et al., 1967: 164). And lying behind worries and anxieties about crime are concerns about moral decline (although, of course, panics about moral decline are experienced in every generation), the erosion of social values (even if it is difficult to make a case for longer term decline, given increased rights on issues of gender, race, and sexuality), and the sense of decline of social capital and the norms, values, and mutual respect that underpin trust, cooperation, and shared concern.

We should say one last thing by way of introduction before we develop more fully the broader context of our study. A key strength of this book is the wealth of data that we bring to bear upon the topic at hand. Theoretical development and critical commentary in the fear of crime literature has gathered apace over the past fifteen years or so—especially in Britain, the USA, and Australia. Yet studies that bring empirical evidence together with careful conceptual advancement have been all too rare. Exceptions exist of course (e.g. Taylor et al., 1996; Tulloch et al., 1998; and Girling et al., 2000); and much of our theoretical framework can be traced back to both previous critiques and particularly these theoretical and empirical advances. But our contribution in this book is to develop an *integrative position* on the fear of crime that is (a) supported by a wealth of high-quality quantitative and qualitative data, that (b) takes seriously what we consider to be the best from the interpretive and qualitative turn in fear of crime research (the recent focus on the social and cultural significance of crime), and that (c) provides a much-needed empirical focus on

the everyday experience and significance of worry and anxiety about crime.

The Broader Context of Our Study

The empirical work we present in this book contributes to three ongoing criminological debates:

1. The nature of the fear of crime;
2. The prominent position of crime and security in contemporary times; and
3. The tension between government administration of justice and competing public perceptions and demands (the 'punitive turn' and 'penal populism').

We take each in turn.

The Nature of the Fear of Crime

'Fear of crime' is a slippery and contested concept, with doubts remaining over what the 'fear of crime' means as an everyday experience and as a social phenomenon. Beginning with DuBow et al.'s (1979) less than glowing assessment of the clarity and consistency of survey measurement tools, readers of the criminological literature will have regularly encountered commentary from respected scholars on the importance, and slowness, of progress in this regard. Some have even suggested that fear might be as much a methodological artefact as an empirical reality (Ferraro and LeGrange, 1987; Lee, 1999, 2001; Farrall et al., 1997; Farrall and Gadd, 2004). Not only is it unclear which factors drive public perceptions of risk; it is also unclear what is actually being measured. While few argue that public anxieties about crime are not real, and are not therefore a problem, we are left with rather blunt methodological and conceptual tools.

In particular we lack data on the psychological significance of the fear of crime. Survey respondents are typically asked whether they are 'very', 'fairly', 'not very', or 'not at all' worried (or afraid) about becoming a crime victim. Survey respondents are not asked *how often* they worry, nor *when* they worry, nor *what effects* these worries have on their everyday lives. As a consequence, instead of data on the patterning and ecology of events of fear, we are left with only vague 'global' summaries of intensity of worry

or feelings of unsafety.[1] So when people say they are 'very worried' about falling victim, should we assume that fear of crime is a constant presence?

A few criminologists have been attuned to the issue of what survey questions about the fear of crime are actually measuring. Warr (2000) suggests that standard summaries represent future-orientated anxiety rather than any summary of past episodes or current feelings of physical fear (see also Sacco, 2005). Jackson (2006) proposes that these questions access individuals' mental image of the risk of victimization; and having a personalized, structured, and emotionally tinged image of risk might be independent of whether they ever actually find themselves in threatening situations. It may be, therefore, that fear of crime is not always reducible to concrete experiences of threat. This is not to say that people do not find themselves in threatening situations and do not worry for their personal safety (as we shall see in Chapter 3). Rather, it is to say that standard measures of fear of crime do not accurately assess these situated and concrete moments; they instead often collate some emotionally-tinged attitude towards risk.

In this book we shed further light on what fear of crime means as an everyday experience and what fear of crime expresses as a social attitude. We discuss some key methodological issues in defining and accessing public feelings about crime. We consider the survey questions commonly used to measure the fear of crime and catalogue broader lessons from the literature on the psychology of survey response. And we explore the various contributions that one might be able to draw upon from qualitative work and methods, notions of public and private accounts (cf. Douglas, 1971), and cross-disciplinary work on everyday emotions.

