

Immigrants as Victims of Crime and Criminal Discourse in Australia.

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ABSTRACT

Issues related to immigrants as criminals or victims of crime resonate strongly in Australia because it has a relatively larger and more diverse immigrant population than most western countries. Focussing on Sydney, the aim of this article is to explore a number of aspects of immigrant victimology in Australia: immigrant as *victims of crime*; as *victims of the fear of crime*; as *victims of racial abuse and violence* in the aftermath of the 11th of September, 2001; and as *victims of media discourses* about 'ethnic crime'. To do this the article draws on national and international research into immigrant crime and immigrant victimology and on two sources of primary data: a Sydney survey of 825 youth and adults (eighty per cent of whom were immigrant minorities) and data from a Hotline established in Sydney in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. The paper provides

evidence of each dimension of immigrant victimology and concludes that there has been a disproportionate focus on, and fear of, immigrant or 'ethnic' crime in the Sydney media. This discourse of immigrant criminality, exacerbated post 9/11, appears to leave little space for a more sympathetic discourse about immigrant victims of crime and the resulting construction of immigrant cultures of criminality leads to policy responses that ignore issues such as inequality, unemployment, education and neighbourhood renewal.

1. Introduction

Concern about crime and fear of crime appear to be one of the characteristics of the age, not just in Australia but also in all western societies. Reviewing the crime issue in the UK and USA, Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 25) state that: "Crime and fear of crime are major issues in British and American Societies that help mould our cities and influence the qualities of life in both nations." Crime and fear of crime have increasingly been linked to immigration and immigrants. In recent years in Australia and Europe the immigrant crime issue has captured media headlines and shaped political discourses and electoral outcomes in an unprecedented way (Collins et al. 2000; Collins 2003). Post the 11th of September 2001 attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, the 12th of October 2002 Bali bombing and the 7th July 2005 bombings on London's public transport system, concern about immigrants as terrorists, the extreme form of crime, has cemented the image of immigrants as perpetrators of crime in public and private discourses. This has reduced the space for discourses about immigrants as victims of crime at the very moment that many immigrants, particularly those from the Middle East and those of Islamic faith have increasingly been victimised following these

events. But as Bowling and Phillips (2002: 76) observe, even before these events there had been relatively little attention given to immigrants as victims of crime: “Until recently, the ‘race and crime’ debate has been preoccupied...by the question of whether people from ethnic minorities are more (or less) likely to commit criminal offences than those of the white majority population...[but] has largely been detached from discussions about ethnic differences in the extent and nature of victimisation and how patterns of offending and victimisation interrelate.”

Issues related to immigrants as criminals or victims of crime resonate strongly in Australia because it has a relatively larger and more diverse immigrant population – some 23 per cent of the population – than most western countries (OECD 1998: 31). It is not surprising that the immigrant crime debate has been centred on Sydney, Australia’s largest city, which takes about 40 per cent of Australia’s annual immigration intake. Indeed, according to a recent report (State Chamber of Commerce (New South Wales) 2005: 9), Sydney has the seventh highest proportion of foreign-born of any city in the world today. Data from the 2001 national census revealed that first-generation immigrants accounted for nearly 30 per cent of Sydney’s population of four million while another 28 per cent of the population was second-generation immigrants (Burnley 2001). After those born in the UK, Sydney’s largest immigrant groups are those born in China, New Zealand, Vietnam, Lebanon, Italy, Hong Kong, India, Greece, Korea, Fiji and South Africa, though it is important to stress the diversity of the Sydney immigrant population, with some 180 national birthplace groups, so that Sydney truly is the world in one city (Collins and Castillo 1998). Significantly, Sydney is also the main centre of Middle

Eastern immigration, with seven out of every ten (107,405 or 72.2%) of Australia's Lebanese immigrants settling in Sydney (Collins 2005: 190-92). Sydney is thus a good site to explore contemporary issues of immigrant criminality and immigrant victimology in Australia.

The aim of this article is to explore a number of aspects of immigrants as victims of crime in Australia with a focus on Sydney. One is the evidence related to *immigrant as victims of crime* per se. Another is the experience of *immigrants as victims of the fear of crime*. This is important because fear of crime among individuals often leads them to change their behaviour and develop anxieties about daily life so that they, too, become victims of criminal discourse, particularly when that discourse constructs a fear of crime that is disproportionate to the actual incidence of crime. Another aspect explored here is *the geography of victimology*: where precisely is it in the city of Sydney that immigrants fear most for their safety from criminal acts and to what extent are areas in the city that are concentrations of settlement of immigrant settlement constructed as places to be fearful of crime? This article also explores the experience of *immigrants as victims of racial abuse and violence* in the aftermath of the 11th of September, 2001, a form of race hatred or race crime. Finally this article investigates the extent to which *immigrants are victims of media discourses* about 'ethnic crime' that have shaped much of the public attitude to crime and has helped to affix specific immigrant identities – particularly Middle Eastern and Arabic – to the face of crime in Sydney.

To explore these dimensions the article draws on primary and secondary data to flesh out the ways that an immigrant background shapes the victim experience in Sydney. The first set of primary data comes from a survey of 840 adults and youth in Sydney about their perceptions of and experiences of crime, criminal gangs, fear of crime and police victimization (Collins et al. 2002). Since 80 per cent of those surveyed were immigrant youth or adults, the survey provides a valuable insight into the complex dynamics of immigrant victimization in Sydney, including the spatial dimensions of the (feared or actual) victim experience. The second primary data source comes from a Hotline established by the Community Relations Commission (CRC) of NSW immediately following the 11th of September attack (UTS Shopfront 2005). This data permits an interrogation of a different aspect of immigrant victimology, that is, the experience of those immigrants, particularly though not only of Arabs and Muslims, who were the victims of the escalation of violence and anger that followed the shock of the twin towers' attack. The article also draws on secondary national and international sources on immigrant crime and immigrant victimology - including a recent survey of crime victimization in Australia (Johnson 2005) – and on media discourses of immigrant criminality, an aspect of victimology resonating loudly after the July bombings in London in 2005.

