

## CITY SIZE, FEAR AND VICTIMIZATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Urban theorists in America such as Louis Wirth (1938) postulated a casual connection between urbanization and crime and deviancy. As Shichor *et al.* state (1979: 184), "Crime has been long associated with the rise of the city, and urbanization has been isolated as one of the main factors responsible for fostering the social conditions for the production of criminal behavior."

Wirth, following leads suggested by Durkheim and Simmel, held that as cities grew, relationships became more formal and impersonal. The urbanite had neither the time nor the ability to take a personal interest in all those encountered.

Combined with the competitive nature of the American economy, Wirth hastened to add, the impersonality of city life is highly conducive to predatory behavior such as assault, robbery, and forcible rape. From Wirth, it is a short step to the following syllogism:

(1) the larger the city, the greater the likelihood of predatory behavior;

(2) the greater the likelihood of predatory behavior, the greater the fear and amount of criminal victimization;

(3) therefore, the larger the city, the greater the fear and amount of criminal victimization.

The validity of such a theory is clearly dependent on the measurement of a solid relationship between city size on the one hand and fear of crime and the amount of criminal victimization on the other. Local area studies and studies using national samples have found a positive association between fear of being victimized and city size (Boggs 1945; Conklin 1971; Erskine 1974). And, a variety of national surveys have uncovered a positive connection between city size and criminal victimization (Ennis, 1967; Garofalo & Hindeland, 1977).

The problem is that fear and victimization have been found to be both mutually influencing. High fear may lead to reduced exposure to the risk of victimization, and victimization may increase or decrease fear of victimization. Therefore, the impact of city size on the dependent variables must be examined in a multivar-

iate context. The relationship between the relevant variables must be determined and then re-examined controlling for city size. Further, fear and victimization must also be controlled when examining the association between one or the other and selected independent variables. Our object is to determine whether city size may account for expressions of the fear of crime and victimization by burglary and robbery.

## AGE

Recent studies have found a positive relationship between age and fear of crime, and a negative relationship between age and criminal victimization (Clemente & Kleinman, 1977; Garofalo, 1979). While the prevalence of fear among the elderly appears to account for their lower level of victimization than the young, the experience of victimization does not appear to account for their higher expressions of fear. Garofalo found that controlling for victimization did not appreciably reduce the relationship between either age and fear or sex and fear.

## SEX

Women are much more likely than men to fear criminal victimization. Whatever the measure of fear employed, the female to male response ratio has been in the vicinity of 3:1. However, women are much less likely than men to be victimized.

The findings in regard to age and sex suggest the general possibility of an inverse relationship between fear and victimization. The greater the fear, the less the victimization. Nevertheless, data on other variables do not follow this pattern.

## EDUCATION AND INCOME

All studies to date have found that as education and income increase, both the fear of crime and victimization decrease. The assumed explanation for this is that the higher the socioeconomic status, the greater the self-confidence and means of protection.

## RACE

Blacks are much more likely than whites to

fear crime and be criminally victimized.

### ADDITIONAL VARIABLES

A variable that has not been examined in studies of fear and victimization is occupational status. This is an important omission, especially in regard to the study of fear of crime. Fear of crime may be highly related to self esteem and self esteem is related to occupational status. (Brooks, 1974). Thus, one hypothesis to be examined is: The higher the occupational status, the lower the fear of crime. And, as there is a positive relationship between occupational status and income, the expectation is that the higher the occupational status, the lower the level of victimization.

One also expects certain occupations to be especially high or low in fear and victimization. Farmers would be expected to be low in both respects and clerical, sales, and service personnel would be expected to be relatively high on fear due to relatively high female employment in these areas, but low on victimization. These expectations were taken into account in rank ordering the occupational categories for statistical analysis.

The unemployed have lower self esteem than the employed. Consequently, it is hypothesized that fear of crime will be higher among the unemployed than the employed. As the unemployed would appear to be more generally available and prone to risk taking in the pursuit of a livelihood than the employed, they are expected to have relatively higher rates of victimization.

The last variable included in the analysis is marital status. As married people may be assumed to be less generally adventurous than single people, they are expected to have relatively lower rates of fear and victimization.