[1] In a general discussion of 'emotional self-report', Robinson and Clore (2002a, 2002b) argue that research into emotion rarely accesses *experiential knowledge* (the specific details surrounding an emotional arousal). The idea is straightforward. Respondents are rarely, after all, feeling the particular emotion they are being asked to report on at the time of the research interview. Research typically evokes generalized beliefs about emotion, and importantly for an understanding of the fear of crime, these beliefs may not neatly map onto experience. Different processes may be involved that invoke different forms of knowledge and involve different strategies of knowledge retrieval.

The Prominent Position of Crime and Security in Contemporary Times

In the UK—as in the US, and many other so-called 'high-crime' societies—the past few decades have seen crime move to centre stage as a social and political issue. Loader (2008: 399) describes the 'rise of crime as a central organizing principle of political authority and social relations'.

Inter alia we have experienced a consumer boom that has produced more to steal, a reduction in situational controls, an increase in young males with time, freedom, and sub-cultures growing around them, and a reduction in the informal social controls that help shape behaviour and discourage rule-breaking (Garland, 2001: 90–99). Accompanying these social and economic changes, we have seen increasing levels of public anxieties about crime, heightened punitive political rhetoric and action relating to both crime and fear of crime, a greater prominence given to the victim in criminal justice policy, greater force given to public opinion in the policy-making process[2], more emphasis given to security and the management of risk, and an expansion of crime prevention and commercialization of crime control through private security.

According to Garland (2001: 148) the 'liberal elites, the educated middle classes and public sector professionals' had little firsthand experience of crime in the 1950s and 1960s:

> They occupied low-crime parts of the city and the suburbs. Their children attended schools that were well disciplined and largely free of crime, drugs, and violence. Their daily routines did not often expose them to the threat of crime, nor did fear of crime occupy a prominent place in their consciousness... The professional middle classes were, moreover, an economically prosperous social group, enjoying the security and status afforded by educational certification and professional credentials in the increasingly professional society of the post-war decades. From this vantage point the group was able to adopt a civilized attitude towards crime and criminals. They viewed crime as a social problem linked to, and explicable by, poor social conditions, and susceptible to the professional, expert, social engineering solutions in which they, as a group, now specialized. For this

[2] As Garland (2001: 13) remarks: 'The policy-making process has become profoundly *politicized* and *populist*. Policy measures are constructed in ways that appear to value political advantage and public opinion over the views of experts and the evidence of research'. Emphasis in original.

group to adopt a correctionalist, non-punitive attitude was, at once, to disdain the vulgarities of the under-educated, to express compassion for the poor masses, and to further their own professional interests. (pp. 149–50).

A shift was seen in the 1970s and 1980s, however, as the middle class experience of crime was transformed. Crime moved from a problem that afflicted the poor to a daily consideration for many, denting liberal sensibilities about the seriousness of crime. Increasing direct and indirect experience, a mass media raising the salience of crime and 'institutionalising' public concern, and the growing visibility of signs of crime—in the form of physical incivilities, such as vandalism, and social incivilities, such as groups of intimidating youths hanging around in the street—all helped to bring crime and the risk of victimization into people's everyday lives. Events such as the urban riots of the early 1980s in Brixton and Toxteth (alongside media reports and commentary) transformed crime into a major issue, linked it to questions of race and class, and fixed it as a target for more diffuse anxieties about social change. Images of the excluded and disaffected young males of the inner city became resonant as the perception grew of them 'as a newly dangerous, alien class' (2001: 154).

The mass media—in the form of newspapers, television, radio, and more recently the internet—have played a key role in heightening the social significance of crime. Newspapers and other mass media outlets seemingly delight in highlighting increasing crime levels and ignoring decreasing crime levels. But perhaps it is the regular dramatization of the most sensational and shocking criminal events that has the strongest effect on public perceptions and anxieties about crime. 'Fear-inducing accounts' of events—such as the incident in 2002 in Virginia when two snipers killed ten people—are highly publicized. The media dwell on those acts that are especially serious in their consequence, that are morally reprehensible in their character, that are difficult to fathom and explain. Sunstein (2005) has suggested that media representations of risk can lead to 'cascade' effects throughout society as the event becomes 'cognitively available' to an increasing number of people. Especially heinous crimes are more likely to be reported and picked up by members of society, and 'group polarization' processes then lead to people discussing with each other certain events

and risks, typically ending up with many individuals holding a rather extreme view of the crime problem and the risk of crime.[3]