The structure of this article is as follows. Section 2 provides a brief introduction to the data on and debates about immigrants as criminals and victims of crime in Australia. Section 3 interrogates data from the Sydney survey in order to flesh out different elements of the immigrants as victims of crime. Section 4 then looks at the CRC Hotline

data in order to sketch key features of the victims in Sydney of the anger in the aftermath of the American attack and Bali bombings. Section 5 reviews media discourses of immigrant criminality while Section 6 briefly draws out the implications of the Sydney experience for our understanding of the dynamics of immigrant victimology.

2. Immigrant Crime and Victimology in Australia

The supposed links between immigrant minorities and criminal behaviour is a recurring theme in Australian immigration history (Francis 1981). This had led to periodic research and inquiry into immigrant crime in the post-1945 decades (Mukherjee 1999). The issue has also periodically attracted media attention and public debate. The 1950s and 1960s were dominated by immigration of Greeks and Italians, and these groups were soon linked to crime in Australia. The 1970s also saw the ‘Greek conspiracy case’ over alleged Medibank fraud by Greek doctors. The accused were later exonerated, with the police involved found to have used inappropriate investigative methods in the case (Kondos 1992). The now defunct weekly, *The National Times*, reported in 1978 on the drug trade involving Calabrian Italians, as well as Lebanese, Chinese and Turkish drug traffickers. The emergence of Asian immigrants in large numbers in the mid-1970s – for the first time in nearly 100 years, following the abandonment of the ‘White Australia Policy’ – was accompanied by a fear of Asian crime, particularly associated with the Triads. Media representations of immigrant minorities produce and reproduce stereotypes of violent and criminal communities (Goodall et al. 1994) and the suburbs in which they concentrate are depicted as dangerous and unsafe places (Dreher 2000; Castillo and Hurst 2000).

The issue of immigrant crime has risen to new heights in recent years in Sydney since the fatal stabbing of 14-year-old Korean-born Edward Lee in Punchbowl in October 1998 and, two weeks later, a drive-by shoot up of the Lakemba police station. The recently retired NSW Premier, Bob Carr, and the NSW Police Commissioner, Peter Ryan, immediately identified Lebanese gangs with both crimes in media reports. Since then, the terms 'ethnic gangs', 'ethnic youth gangs', 'Middle Eastern gangs', 'Lebanese gangs' and 'immigrant gangs' have recurred with amazing frequency in Sydney media headlines (Ethnic Communities Council of NSW 1999; Collins et al. 2000; Poynting et al. 2004). Since then a number of global and local events have kept the issue of immigrant crime at the top of the Sydney media hit-parade. These global events include the Twin Towers' hits in 2001, the Bali bombing in October 2002, the occupation of Iraq and the July London bombings this year. The local events include a notorious race-rape case and a number of other criminal events in Sydney (Poynting et al. 2004), a federal election won on anti-refugee politics (Marr and Wilkinson 2003) and a national government that prided itself as being the strongest supporter of the USA in global politics. In this environment, 'Middle Eastern' and 'Arabic' are immigrant identities in Sydney that are increasingly criminalized in recent media and popular discourse. During this period, immigrant minorities have been constructed as criminal with their (inferior/dysfunctional) ethnicity or culture at the same time explaining why they are criminal and why immigrant crime is something to be feared more than other crime (Lupton 1991).

Despite the controversy that surrounds the issue of ethnic or immigrant crime in Australia and elsewhere, there has been surprisingly little solid research on the subject. There are

three main ways that criminologists construct a picture of the extent of crime in a society: arrest or imprisonment statistics; victim reports of crime; and self-reports of offences (McCord et al. 2001: 26). The only reliable set of published Australian data on immigrant criminality is based on imprisonment rates by birthplace. This data does show that immigrants of certain birthplace groups – Lebanese (1.6 per 1,000 of population), Vietnamese (2.7) and New Zealanders (1.6) - are over-represented in the criminal justice system while other groups of immigrants – those born in Italy (0.6), Greece (0.5) and the UK and Eire - (0.6) are under-represented when compared to the Australian born (=1) (Mukherjee 1999: 8).

But this data is very inadequate if the intention is to form a rigorous judgment on the criminality of immigrants in Australia. First, as Mukherjee (1999: 4) points out, only one in ten crimes is solved. This is challenged by Australian data for the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey which found much higher rates of reportage of crime to police: from 94 per cent of motor vehicle thefts to 37 per cent of assaults and threats (Johnson 2005: xii). Nevertheless it can be concluded that imprisonment data refers only to the tip of the crime iceberg. Second, birthplace does not equate with ethnicity: a person born in Malaysia, for example, might be of Chinese, Indian or Malaysian background. Third, police discretion mediates between criminal acts that come to police notice and the extent to which these acts and their perpetrators are taken further into the criminal justice system. A suspect's ethnicity does make a difference (Keith and Murji 1993). As Bowling and Phillips (2002: 243) argue for the UK: “[B]y the end of the criminal justice process there is an undeniable disproportionate number of people from

ethnic minorities who had been stopped ‘under suspicion’ by police, arrested and imprisoned.” This provides space for police and/or community racism to influence arrest and imprisonment rates in countries such as Australia (Chan 1994, 1997), Canada (Henry and Bjornson 1999; Wortley 2001) and the United Kingdom (Holdaway 1996; Phillips and Brown 1998). Hence the arrest data itself is flawed, not only because for some crime no arrests are made and for others several people may be arrested who may or may not have committed the crime, but also because “[a]rrests also depend on a number of factors other than overall crime levels, including the policies of particular police agencies; the co-operation of [the] victim; the skill of the perpetrator; and the age, sex, race, and social class of the suspect” (McCord et al. 2001: 27).

