
PERSPECTIVES ON THE FEAR OF CRIME

SOCI0067: Crime and the Media – Thursday Tutorials

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The Fearful Significance

- * Crime and the fear of crime are not the same thing
- * Crime generally refers to actual concepts of criminality, whilst fear of crime relates to perceptions of crime
- * Fear of crime was regarded as a trivial matter until 1967
 - * President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice findings highlighted the issue
- * Research on fear of crime is the bridge between crime and media
- * We will not cover the fall out of fear of crime in a society here

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1. Crime and the fear of crime are different topics
2. Crime generally refers to actual concepts of criminality, whilst fear of crime relates to perceptions of crime
 - While fear of crime may seem like a meaningful term, the concepts of fear and crime are actually a lot more complicated than they seem
 - Fear, for example, could be understood as from the perspective of concern, risk, threat and behaviour
 - In fact, some criminologists have also argued that most research on “fear of crime” is wrong-headed because “fear of crime” is more a “fear for the other” than a “fear of for the self”
 - As we shall see throughout this presentation, “fear of personal victimisation” is how most criminologists understand “fear of crime”
3. Fear of crime was regarded as a trivial matter until 1967 when the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice concluded:
 - The most damaging of the effects of violent crime is fear, and that fear must not be belittled.
4. Research on fear of crime is the bridge between crime and media
 - Crime and the media are, in fact, separate elements of study and do not have much of a relationship apart from this element of fear
 - This is why it is important to understand the significance of looking into fear and what role the media plays in understanding fear
5. This presentation will not cover the fall out of fear and crime, although you should note that this is also a part of the criminological literature as well.

Mainstream Criminological Models for Fear of Crime

- * Victimisation Model
- * Community Concern Model
- * Subcultural Diversity Model
- * Social Integration Model



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1. Models generally downplay the role of the media and its influence on people's perceptions of crime
2. There are four general trends
 - Victimisation Model
 - Community Concern Model
 - Subcultural Diversity Model
 - Social Integration Model

Victimisation Model



- * Fear of crime is generated from
 - * Personal victimisation
 - * Perceived vulnerability
 - * Vicarious experiences
- * These three elements determine a person's personal perception of crime

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1. Fear of crime is generated from
 - Personal victimisation: victimisation leads to more fear of crime
 - Perceived vulnerability: personal perceptions of social position and vulnerability lead to more fear
 - Vicarious experiences: hearing about crime from significant others and those who are close to you will increase the fear of crime
2. These three elements determine a person's personal perception of crime
3. Based primarily on the concept that personal experiences are the main factors behind fear of crime

Community Concern Model



- * Similar idea to the disorder model
- * Areas with poor upkeep will likely induce higher levels of fear of crime
- * The signs of disorder are the key elements to creating a fear for crime

Broken windows theory, as it is still called today, was first proposed by Harvard criminologists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling

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1. Similar concept of disorder model
2. Areas with poor upkeep will likely induce higher levels of fear of crime
 - When a community is less concerned about its surrounding area, fear of crime increases
3. The image of signs of disorder are the key elements to creating a fear for crime
 - Note the principle of the "image" of disorder compared to actual disorder itself
4. Based on an idea similar to "broken windows theory"

Subcultural Diversity Model



- * Fear of crime increases for those who live near others that have different cultures
- * Behavioural patterns of other cultures create unease

Thaipusam practitioners: A traditional festival undertaken by common folk of the Indian community in Malaysia.

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1. Fear of crime increases for those who live nearby others that have different cultures
2. Behavioural patterns of other cultures create unease
3. Model relies on the idea that individuals are unable to accept the practices of another culture

Social Integration Model



Wild ferrets grouping together to ward off a cobra—
not quite a human example, but you get the idea

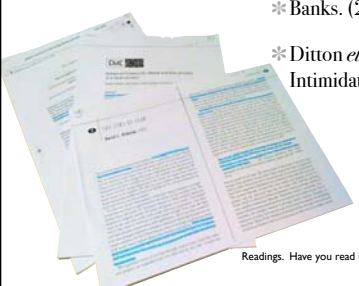
- * Less social integration in a community leads to heightened fear of crime
- * Mixed results in support of this model of understanding fear of crime

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1. Argues that less social integration in a community leads to heightened fear of crime
2. Based on the belief that social integration will help to alleviate the fears of individuals
3. Results to support this model has been mixed

Returning to the Readings

- * Altheide. (2002). The Lens of Fear.
- * Banks. (2005). Spaces of (In)security.
- * Ditton *et al.* (2004). From Imitation to Intimidation.



Readings. Have you read it yet?

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