As Garland argues, the growing visibility of symbols of crime and neighbourhood disorder may also be important in explaining the prominent position of crime and security in cultural and political life. Much criminological research has demonstrated that fear of crime is as much a response to day-to-day encounters with 'symbols associated with crime' as it is about media messages and specific beliefs about crime (Hale, 1996). Perceptions of the likelihood of victimization are thus shaped by these individual evaluations of the social and physical environment, including judgements about (a) social cohesion, trust, and informal social control, (b) incivilities or 'broken windows,' and (c) the values, norms, and morals of the people who make up the community. Feelings of control may therefore extend beyond control of concrete risks (i.e. explicit events of victimization) to control over the social and physical environment: a diffuse sense of unease and lack of control within an unpredictable and disorderly environment. Indeed, Furedi (2006: 5) argues that:

> The fear of crime is a distinctive feature of a society where the influence of informal relations and taken-for-granted norms has diminished in influence. It is anxieties about the uncertainties of day-to-day existence that people echo in discussions about the subject of crime. Insecurity towards expected forms of behaviour and suspicion about the motives of others provide a fertile terrain where perceptions of threats can flourish. These perceptions are intensified in circumstances where social isolation has become pervasive.

[3] Existing predispositions may determine, in large part, to what individuals give their attention. Individuals hold attitudes towards risk which reflect and strengthen their values, commitment to particular ways of life, and preferred visions of society (see, for example, Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982). Crime threatens social cohesion and moral consensus, and quickly gets linked to individuals and behaviours that are seen to be hostile to social order. People may attend to information about crime risk from the mass media and interpersonal communication because crime speaks to and dramatizes their concerns about social cohesion, relations, and change (Jackson, 2008). Crime may get into such a symbolic tangle with issues of cohesion because the act of crime communicates hostility to the social order of a community and damages its moral fabric. The prevalence of exaggerated levels of crime may thus signal that a community could be suffering from deteriorating standards of behaviour, the diminishing influence of informal social controls, increasing diversification of norms and values, and decreasing levels of trust, reciprocity, and respect.

Crime may also act as a handy receptacle for expressing and distilling broader social anxieties about social change (Bauman, 1999; Taylor and Jamieson, 1998; Girling et al., 2000). Scholars such as Zygmunt Bauman and John Pratt have argued that at a time of rapid social change, of decreasing certainty, of increasing diversity and liberalization, and of decreasing deference to authority, crime becomes a handy receptacle for the broader social anxieties that such broader rapid change engenders. In other words, crime becomes entangled with broader issues of stability and breakdown and the sense that governments have lost the ability to 'steer the ship to safe waters'. Equally, we are increasingly seeing the world through the lens of crime and deviance. Think of Lee's feedback loop (2001) in which fear of crime and government responses to fear of crime only heighten the salience of crime, leading to ever more temptation to pursue punitive criminal justice policies (see pages 30–40 in Chapter 2). Loader and Walker (2007) have drawn our attention to how 'security' has leaked into areas of social life not immediately related to crime. For example, reassurance policing and political rhetoric on anti-social behaviour (ASB) encourages people to view certain social conditions through the lens of crime, policing, and security. However, and as colleagues such as Lucia Zedner (2003) have been quick to point out, security demands are never ending; the more provision is made for security (via 'peep-holes' in front doors, burglar and car alarms, and the such like) the more (a) we are reminded of our (pre-supposed) vulnerability and (b) made to feel that somehow we are entering the lion's den naked when such provisions are unavailable to us. (See also Loader, 2008: 401–2.)

Further afield from these criminological foci—and on which we can do little more than speculate for the present (see Chapter 8 also)—a body of work has started to chart the rise of affluence and the attendant rise of various social problems. That the UK, Europe, and many other parts of the world (both industrialized and developing) have undergone a period of sustained economic changes in the past 40–50 years ought not to be news to anyone. However, there has been a recognition that the (until recently) increasing levels of affluence experienced by many in Europe, North America, and elsewhere may not be making people happier—in fact such developments may be making people less happy and more insecure. Amongst the authors who have articulated the view that increasing affluence may be bad for societies are Avner Offer (2006), Robert

H. Frank (2007), and Oliver James (2007). Offer's arguments are representative of this position: affluence is driven by novelty (2006: vii), whilst abundance causes harm in a number of ways (producing obesity, mental ill-health, violence, economic fraud, and insecurity, 2006: 2). How might such approaches assist us in understanding anxieties about crime?