Nevertheless, it is clear that in a multicultural society such as Australia and in cosmopolitan cities such as Sydney criminals will come from all birthplace and ethnic backgrounds. What is not clear is whether certain immigrant groups are more criminal than others and, if so, what are the reasons for this. When immigrant minorities do have higher rates of incarceration than non-immigrants it is also possible that it is the relative socio-economic disadvantage of immigrant minorities compared to the majority white population - as occurs in Australia (Collins 2000) and other countries such as the UK (Solomos 1993; Skellington 1996) and Canada (Henry et al. 2000; Satzewich ed. 1998) - rather than the supposed dysfunctional ethnic or cultural traits of immigrants, that is the explanation. This is more than an academic debate: it impacts on the policy responses to crime. One explanation leads to a mobilization to stop or reduce the immigration of minorities, the other to policies to reduce the socio-economic

disadvantage of immigrant minorities. This latter point is conveniently ignored in much media discourse on immigrant criminality in Sydney (Henry and Bjornson 1999; Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales 2003), an issue explored in more detail later in this article.

The other side of the coin of crime is the people who are victims of this criminal behaviour. There is extensive data on victims of crime in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002: 31-9). Data of recorded crime statistics suggests that over one million people - or 5 per cent of the population - are victims of crime each year. This varies according to the type of crime: highest for crime against property (6 in every 100 persons) but much lower for crimes against the person (one in every 100 persons) (Grant et al. 2002: 282). Whilst the discourse on crime often paints immigrants as the perpetrators and villains, it should be remembered that many immigrants are themselves the victims of crime. Research in the United Kingdom suggests that ethnic minorities generally have a greater risk of criminal victimisation (Bowling and Phillips 2002: 89).

However the Australian data does not generally distinguish between immigrants and non-immigrants. One recent exception is the Australian data for the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey (Johnson 2005). Compiled from a random sample of 7000 adults (16 years and older), 25 per cent of those surveyed were born overseas, a rate comparable to the proportion of first-generation immigrants in the Australian population. The majority (40%) of immigrants surveyed were born in Southeast Asia while just under one in four (24%) were born in the Middle East (Johnson 2005: 4). The survey does not

support the UK research that suggests that immigrant minorities are more likely to be victims of crime. The survey found that when considering the risk of personal victimisation in general, speaking a language other than English at home was not significant when other variables were controlled, while the risk of being a victim of assault or threat was highest among those who speak only English at home (Johnson 2005: 18). The survey did find, however, that when looking at fear of crime, “those who speak a language other than English at home report higher levels of fear” (Johnson 2005: 34). The sampling methodology employed in the survey constrains this survey’s ability to assess victimisation of Middle Eastern immigrants in particular. Rather than using random direct dialling to survey immigrants – as was used for non-immigrants – the survey employed a surname-based approach “of known Vietnamese or Middle Eastern surnames from the White Pages of the telephone book” (Johnson 2005: 58). Telephone calls led to appointments for interviews that were conducted in seven languages other than English. One problem with this was that “about half of Arabic sounding surnames were actually Pakistani, Indian or another nationality” leading to a response rate for the Middle East sample of only 36 per cent (Johnson 2005: 58). Moreover, the survey did not specifically investigate victims of race crime or hate crime, a category where immigrant minorities are generally the target.

3. Immigrant Experiences and Perceptions of crime: The Sydney Survey

This section reports the findings of a survey of 825 people (380 were adults and 445 were youth) who mainly lived in the south western suburbs of Sydney, the site of settlement of most of Sydney’s immigrant minorities, that was conducted in 2001 and finalized before

September 11 2001 (Collins et al. 2002). The survey – hereafter called the *Sydney survey* - was designed to obtain 80 per cent of respondents from a non-English speaking background (NESB), about half adults and half youth, half male and half female. Adults from 21 different birthplace groups were surveyed, the largest of these being adults born in Lebanon (45) and Vietnam (41), with the justification that these two birthplace groups have been most associated with crime in recent public discourses in Sydney (Collins et al. 2000). Other birthplace groups of adults with large numbers were: Greece (25), Macedonia (23), Egypt (21) and China (20). In addition 445 youth from 24 different birthplace groups were surveyed. The largest group (241) was born in Australia – mostly second-generation immigrants – while the biggest samples of the first-generation youth surveyed were those born in Vietnam (29), New Zealand (28), Lebanon (19) and Macedonia (13). A control sample of about 20 per cent of third- or later-generation Australians and immigrants from and English-speaking backgrounds was also included, as was a region in Sydney’s north shore where immigrant settlement is lower and limited to wealthier immigrants. A snowballing or networking methodology was used rather than a random sample. The rationale for this was that by using ethnic community networks to find respondents and by matching interviewers in terms of ethnicity and foreign language of the interviewees, a relationship of trust would be established that would not be possible from ‘cold call’ random sampling leading to richer and more reliable responses but at the cost of losing the represented-ness of the findings that a random sample would provide.