### THE DATA

This study is based on the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (Davis, 1972-1978). Data on fear and victimization from this source are currently available for the years 1973, 1974, 1976, and 1977. The responses analyzed represent the four year total of 6,017. This was done in order to provide a sufficient number of individuals admitting to have been victimized in the analysis.

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Age was broken into ten year intervals from 10 to 19 and ending with 80 and over. Race and sex were dichotomized as black or white, and male or female.

Income was identified as family income and coded on the basis of \$2,000 intervals beginning with under \$1,000 and ending with \$25,000 or more. Education was defined as years of education and identified by one year intervals from one through twelve and less than a year of college to eight or more years of college.

Occupation was divided into four categories: farming, professional, skilled, and clerical, sales, and service. Employment status was dichotomized: employed full-time or unemployed.

When controlling for city size, the following two categories were used in order to enhance the interpretation of its influence: less than 49,999 and 1,000,000 or more.

Fear was based on the following NORC survey question: "Is there any area within a mile - where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?" Of the 6,017 asked the question during the four years in question, 43.5 percent (2,617) answered "yes". Between 1973 and 1977, there was a 4.2 percent increase in the affirmative response rate. By year, the affirmative response rate was as follows: 1973, 40.6%; 1974, 44.7%; 1976 43.8%; and 1977 44.8%.

The two types of victimization included in the General Social Surveys are burglary and robbery. The burglary question was as follows: "During the last year - that is, between March and now - did anyone break into or somehow illegally get into your apartment/home?" Considering the four year total, 7.2 percent or 433 of the 6,017 interviewed said they had been burglarized. By year, the affirmative response rate was as follows: 1973, 7.5%; 1974, 7.6%; 1976, 7.1%; and 1977, 6.6%.

The robbery question was as follows: "During the last year, did anyone take something directly from you by using force - such as a stick-up, mugging, or threat?" Over the four years, 2.2 percent (or 130 of the 6,017 interviewed) said they had been robbed. By year, the affirmative response rate was as follows: 1973, 1.6%; 1974, 3.6%; 1976, 1.6%, and 1977, 1.9%.

### STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

The ordinal statistic *gamma* was used as the measure of association because (1) most of the variables in this study are ordinal in type, and (2) when nominal variables such as sex and fear were examined, data were arrayed in two-by-two tables, in which case *gamma* becomes the equivalent of Yule's Q, a statistic appropriate for measuring association between nominal variables (see Mueller et al., 1970: 290-292). Whenever possible, of course, variables were put into the ordinal format. For example, the categories of marital status entered cross-tabulations as follows: married, widowed, divorced, separated, and never married. This is the order prescribed by hypothesized expectations.

In the case of occupational status, the sequence was: farming, professional, skilled, and clerical, sales, and service. Farming was placed first because it is the least "urban" occupation and because respondents in this category are assumed to be least likely to express fear of crime and be criminally victimized.

### FINDINGS

The statistical relationship between the nine variables identified above and fear and victimization is reported in Table 1. As can be seen, the relationship between sex and fear (.69) is unmatched in strength by the other thirty-five statistics. For consistency, city size stands out. But the statistics by race are also noteworthy.

Overall, the statistics support previous research findings in regard to age, city size, education, income, race, and sex. That is, (1) as age increased, fear increased and victimization decreased, (2) as city size increased, both fear and victimization increased, (3) as education and income increased, fear and victimization decreased, (4) blacks were more inclined than whites to express fear and be victimized, and (5) women were much more likely than men to express fear, and less likely than men to be victimized.

Of the three "additional variables," occupation evidenced the highest statistical relationship with fear, status with burglary, and marital status with robbery. As expected, occupational status were inversely related to both fear and victimization.

Not expected was the non-significant re-

lationship between employment status and fear. The unemployed rather than the employed were expected to express the greater amount of fear. However, the relationship was low and not statistically significant. The unemployed were more likely than the employed to be victimized. The relation of city size to fear is shown in Table 2. If increasing city size accounts for a measured relationship, the statistics in the 1,000,000 or more row should approach zero and be lower in strength than those in the less than 49,999 row.