It was Zolotas (1981: 1) who, along similar lines, claimed that: 'When an industrial society reaches an advanced state of affluence, the rate of increase in social welfare drops below the rate of economic growth, and tends ultimately to become negative.' Put another way, as a society's wealth increases, so increases in welfare ultimately suffer. In short, increases in affluence result in decreases in social welfare, so rises in levels of income past a certain point provide no increases in well-being. Why ought this to be the case? One possible answer is that as income increases, individuals adjust to it and raise their standards—remaining on a 'hedonistic treadmill'. Another possible answer—which resonates with our own concerns—is the thesis put forward by Inglehart: that as a result of their experience of post-war economic security, cohorts of Europeans and North Americans have shifted the preferences from economic to non-economic rewards. As such, economic security encourages us into wanting non-economic goals—including non-economic security. If one measures affluence in terms of the average income per head, then, the US has led the UK by one generation (Offer, 2006: 7). Starting from the end of the 1960s, we witnessed a shift in attitudes away from seeing common welfare and public service as the chief form of well-being towards the view that private benefits were the key sources of well-being (Offer, 2006: 7–8).

Thus, at around this same time there was a shift in the forms of security which people sought (since their immediate economic needs had been met). At around this same time, as others have documented (Loo, 2009), rightwing politicians started to refer to the 'problem of crime'. These sentiments resonated with members of the middle class, who as Frank (2007) noted often felt as if they had lost most during the period of rising affluence. This is also the same approximate point at which we see the widespread recognition (or 'invention' and 'production' for some, see Lee, 2007; Loo, 2009) of the fear of crime in the US and then the UK. Thus, first in the US and then the UK, economic growth led to rising prosperity, which, from around the late 1960s, started to produce not

only diminishing rewards, but also increases in levels of anxiety (Offer, 2006: 282).

In this way, the introduction of the fear of crime as an object of enquiry in the late 1960s in the US and the late 1970s in the UK may not simply be because of rising crime rates, but also because of background economic factors and the implications which these had for value systems in industrialized nations. Rising levels of affluence, to which people became habituated and which were then challenged by the oil crisis in the early 1970s, produced increased levels of anxiety. Added to this, according to some authors, was a desire to shift political debates from the socially progressive, welfare-minded concensus which had characterized the post-war period, towards an agenda which would more closely favour neo-conservative policy concerns (Loo, 2009). In this analysis, the rise of the fear of crime was the result of a 'perfect storm': rising affluence, shifts in values as a result of this, an economic crisis in the case of the UK, and an attempt to shift the agenda by the political rightwing in the US and the UK. Although the nature of the data which we have to hand does not easily lend itself to a direct empirical analysis of some of these propositions, we return to these matters in the closing sections of this book, in order to reflect on them.

The Tension between Government Administration of Justice and Competing Public Perceptions and Demands (The 'Punitive Turn' and 'Penal Populism')

To guide democratic societies and ensure order and prosperity, governments must manage natural and human-made hazards. To regulate crime, environmental catastrophe, economic collapse, and other future prospects and uncertain events, governments need rational and technical forms of information and reasoning. Because governments have limited resources, they must give priority to certain issues and decide on appropriate courses of action, ideally according to dispassionate and systematic assessments of likelihood and consequence. But of course not all future events can be known or foreseen. Not all risks can be eliminated entirely.

As both Garland (2001) and Loader (2006b) have argued, prior to (roughly) the mid-1980s it was the liberal elites who took on the role of 'looking after' criminal justice policy. Criminal justice

system policy during this era was made through a dispassionate and rational assessment of 'what worked', about the role of rehabilitation, about the allocation of police resources through the targeting of volume crime and especially serious victimization types. However—and as we shall see in Chapter 2—this started to unravel during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s: the public started to make (and importantly voice) assessments of risk that differed to those produced by rational and technical judgements.