The Sydney survey explored a number of perceptions about, and experiences of, crime. It revealed that immigrants were both perpetrators of crime and victims of crime, and that the fear of crime was strongly present in the immigrant community. It also explored perceptions of the link between youth gangs and criminal gangs and different immigrant groups and perceptions of police victimisation of immigrant youth.

Of most concern here are the findings about immigrant victimology. Respondents were asked: “Have you been a victim of crime?” and, if so, to indicate the nature of these crimes. Multiple responses were permitted. As Figure 1 shows, burglary (167 reports) and car theft (121 reports) are the crimes of which most adults surveyed in Sydney had been victims. These far outweigh the other experiences of crime among adults surveyed: 47 adults had been victims of street theft, 38 were victims of violent assault, while eight adults reported being a victim of sexual assault.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

We asked a similar question of the youth we surveyed. As Figure 2 shows, youth experience matches that of the adult sample in that burglary (145 reports) and car theft (87 reports) are the most common criminal experiences that youth interviewed for our study had experienced as victims of crime. Importantly, however, youth also reported a higher incidence of being victims of violent assaults (76 reports), street theft (62 reports) and sexual assault (30 reports) than adults. Moreover, the incidence of sexual assault is much higher for youth (mainly girls) than for adults. These findings indicate that a surprisingly high number of respondents had personal experiences of crime, although

most of this is related to theft of cars or property. Thus, whilst youth are often portrayed as perpetrators of crimes, they are the victims of violent assaults as well.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Concern about crime generates a fear that impacts on the daily decisions that people make about what they do and where they go in the local area. As such it is a form of (vicarious) victimisation of crime. As James and Graycar (2002: 249) argue, “those who are vicariously victimized, like those who have been directly victimized, may be said to experience the costs of crime”. Given these reports of criminal victimization it is not surprising to see that the majority of immigrants – adults and youth - surveyed in Sydney were actually concerned about crime. Of the adults surveyed, most (63%) were ‘very concerned’ about crime, with another 25 per cent ‘concerned’ and only 12 per cent of those adults surveyed responded that they were ‘mildly concerned’ or ‘not concerned’ at all about crime. In contrast, only a minority of youth (21%) reported that they were ‘very concerned’ about crime, with another 41 per cent ‘concerned’, 31 per cent ‘mildly concerned’ and 7 per cent ‘not concerned’ at all about crime. Whilst the concern of youth about crime is decidedly less than for adults surveyed, nevertheless about two in three youth surveyed were either very concerned or concerned about crime. This supports other Australian research which asserts that “despite the low victimisation rates, older people are nevertheless disproportionately fearful of crime” (James and Graycar 2002: 249).

There is an important gender dimension to concern about crime. Of females, 45.4 per cent surveyed were very concerned about crime, compared to 34.4 per cent of males. Overall, eight out of ten females surveyed, and seven out of ten males surveyed were concerned or very concerned about crime. Only 4.2 per cent of females and 7.6 per cent of males were not concerned about crime. These Sydney findings are consistent with other findings in Australia (Johnson 2005: 31-2; Ogilvie and Lynch 2002: 203-09) and in the UK and USA that women are more likely to fear crime and/or fear for their safety than men. As Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 19) put it in their transatlantic study of crime, citing the work of Valentine (1991) and Pettersson (1997):

In both nations, women, especially elderly women, were more likely than men to restrict their activities because of fear of crime. Women's heightened fear of crime and their likelihood to change shopping, recreational, and entertainment-related behaviours, especially after dark, are borne out by research conducted across a range of different sized urban and suburban areas, and across income groups.

Research in the United Kingdom has found that immigrant minorities were more fearful of crime than non-immigrants. One study found that while 20 per cent of whites thought that they were 'very or fairly' likely to be burgled in the coming year, 30 per cent of black respondents and 38 per cent of Asian respondents held this view (Kershaw et al. 2000). Another study reported that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were most concerned about crime and, as a response, avoided going out at night and avoided walking near 'certain types' of people (Percy 1998). Because the sample size of the Sydney survey was relatively small (825 people) and the number of immigrant birthplaces relatively large (24

birthplaces) it is not possible to be definitive about which groups of immigrants were most concerned about crime.

Nevertheless, in order to explore concern about and fear of crime in further detail, respondents in the Sydney survey were asked to indicate the crimes that they ranked as the biggest social problem in Sydney. Drugs were considered to be the biggest social problem in Sydney by more than one out of every four (27.7%) of those surveyed. Burglary was ranked the next greatest social concern by one in five (20.5%) respondents; with violent assault ranked next as of greatest concern by 17.7 per cent of respondents. The only other crime ranked as the greatest social problem by more than 10 per cent of respondents was street theft (13.9%). Sexual assault was the greatest concern of only 8 per cent of respondents, while only 4.5 per cent thought that car theft was the crime presenting the biggest social problem in Sydney.

There is also an important age dimension to this question. When asked about the crime they thought was the biggest social problem today, youth respondents nominated violent assault, burglary and street theft - only 10 per cent were concerned about the social impact of drugs and the criminal activity that surrounds the drug culture. In contrast, 41 per cent of adults reported that drugs presented the biggest social problem, although both adults and youth rated violent assault as the crime that they considered of most concern. Clearly generational issues shape crime experiences and fear of crime in Sydney. These results are similar to research carried out in the UK and the USA by Schneider and Kitchen (2002: 4-5), with the exception of car theft: “[N]ational surveys in Britain and

the United States tell us [the crimes] citizens fear the most [are]: ‘stranger to stranger’ personal and property crimes, such as assault, robbery, burglary and car-related burglary and theft.” As Schneider and Kitchen note, white collar crimes, such as fraud and cyber crime, rarely feature in the crimes that concern the public.

