

Book Review

Fear of crime in the United States

Jodi Lane, Nicole E. Rader, Billy Henson, Bonnie S. Fisher and David C. May
Carolina Academic Press, Durham, NC, 2014, 286pp., \$35.00, ISBN: 978-1611630664

Security Journal (2016) 29, e8–e10. doi:10.1057/sj.2015.20; published online 10 August 2015

Fear of crime research has been advancing for the past 50 years. Lane, Rader, Henson, Fisher and May's *Fear of Crime in the United States: Causes, Consequences, and Contradictions*, published by Carolina Academic Press, provides readers with a comprehensive overview detailing the progression of the research. The book is primarily focused on introducing readers to the advancements made in the fear of crime research over time. The authors begin by framing the concept of fear of crime as a complex topic that affects individuals physically, psychologically, behaviorally and socially.

The book consists of eight chapters which are laid out chronologically to discuss the improvements in fear of crime research over the last several decades. Each chapter builds upon the previous chapter to give a thorough review of the literature. The book offers reviews of empirical studies that illustrate the changes and growth of fear of crime and victimization research. Throughout the text, the authors describe key research findings and present policy and research implications. Each chapter concludes with a section that provides a summary of concepts outlined in the chapter, as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1 begins by introducing readers to fear of crime with a brief overview of fear as an emotion and the three elements of fear of crime: '(1) an emotional response, (2) to a danger or threat (3) of a criminal incident'. The authors discuss how since the 1960s, the media has served as an outlet for crime awareness, and how socialization is important to the development of crime-related fear. Generally, the authors explain what is known about fear of crime and give an overview of how fear of crime can affect individuals' lifestyles. This overview reveals that preventative patrol is not effective in reducing the public's fear of crime and also discusses race, place of residence, and national polls in relation to fear of crime.

Chapter 2 discusses crime prevention, outlines the seminal works and advances from the infancy, adolescence, and mature era of fear of crime research and discusses trends in the research. For each era, the authors provide selected influential studies to demonstrate the highlights of that era. The authors explain that the general public's fear of crime increased in the 1960s as the United States experienced its first wave of increased crime rates. This fear of crime made it easier for presidential campaigns to focus on crime prevention. This chapter discusses the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, which evaluated crime in the United States and made suggestions for crime prevention; through this report, many of the victimization instruments that are used currently were constructed.



Details of the difficulty in measuring and operationalizing fear of crime are outlined in Chapter 3. The authors reveal that though a universal definition does not exist, fear of crime definitions share certain similarities: they all define fear as an emotional reaction, associated with threat or expectation of victimization, and an event in which potential criminality could occur. This chapter discusses the evolution of fear of crime measurements that occurred over time. Single-item measures, temporal order, and daytime and nighttime fear are some of the measurements mentioned. The authors explain that, initially, the Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration, fear of crime as a policy issue and fear of crime in general were not given much thought. However, after fear of crime was identified as a problem, it was introduced into the political agenda. The essential distinction between fear and perceived risk is also discussed.

Chapter 4 introduces the reader to the most consistent predictor of fear of crime, which is gender. This chapter examines research that suggests that females are more afraid of crime than males, which may be explained by their fear of sexual assault as well as six other explanations given by the authors based on previous research. Explanations are provided as to why females and males experience fear of crime differently. The authors also express that victimization type varies by gender; the authors discuss different types of victimization and different fear levels. Evidence is provided on how socialization may influence individuals to fear crime. Chapter 5 continues the discussion on demographic characteristics by introducing age, race/ethnicity, and social class. Of these characteristics, age receives the most attention. This chapter discussed physical and social vulnerabilities, as well as socialization to explain fear of crime among different ages, racial/ethnic groups, and socioeconomic statuses. Previous research has demonstrated that younger individuals, women, minorities, and individuals who are economically disadvantaged are associated with being more fearful of crime.

Personal experience, indirect victimization, and community, each have an effect on fear of crime, which is examined in Chapter 6. To begin the chapter, the authors provide a list of contextual factors that are related to fear of crime. Certain situations may provoke fear; these situations are often environmental, such as dark areas and a place an individual perceives not to be easily escapable. This chapter serves as a great segue into Chapter 7, which provides a discussion of the physical, psychological, social and behavioral consequences of fear as well as environmental design and its impact on crime prevention. The authors use previous research to suggest that fear can be situational, and does not necessarily occur from personal experience. When a person is fearful, they may change their behaviors to avoid or limit the interaction with the situation that makes them fearful. Avoidance and protective behaviors are illustrated as constrained behaviors and the authors suggest that weapon behaviors deserves to be a third, distinct category of constrained behaviors because of the predictors and consequences of those behaviors. The latter part of Chapter 7 discusses environmental design as a way to reduce fear of crime as well as prevent crime. Fully thought out environmental designs serve as an outlet for policymakers to reduce crime through situational crime prevention. The authors present and discuss numerous studies on environmental design and crime. Environmental improvements in neighborhoods such as increased lighting, security, and neighborhood design may have an impact on fear of crime.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, provides a summary of advances of past research on fear of crime in the last 50 years. The authors provide an illustration with the major fear of crime research which discusses how fear is measured, why certain groups are more afraid than others, how personal experience with crime and contextual factors impact fear, the differing



frequencies and intensities of fear, and the consequences of fear. They also offer several policy and practice implications. They suggest community policing may be a good way to lower fear levels in the public, and discuss the impact education on fear of crime can have on the public. Evidence from future researchers suggest that fear of crime researchers have the ability to influence environmental design and provide informative designs with the perception of safety at the forefront of the design.

Fear of Crime in the United States: Causes, Consequences, and Contradictions is useful for researchers, scholars, and policymakers to expand the knowledge of fear of crime research. The book may also be useful for police officers and security practitioners to educate them on the best practices to reduce fear of crime in the community. This book synthesizes the seminal fear of crime pieces and places them in the hands of scholars and practitioners who can use the knowledge gained from this consolidation of literature to expand and fill the gaps. The authors conclude their overview by discussing several gaps in the literature that need to be filled and encourage academics to pursue this area. This book, though thorough and informative, may be difficult for non-academics to follow because of the academic nature of the material. Overall, this book provides an important overview of the history and state of fear of crime research and creates a great pathway for individuals interested in pursuing fear of crime research.

Sara L. Bryson
Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Sam Houston State University,
Huntsville, USA