Study after study has shown that the public are more concerned about (media fed?) evocative risks that chime with broader themes of social significance and outrage. Crime, of course, is just one of these. And it is no surprise that citizens fear sensational but rare crimes. When processing information about risk, people often rely upon cognitive heuristics and qualitative judgements rather than engage in more careful, actuarial, numeric assessments of probability and consequence. Such reliance on qualitative judgements—on the emotional valence of a danger, the availability and vividness of relevant imagery, and assessments of control, familiarity, and impact—helps explain why people often *do* worry about some risks which perhaps, if they were all actuaries, they would not (because the objective risk is actually very low but images of the hazard are readily available, evocative, and vivid) and *do not* worry about other risks which they should (because the objective risk is high but the hazard is seen as routine and mundane (for example, car journeys within short distances from one's home).

Such worries, as they relate to crime and disorder, lead to the public clamouring for 'more police on the streets', more 'to be done about knife crime amongst teenagers', 'longer sentences' to be given to murderers and criminals who commit other heinous acts, and the outraged claim that 'life ought to mean life'. In these ways, 'fearfulness' often leads to (or at very least, is temporally associated with) demands for increases in 'punitiveness'. More dispassionate assessments—by policy makers and criminologists alike—often suggest a misplaced and heightened set of public expectations about the levels of control possible that can be a frustrating source of pressure on policy making.

We have thus witnessed the movement from dispassionate, civil servant-led policy (aimed at tackling the problem of crime 'quietly') to 'hot' populist policy, often driven by politicians.

Public anxieties about crime, sensationalist media reportage, and political responses have coalesced around an increasingly illiberal dynamic whereby it would appear that the public have lost trust in their governments' abilities to control crime, punish law-breakers, and ensure safety. Such sentiments, often described as 'penal populism', chime with broader social anxieties about 'moral decay' and the direction and pace of other social changes, and, it would also appear, provide the kindling for demands for punitive actions from the State. As we have attempted to document elsewhere (see Farrall and Lee, 2009: 3–6) the media represent these issues back to the population; governments pander and enter into 'Law and Order arms races', market organizations exploit any potentials for extracting profit, the police are mandated to act in all sorts of new and 're-assuring' ways and so on. Politicians and governments want (and indeed need for reasons of political legitimacy) to create the sense that they have control, that they understand public concerns about crime, that they agree that norms, values, and controls need to be defended, and that the State can after all 'steer the ship'. Hence eye-catching populist schemes and sound bites extolling 'get tough' messages such as 'zero tolerance', 'three strikes and you're out', and 'tough on crime; tough on the causes of crime'.

Governments face numerous dilemmas. One of the trickiest to handle comes when the public raise concerns about certain issues that seemingly outweigh the reality of the problem. Measured and dispassionate crime policy and the debates which surround them produce balanced laws, punishments, and policing. Resources are put into areas with high levels of crime; the police engage in strategies that are known to be efficacious; efforts to rehabilitate offenders supported. But when the public intrude, when there is a clamouring for different sorts and styles of punishment, when the media 'talk up' certain issues, then there is pressure to change policy, to bend the criminal justice system further towards the (supposed) 'needs' of the public. This can be as frustrating for policy makers who believe that the public are overly anxious about crime as it is for academic researchers and less-strident politicians. There arises a situation wherein the public start to distrust their government, whilst, at the same time, some engaged in the work of the government view the public as placing undue pressure on policy-making processes, calling for overly punitive policies simply on the basis of their own misunderstanding and lack of knowledge.

Our contribution to this debate is to encourage policy-makers and police officers (and politicians too, perhaps) to 'stand back' from all this seemingly unending 'demand' for 'safety', 'policing', and other forms of activity aimed at addressing 'all this fear', and to consider what these demands are *really* about. In many cases such demands will refer to problems which need to be tackled, but not in all. And it may be that those who shout loudest have least to shout about (Hope et al., 2001). The resulting problem, of course, then becomes the problems associated with leaving out the voice from one constituency, namely, the loss of legitimacy (see Walklate 2002 for an example of this). Our contribution calls for a less hot-headed and more reasonable debate and set of arguments about crime—perhaps one that is rather difficult to have (Loader, 2006b).

Our Overall Contribution

So—one may reasonably ask—what is our broad and over-arching contribution? What are we saying to policy makers? To politicians? To our fellow academics? In the UK the 'perception gap' or 'reassurance gap' has referred to the refusal of the public to believe that crime has been falling for some time. This distance between 'fear' and 'crime' continues to frustrate, since 'fear' is widely believed to be damaging and irrational. But is worry about crime always damaging? Does not worrying about crime indicate another aspect of the post-welfare state settlement: responsibilization? 'Functional fear' as some have termed it (Jackson and Gray, 2009) may merely be getting on with the job of looking after oneself and one's own. And—as others before us (e.g. Sparks, 1992) have asked—irrational compared to what? The actual incidence of crime? Well, people may not think like that.