The greatest gender discrepancy in the frequency of crimes identified in the Sydney survey as the biggest social problem related to sexual assault: females were four times more likely (13.4%) to identify sexual assault as the greatest social problem than males (3.3%). Perhaps more significantly, sexual assault is ranked last amongst the crime that is the greatest social concern of males. As for other crimes, twice as many males (5.8%) consider car theft to be the major social problem than do females (2.9%), although in both cases the concern about car theft is ranked very low. Drugs, burglary and violent assault are most often the crimes identified as the major social problem by both males and females. This finding is not surprising and it ties in with other research carried out in Australia (Ogilve and Lynch 2002: 203) and other western countries that also shows that there are important gender dimensions to fear about crime. The *British Crime Survey* (Home Office 2000: 48) compared female to male ratios for those who felt ‘very worried’ about certain types of crime. The findings showed that women were four times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about rape; three times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about physical attack; between two and three times more likely to be ‘very worried’ about being insulted or pestered; and twice as likely to be ‘very worried’ about mugging.

Fear of crime often also becomes fear of a criminal group. Most adults surveyed identified 'youth gangs' as the group that they most felt threatened by. Surprisingly, fear of youth gangs (mentioned by 284 adults) exceeded fear of organized criminal gangs (mentioned by 207 adults) or criminals working alone (mentioned by 168 adults). Clearly, fear of crime in Sydney is strongly associated with fear of criminal or youth *gangs*. 'Kids on the street' were also of concern to the adults surveyed, whilst very few (31 respondents) reported that they feared the poor or homeless.

The Sydney survey also explored the relationship between fear about crime and public space in Sydney, permitting some insights into the geography of immigrant victimology. What was the local, spatial dimension into crime and fear of crime? We asked those surveyed in each municipality to identify the sites of crime and what areas were thought to be dangerous places. The answer, almost invariably, was related to the use of transport, a finding also reported in the Australian data for the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey (Johnson 2005: 30). The railway station was the place most feared after dark, with the car park and the bus stop also areas of concern to both youth and adults. Parks and recreation areas were also felt to be dangerous by many youth. Perhaps the biggest inconsistency between youth and adult responses to this question is related to the safety, or lack thereof, of shopping centres. While 55 youth responded that they felt unsafe in the local shopping centre, over twice the number of adults (112) felt unsafe in the shopping centre. These results point to the shopping centre or shopping mall as a site of contestation between adults and youth.

Another dimension of victimology relates to the experiences of and perceptions of youth about their relations with police and the extent to which certain youth become victims of excessive police response. There is strong evidence of police racism in multicultural cities across the world (Collins et al. 2000: 88-89) and in Sydney in particular (Collins et al. 2000: 90-92; 171-72; 190-92; 237-38). Respondents in the Sydney survey were asked if they thought that police picked on some groups of young people, and if so, to identify these groups. Overall, a slight majority of those surveyed agreed that police did pick on groups of young people, with males slightly more likely to agree to this proposition than females. When age of respondents is considered, it is clear that two in every three youth surveyed (62.8%) thought that police picked on groups of young people. When asked to identify these groups most responses mentioned youth from Asian, Chinese, Lebanese, Vietnamese and Pacific Islander descent as most often victims of police harassment.

4. From 9/11 to 7/7: Terrorism and the Victimisation of Arab and Muslim Citizens in Sydney

There is no doubt that ethnic, religious or geopolitical conflicts on a global scale do reverberate in cosmopolitan cities like Sydney. A decade before the terrorist attacks on the twin-towers in New York, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, US forces under President George Bush Senior and allies, including Australian troops, were engaged in the first Gulf War. One consequence of this event was that Australians of a Muslim and/or Arab background were subject to extensive racial vilification, abuse and physical attacks (HREOC 1991). A report by the Committee on Discrimination Against Arab Australians (1992), documented racist incidents against

Arabs and Muslims for the period November 1990 to July 1991. Many families reported harassment at their homes and in the streets, shopping centres, schools and communities. Many women wearing the hijab reported harassment from passing cars and in parking lots. Physical violence was also widespread, with reports of Arabs being spat at or incurring physical injury, including women who had their hijab pulled or torn. In one incident, a car was deliberately run into and damaged, while in another an Arab man died of a heart attack after being racially harassed by a group of teenagers. Widespread property damage was also reported. A Muslim school and restaurant in Perth, Western Australia were subject to arson attacks after threatening phone calls and in other homes and restaurants broken windows and graffiti were common. Many mosques and offices of Arab and Muslim organisations were attacked repeatedly while staff received threatening phone calls and mail threats. One Islamic Centre in one outer Sydney suburb was fire-bombed in January 1991.

Given this history, immediately following the events of 9/11, the then NSW Premier, Bob Carr, and the Chairman of the *Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW*, Stepan Kerkyasharian, and ethnic community leaders were concerned about the possibility of an escalation of violence and anger directed towards Arabs and Muslims living in Sydney. They had a right to be concerned. The CRC responded immediately with the establishment of a Hotline from 13 September to November 2001, on which the short-term community relations impact of these events could be recorded, and responses thereby developed. Initially a 24-hour Arabic Hotline was set up and from 14 November 2001 a Punjabi language line was open from 5pm – 9pm. The CRC Hotline log sheets

asked the CRC telephonist to circle yes/no to the question 'is the caller the victim of the incident'. Data from this Hotline provides evidence that there were a significant number of incidents of verbal abuse and physical attacks on members of the Sydney cosmopolitan community. While this was mostly directed at Australians visibly of a Muslim or Arab background, it was not confined to these groups with Australians of the Sikh religion also reporting abuse and violence.