The column figures show that only in the case of race is fear appreciably reduced by controlling for city size. City size has no measured impact on the strength of the relationship between sex and fear. This finding bolsters Garofalo's claim (1979: 96) that the relationship between the two variables is due mostly to sex role socialization.

The statistical relationship between burglary and marital status controlling for city size is significant and accounts for a portion of the original relation ( $\text{Gamma} = -.23$ ;  $p = .01$ ). The relation between burglary and employment status controlling for city size indicates that fear, regardless of city size, is associated with a lower likelihood of being burglarized. Table 3 reports the relationship between five variables and robbery controlling for city size. With the exception of income and age, the column figures indicate that increasing city size accounts for some of the original relationships. Those on income suggest, that the original relationship

TABLE 1: RELATION OF SOCIAL VARIABLES TO FEAR & VICTIMIZATION (Gamma values)

Variable (N)	Victimization:		
	Fear (2617)	Burglary (433)	Robbery (130)
Age	.11*	-.12	-.13**
City size	.36*	.23*	.47*
Education	-.09*	.03	-.09
Work Status	-.09	.31*	.19
Income	-.12*	-.04	-.24*
Marital status	-.10*	-.26*	-.45*
Occupation	-.26*	-.01	-.29*
Race	.27*	.26*	.41*
Sex	.69*	-.06	-.02

Significance levels: \* .01; \*\* .05

**TABLE 2: EFFECTS ON FEAR BY CITY SIZE**  
(Gamma values; Significance: \* .01; \*\* .05)

City Size (N)	Fear by:						
	Age (4345)	Education (4344)	Income (4359)	Marital Status (4359)	Occupation (3944)	Race (4359)	Sex (4359)
Under 50,000	.14*	-.19*	-.14*	-.06*	-.25*	.17**	.70*
Over a million	.16	-.21*	-.36	.01	-.20	.05	.72*

**TABLE 3: ROBBERY EFFECTS BY CITY SIZE**  
(Gamma values; Significance: \* .01; \*\* .05)

City Size (N)	Robbery by:				
	Age (4349)	Income (4162)	Marital Status (4363)	Occupation (4341)	Race (4335)
Under 50,000	-.13	-.18**	-.48*	-.36*	.43*
Over a million	-.11	-.31	-.29	-.11*	-.16

is influenced more by decreasing than increasing city size. The relation between and victimization by robbery and age, income, marital status, occupation and race while controlling for city size and fear shows no significant gamma values. Controlling for fear in addition to city size had no measured impact on the original relationship between robbery and income.

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Controlling for city size alone accounted for most of the measured association between (1) race and fear, (2) marital status and burglary victimization, and (3) marital status, occupation, and race and robbery victimization. Controlling for both city size and robbery victimization had the effect of strengthening all the measured relationships between fear and seven variables. Robbery victimization may lessen fear of victimization regardless of city size.

When fear and city size were simultaneously controlled for (1) the measured relationship between marital status and burglary victimization virtually disappeared, and (2) most of the measured association between marital status and occupation and robbery victimization was explained.

The negligible impact of city size on the measured relationships between the examined variables may be due to influence of measures taken by city residents to decrease the risk of criminal victimization. City residents,

especially those in high crime areas (see Furstenberg, 1971), have been taking greater precautions not only to avoid victimization in their homes and work places, but also on the streets. Neighborhood patrols by local residents now supplement police protection in many communities. In effect, then, the evidence may understate the impact of city size on fear and victimization not because it may be a crude measure of secondary importance, but because it has influenced people to better protect themselves, and therefore, reduce anxiety and victimization. The larger the city, the greater the number and variety of defensive measures that may be taken.

A second consideration concerns the susceptibility of one of the dependent variables, fear of crime, to diverse influences. While the fear of crime may reflect the actual degree of threat of victimization (Balkin, 1979), it also may be the product of sex role conditioning and media sensationalism. Everyone, regardless of place of residence, has been made to fear criminal victimization.

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(Concluded on p 22)

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LARSON

(From p 16)

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