How ought governments to respond? Ignore uneducated assessments of risk (and the seemingly punitive demands they bring forth)? Treat the fear of crime as a hyped and stereotypical set of beliefs about crime (intolerance towards young people, media-fuelled beliefs in crime out of control) that must be calmed down, treating it as a problem separate to crime and tackling it through reassurance and education? Wrap up fear and crime in one package and elevate crime and punitive responses? Treat fear of crime as part of a broader battle of cultural cognition?

To a large extent, what governments, academics, policy makers, and pollsters should do depends on the nature of the fear of crime—the topic of this book. Debate in political, social, and academic arenas continues to ebb and flow on the issue of the (ir)rationality and (un)realism of public beliefs about crime. Much of this debate has been unproductive (Sparks, 1992). But the pragmatics and constraints of policy-making mean that the issue rarely seems to go away. Our contribution is the argument that to compare 'fear' to the actual extent of crime is to miss the point (this is by no means an original claim, we concede: see Sparks, 1992). This is especially so since the fear of crime is based not on public assessments of some abstracted crime problem but rather on public assessments of neighbourhood conditions, broader societal change, and circulating representations of criminals and groups in society.

Moreover, there is (we submit) a moral, social value and normative component to the fear of crime. By associating certain individuals, groups, and social conditions with crime, people may be articulating their sense that these run counter to their idea of a stable and cohesive society. Fear of crime may thus be an important attitudinal social indicator reflecting concerns about the erosion of traditional sources of authority, anxieties about the cohesion and stability of communities, a desire for stronger groups that cooperatively pursue common goals, and concerns about the deterioration in the everyday civil interaction between strangers. But the fear of crime is not only this; it is also a sense of immediate threat to one's security—or to the security of things one holds dear. We misunderstand the fear of crime if we approach it as simply about either crime or a way of making sense of social change. Therefore 'what' one 'does' about 'the fear of crime' depends very much on which element of this phenomenon one wishes to 'tackle'. Hence our exploration of the fear of crime along the lines hinted at above (and outlined in greater depth in subsequent chapters); that is as both a set of discrete, episodic experiences, and as being expressive of another set of feelings and sentiments.

A Quick Summary of the Structure of the Book

It might be worth us devoting at this juncture a few words to the organization of the rest of the book. There are three parts to our

contribution. The rest of Part I is very much an organizing and marshalling of the key tenets of our core arguments. Chapter 2 outlines the emergence of the fear of crime as a piece of political rhetoric and as an object of criminological interest. Chapter 3 presents arguments—supported by empirical data—which underpin a number of our later claims. These revolve around the design and interpretation of survey questions, the frequency with which basic human emotions (such as fear) are encountered, and the nature of the fear of crime when it comes-a-visiting. Chapter 4 reorganizes a number of the theoretical stances which have been adopted to account for the fear of crime into one theoretical model. By the end of Part I we will have outlined the wider background to debates surrounding the fear of crime, described 'where', 'why', and 'when' it emerged, what the fear of crime is and how best to make sense of it.

Part II commences upon the 'real work' and in so doing we draw upon data from a number of sources, both qualitative and quantitative. Chapter 5 explores the theoretical model we outlined in Chapter 4 using qualitative data. Chapter 6 starts our quantitative investigation of our new approach to the fear of crime—modelling as it does types and intensities of fear. Chapter 7 explores portions of this same data, this time more closely relating it to the theoretical model we developed in Chapter 4 and explored initially in Chapter 5.

Part III contains just one chapter. Chapter 8 recaps what we have learnt from our investigations into the fear of crime. The discussion touches on a number of issues, including economic change, rising affluence, and the notion of 'winners' and 'losers' during periods of socio-economic change, and—of course—the role of these factors in the (re)production of anxiety. We also explore a number of pressing issues, including the frequency with which the fear of crime is encountered within the lives of citizens in industrialized nations such as the US, Canada, Australia, and those in the EU, and what governments can 'do' to address popular anxieties about crime.