There were seven categories of attack or assault: physical assault; verbal assault; sexual assault; threat; racial discrimination or harassment; damage to property; and media attack. The most threatening incidents were those of physical or sexual assault (31 incidents, 17.3%). The most commonly reported incident was of verbal assault in a public space (65 incidents, 56%), followed by racial discrimination or harassment, typically in the media (33 incidents, 22.6%) and then physical assault in a public space (30 incidents, 16.9%).

These incidents were reported affecting children, women, men, young people and the elderly. In some incidents age and gender were not applicable, as in damage to property, or were not stated by the caller. Half of all victims were female, and 44.4 per cent were male. Seven in ten victims were adults. The largest language groups to use the Hotline were Arabic, with 130, or 52.4 per cent of calls, and English, with 86, or 34.7 per cent of calls. Punjabi recorded 7, or 2.8 per cent, of calls. At first glance only 74, or 29.8 per cent of the victims, identified as Muslim, but on closer examination of the transcriptions of the call the religion of 128 callers was identified. Of these, the overwhelming majority (88)

were Muslim; 37 were Sikh; 1 Jewish; and 1 Christian. In addition, one caller was identified simply as religious. The religion of 98 callers was not identified. It is also important to explore the spatial dimensions within Sydney of this experience as a victim of assault, or abuse locations where an incident may have occurred. Almost half (47.2%) of all incidents occurred in a public space, including in or near shops and shopping centres and on the road or while driving. The next most common location for incidents reported to the CRC Hotline was in the victim's residence or neighbourhood (15.3%), followed by incidents in the media (13.7%).

Sixteen incidents of damage to property were reported to the CRC Hotline during September–November 2001 (6.5% of all incidents). Damage to property was reported against family homes (56.3%), places of worship (25%) and in public spaces (12.5%). Callers reported attacks on property including arson. In some instances physical assault and damage to property were combined. The majority of reported threats (63.6%) were against females. Threats were reported against all age groups: adults (69.7%), adolescents (18.2%), children (6.1%) and the elderly (3%).

Another insight into the impact post 9/11 on Arab and Muslim Australians and the extent to which many were victims of racial violence and abuse come from a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) large national consultation on the impact on Australian Muslims arising out of the events of September 11 and the bombing in Bali in October 2002. The HREOC consultations included group discussions with 1423 Arab and Muslim Australians and conducted an audit of 100 local and state government groups and

community organisations. The report of the consultations, *Isma-Listen* (HREOC 2004) found that the majority of Muslims consulted had experienced escalating prejudice because of their race or religion as a result of the events in New York and Bali. They reported experiences that ranged from “offensive remarks about race or religion to physical violence” (HREOC 2004: 2). The *Isma-Listen* report summarised some dimensions of the extent of discrimination, vilification and prejudice in the aftermath of September 11:

The Australian Arabic Council recorded a twenty-fold rise in reports of discrimination and vilification of Arab Australians in the month after 11 September 2001. The Muslim Women’s Association of South Australia received a ‘significant number of reported incidents, specifically of discrimination and harassment against Muslims’, most involving offensive verbal abuse of women. The Al Zahra Muslim Women’s Association in Sydney also reported a ‘phenomenal’ increase in both discrimination and vilification reports (HREOC 2004: 43).

The report outlines anecdotal reports of the extent of discrimination, vilification and prejudice experienced by Arabs in Australia. It noted that “people readily identifiable as Muslim because of their dress or appearance were particular targets of racist violence and abuse” and that “Muslim women who wear the hijab, niqab or chador have been especially at risk” (HREOC 2004: 45). Physical attacks, threats of violence and attempted assaults were widely reported to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. In addition, there were a number of incidents of vandalism on what was identifiably the property of Muslim organizations or individuals, with one mosque in Queensland fire

bombed and burnt to the ground (HREOC 2004: 49). These incidents were reported as having occurred on the street, at home, in private and public transport, in shops and shopping malls, at school, college and university and at work.

5. Immigrants as Victims of Crime Discourses in Sydney

There is a strong international literature on the criminalising of immigrant minorities in many western countries (Tonry ed. 1997; Hawkins ed. 1995; Bowling and Phillips 2002; Schissel and Brooks eds. 2002), particularly in relation to black immigrants in countries such as Canada (James 2002; Chan and Mirchandani eds 2002) and the UK (Gilroy 1987; Cook and Hudson 1993; European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia 1999; Cathcart 2000). A common theme that emerges from this literature is the social construction of ethnic criminality (Hall et al. 1978; Webster 1997; Henry et al. 1996), linked to the fear of the stranger Other.

Immigrants in Sydney are not only victims of crime in Australia but also victims of a criminalisation discourse. The sensationalist tabloid print and broadcast media play a central role here, as do opportunistic politicians. This can be seen most vividly in a brief review of sensationalist media reportage of 'Middle Eastern crime' in Sydney since the late 1990s (Collins et al. 2000: 30-54; Poynting 2000; Kennedy 2000; Priest 2004) – including a notorious 'ethnic gang rape' that occurred in Sydney between August 2000 and August 2001 (Poynting et al. 2004: 17-22), the 'children overboard' incident immediately prior to the 2001 federal election when the Howard government (falsely) claimed to have photographic evidence of 'boat people' throwing their children into the

sea in order to undermine sympathy for their asylum seekers (Marr and Wilkinson 2003) and the reportage of events following September 11, 2001 (Poynting et al. 2004: 52-78).

Because of the perception that these events have in common the presence of people from what might be broadly identified as of 'Middle Eastern' ancestry, these events have formed the basis of a series of cycles of moral panic (Cohen 1973: 9) which have centred around those of Arabic-speaking background and especially, but not exclusively, those of Muslim faith. Such panic has recurred over a much longer time span, often in relation to the (alleged) criminality of Chinese, Italian, Greek and other immigrant groups (Francis 1981; Hazlehurst 1987), though there has been an intensification of these waves since the late 1990s. They have been whipped up by the tabloid press, talkback radio and opportunist politicians, with a subsequent increase in racial attacks in public places across Australia. The second half of 2001 saw one such crescendo leading up to the federal election in November during which both the refugee crisis – whereby boats carrying refugees from the Middle East were turned away from Australian shores by the Australian navy for the first time in post-war history - and the insecurities caused by international terrorism were exploited by the Liberal-National Coalition government in their successful bid to return to office, against earlier expectations (Marr and Wilkinson 2003).

The links that are made between these events and the 'perpetrators' involved, however problematic, rest on what might be called 'the Arab Other' - a supposedly homogeneous category which includes those of Arabic or Middle Eastern or Muslim background. This

is not a singular category, of course: it includes people from quite diverse ancestries and with quite distinct histories. Nevertheless, the media discourse that emerged following these events shows how via the chains of association Arabic-ness and Islam and Middle-Eastern-ness are seen to be the same thing, and are seen to be essentially and pathologically evil, inhuman, violent and criminal (Poynting 2000; Poynting ed. 2004). As a result of these associations, whole communities are made to share the burden of blame. In assembling this Arab other, the key ideological feature is the systematic 'dehumanising' of those involved, whether they be criminals, terrorists or refugees. Moreover, in this public discourse on Lebanese or Middle Eastern crime in Sydney the accused – mostly second-generation immigrants born in Australia – have been robbed of their nationality. They are 'Lebanese' or 'Middle Eastern', and never 'Australian'. With the construction of the Arab Other, the association of criminal and other practices results in the criminalisation of cultural difference, which appears to threaten the social and moral order as much as overtly illegal behaviour.

It is clear that in cosmopolitan societies such as Australia and its major cities like Sydney that crime will be cosmopolitan and immigrants will be involved in crime. The critical issue is whether some cultures are themselves predisposed to criminal activity, a view that is presupposed by much of the media moral panic about ethnic crime in Sydney. As a corollary, the public discourse on immigrant crime in Sydney has equated *immigrant* or *ethnic* with *criminal*. This approach not only robs these immigrants of their Australian identity and shifts the focus of immigrant youth away from being victims of crime to be consoled and reaffirmed to that of perpetrators of crime, to be feared, to be scorned and to

be excluded. This also diverts attention away from important policy responses to crime. The criminality of individuals becomes the criminality of cultures. Following this logic, the policy response to such crime is not found in the socio-economic realm of policies to improve social inclusion of immigrant minorities (to provide jobs, education or better living standards) nor in the realm of policing reform (to provide a more multicultural police force and tackle police racism). Rather the simple solution is to deport the criminals, to stop the further immigration of these (dysfunctional) immigrant minorities and to call on the Imams to control *their* people: Australian society will not take responsibility for these criminals in the same way that it does for other criminals. It is not our problem, but theirs. In this way the media construction of immigrant criminality creates or supports negative, prejudicial stereotypes about immigrants and immigrant communities that help to reinforce their experience as victims in their host country. This in turn reinforces immigrants' fear of crime and concern for safety. As Bowling and Phillips (2002: 14) argue in relation to the British experience "racist violence has a significant impact on minority communities, leaving them insecure and avoiding many public places for fear of attack".

In Canada (Henry and Bjornson 1999; Sacco 2000; James 2002; Wortley 2002) and Europe (Gilroy 1987; Webster 2001; European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia 1999;) the role of the media in constructing racial stereotypes of immigrant criminality has attracted increasing attention. This is particularly the case since politicians across the political spectrum have opportunistically played on immigrant law and order and illegal immigrant issues in their election campaigns in Australia (Collins et al. 2000;

Marr and Wilkinson 2003) and many European countries (Collins 2003) in recent years. Of course, this is not a new phenomenon. As Bowling and Phillips (2002: 79) put it, “the media and political reactions to the public disorders [in Britain] of the late 1970s and 1980s also contributed significantly to popular understandings of black people as disorderly and criminal”. Moreover, this media ‘loudness’ about the criminality of immigrant minorities is contracted to relative media ‘deafness’ about the victimology of the same immigrant minorities. Reporting on a study of the Toronto, Canada, media Wortley (2002: 64) concludes that “the media are much more likely to communicate the race of criminal offenders than the race of crime victims”.

The HREOC consultation with Australia’s Arab and Muslim communities reported that 47 per cent of survey respondents felt that they had been vilified by the media, complaining of the unfair stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims and the use of ethnic or religious labels in crime-reporting (HREOC 2004: 64). Similarly, the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (2003), in its publication *Race for the Headlines*, reviewed media coverage of three major arenas of race relations: Indigenous issues - Indigenous criminality and victimology is also shaped by racialised discourses in Australia (Cuneen 2001) - refugee issues in the wake of the Tampa ‘boat people’ issue that was a critical issue in the 2001 Australian federal election (Marr and Wilkinson 2003) and issues affecting Muslim communities post 9/11. The report concluded that: “It serves governments well when media coverage of crime is racialised, because attention is diverted from the inadequacies of government policies and programs in addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour” (NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (2003: 59).

While there is evidence of political opportunism in relation to the immigrant or ethnic crime issue in New South Wales state politics since 1998 (Collins et al. 2000” 37-54; Poynting et al. 2004: 11-51), it is also evident that this is not a new phenomenon. Writing a decade earlier, Duncan Campbell, then Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology, wrote (in Hazelhurst 1990): “In the past a rather gloomy picture of close-knit migrant communities, particularly in urban or industrial areas, has been painted. Biased media reporting and prejudice in wider society have depicted minority group enclaves as suffering from crime, disorder and inter-cultural conflict.”

6. Conclusion

This article has argued that there are many dimensions of immigrant victimology in Sydney, one of the world’s most immigrant cities, and it has attempted to provide evidence about these dimensions. Immigrant minorities in general, and Middle Eastern immigrant communities in particular, have been victims of crime. This is the normal sense of immigrant victimology in the criminological literature. However, this is an extremely narrow interpretation of victimology. The nature and extent of immigrant victimology in Australia, and, by extension, immigrant minorities in other western societies, is much more complex. Immigrant minorities in Sydney have also been victims of fear of crime and of political and media discourses that have often equated (some) migrant minorities with labels of criminality. These two forms of victimology are inextricably interrelated. While it is true that in a multicultural society such as Australia criminals will come from all cultural backgrounds, there has been a disproportionate focus on, and fear of, immigrant or ‘ethnic’ crime in the Sydney media and in the

political sphere. This occurs despite very imprecise empirical data on immigrant criminality in Australia.

This discourse about ethnic or immigrant crime robs first and second generation immigrants of their Australian nationality – they are always ‘immigrants’ or ‘ethnics’ and never ‘Australian’, despite the fact that most were either born in Australia or have Australian citizenship. Moreover, by emphasising the cultural causes of crime, this discourse directs attention away from the socio-economic roots of crime. Policy responses to immigrant crime constructed in this way lead to ‘cultural’ or religious solutions such as strong intervention from ethnic minority religious and community leaders: it is ‘their’ problem to solve, not ‘ours’. At the same time the construction of (some) immigrant cultures as cultures of criminality leads policy responses to ignore issues such as inequality, unemployment, education and neighbourhood renewal. In this sense, immigrant minorities are again victimised and conceptualised as being from ‘outside’ the Sydney community rather than a central part of it. The discourse of immigrant criminality leaves little space for a more sympathetic discourse about immigrant victims of crime. The latter deserve our sympathy and our support while the former – at least in the current climate of strong law and order campaigns that parties across the political spectrum appear to hold dear – deserve only our contempt.

Moreover, immigrant minorities in Sydney have also been victims of hate crime in the aftermath of international terrorist incidents. Many visibly identifiable Muslim and Arab immigrants were the victims of physical and verbal abuse and violence post 9/11. But

interestingly other immigrant minorities, such as Sikhs, were also attacked, reflecting the imprecision of racist stereotypes that construct 'Asian' or 'Middle Eastern' or non-Christian' identities as homogenous rather than very heterogeneous categories. Following the London terrorist attacks of 7/7, the tendency for immigrant minorities to be linked to the most extreme form of crime, terrorism, has been exacerbated

This article has attempted to flesh out some of these dimensions of immigrant victimology in Sydney, though it has been suggestive rather than definitive in this regard. Clearly more detailed qualitative and quantitative research into immigrant crime, into police mediation into crimes committed by immigrant minorities, into media and political discourses about immigrant crime, into immigrant minorities and the fear of crime, into immigrant minorities and hate or race crime and into policy responses to immigrant crime and immigrant victimology is required..

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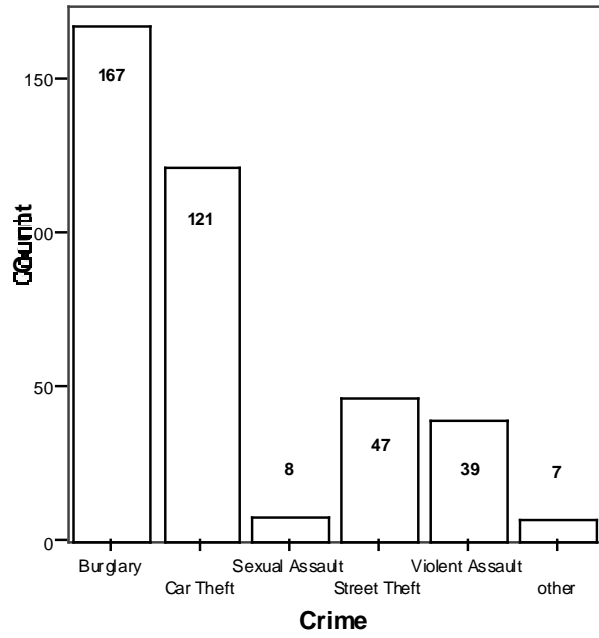
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Figure 1

Personal Experiences as Victims of Crime—Adults



Source: Collins et al 2002:

Figure 2

Personal Experiences as Victims of Crime—Youth

Source: Collins et al 2002:

