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Researching Everyday Emotions:
Towards a Multi-disciplinary Investigation of the Fear of Crime

For an edited volume by Helmut Kury

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The fear of crime has long been a high profile issue across Europe, America and elsewhere. As Farrall et al (2000:399) observe, the fear of crime is now “one of the most researched topics in contemporary criminology”, with the risk of crime being seen as one of the most pressing concerns affecting people’s quality of life (Hale, 1996; Vanderveen, 2006). Yet technical problems have also dogged this field of enquiry. Some criminologists believe that methodological limitations have posed serious implications for the validity of the body of knowledge that public policy relies upon (Skogan, 1981; Bernard, 1992; Farrall and Gadd, 2004; Lee, 1999 & 2001). Others argue that theoretical under-specification has restricted the breadth and depth of definition and explanation, leaving us with a contested and congested concept (e.g. Girling et al. 2000). Certainly, public concerns and perceptions seem messier and more multi-faceted than current methods and concepts disclose. The fear of crime has social and psychological dimensions that require interdisciplinary analysis and innovative methodological inroads – yet the vast majority of research in this area has lacked such ambition.

In this chapter we review, from an interdisciplinary perspective, literature on everyday emotions that has so far gone unexplored by those criminologists interested in the fear of crime. There is a large and rapidly expanding body of psychological research on emotion (see Davidson et al. 2003). But only recently have scholars begun to build an understanding about the emotions people experience during the course of their day-to-day lives. One of the largest studies of real-life emotions involved a series of surveys which focused on describing the probabilities of experiencing certain emotions in everyday life and on the socio-demographic and situational factors that influence these probabilities (Scherer et al, 2002). The body of work on everyday emotions has also encompassed studies in psychology (Frijda, 1986), a number of ethnographic studies concerned with ‘how emotions work’ (Katz, 1999) how emotions are ‘managed’ across the settings of everyday life (Hochschild, 1983) and the development of a diverse ‘sociology of emotions’ (Kemper, 1990; Wouters, 1992; Williams and Bendelow, 1998). These contributions are noteworthy; not least because they offer a conceptual vocabulary that may well have much to offer criminological research, but also because they address pertinent methodological questions concerning research on emotions and therefore place a significant emphasis on ensuring the ecological and external validity of results.

These studies have not only provided rich and valuable data, but have also developed a constructive discussion of both methodological and theoretical issues. Such issues are pertinent to the study the fear of crime since they may help us to formulate a more comprehensive picture of what fear of crime actually is as a lived experience. This chapter begins with a short review of the conceptual and methodological problems within the fear of crime literature, before considering the different perspectives on emotion which have emerged more recently. We assess how a multi-disciplinary analysis might facilitate a more theoretically and methodologically robust interpretative framework. Lastly, we outline how new methodological techniques employed by researchers studying everyday emotions might be employed to go ‘back to basics’, as it were, to assess what fear of crime measures are actually measuring.

The utility and validity of fear of crime research

We make no attempt here to review the vast literature on fear of crime research, since it has been covered comprehensively by previous writers (Hale, 1996; Vanderveen,

2006). Nevertheless, we will highlight key concerns about the validity of the instruments used (Bernard, 1992; Fattah, 1993; Skogan, 1981; Farrall et al, 1997) and some of the main issues surrounding the theoretical under-specification within this field of enquiry (Sparks, 1992; Girling et al, 2000).

Since the 1960s, large-scale victimisation surveys have given rise to data on various offence-specific fears (burglary, rape, car theft etc.), perceived risk of crime and experience of victimisation. Governments in America and later in the UK and Europe were eager to fund research to assess the impact of crime on communities, public perceptions and 'quality of life'. One of the key research conundrums to emerge from these data was the mismatch between officially modelled 'likelihood' statistics (self reported victimisation) and lay perceptions of risk. On the basis of simple mean group differences, it was claimed that perceptions of fear of crime amongst certain groups such as women or older people were 'out of proportion' with their objective risk. Researchers soon took up the challenge to resolve why lay perceptions might overlap objective risk, however, these 'rationality' debates quickly reached controversial heights and fear of crime research gave way to a broad critique of the theoretical and empirical tools used to explore public perceptions of crime and fear.

Soon after the first sweep of the British Crime Survey (BCS) Maxfield (1984) identified that operationalizing the concept of fear of crime from BCS data was laden with technical difficulties. To begin with, studies tended to employ a narrow range of feelings focusing on 'fear' or 'worry', but never anger, frustration or even irritation which may well be as common a reaction, not to mention as socially significant as 'worry' (Ditton et al, 1999). There has also been considerable criticism of the leading nature of the question wording—such as 'how safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?' or 'how worried are you about...?'. These questions infer that this is an issue about which respondents *ought* to have an opinion and can encourage respondents to provide answers which confirm the bias contained in the question (Tourangeau et al. 2000).

Surveys typically ask respondents to reflect and recall emotions they are not currently experiencing; their answers are assessed in contexts outside the realm in which these feelings occur. Despite this, there has been little exploration of the extent to which situational fears might be a symptom of structural or social circumstances. Furthermore, until recently we have not known the frequency or intensity of the emotions reported; questions do not ask whether fear is experienced on a constant basis throughout the day, or whether it is concentrated at certain times or in particular places. Perceptions of likelihood of victimisation produce similar 'global' estimates without providing contextual detail. As Walklate (2007) notes, technical drawbacks have been particularly problematic for women, specifically because questions usually cast fear as taking place outside the home ('how safe do you feel walking around in the dark...?'). Pain (1991) stresses, that while many women might relate to feeling worried about being alone in a dark space, the context of fear for a small but significant number of women is directly situated in the home - in the company of their partner. A failure to recognise the role of the family domain in generating worries and perceptions of victimisation will prevent a study from incorporating a key variable in the nature of women's fear of crime.

These issues raise fundamental questions of how we interpret data in light of the deeply intricate nature of many independent variables. How does one deal with the various responses to a limited range of questions concerning feelings (i.e. fear, worry), cognitions (perceived risk, safety assessments) and behaviours which are very likely to represent different things to different people? A further difficulty is the willingness (or reservation) of survey respondents to honestly reveal emotions or vulnerability, something that may be more relevant to men more than women (Stanko and Hobdell, 1993; Sutton and Farrall, 2005). Similarly, Tulloch *et al.* (1998) and Greve (1998) argue that fear of crime should be conceptualised as a set of inter-related cognitions, emotions and behaviours, yet this is very rarely done.

It has been suggested that the survey is simply too crude to effectively capture the publics' emotional reactions to crime. Smaller scale qualitative studies have indeed been better able to demonstrate the more intricate and nuanced nature of crime fears (Bannister 1993; Girling *et al.*, 2000). As research on public perceptions has advanced we have discovered that lay perceptions are considerably more complex and multi-faceted than previously thought. For example, the claim that certain groups experience irrationally high levels of fear based on flawed perceptions of risk has been deconstructed by new research evidence of 'repeat' or 'hidden' victimisation (see Stanko, 1988). Feminist researchers employing ethnographic and life-history research and female interviewers, were able to draw attention to the 'hidden' nature of crimes (such as domestic and sexual violence) which were not only concealed from police statistics, but to large scale victimisation surveys. Such discoveries effectively put to rest the idea that women (or other 'vulnerable' groups) often reported fears in wild excess of their objective risk. In sum, smaller scale, detailed studies have uncovered various new dynamics underpinning public emotions about crime and have been able to demonstrate how gender, family, class, age, race and location variables interact and influence an individuals perception of risk.

Research has also indicated that broad social and political contexts can shape individuals perceptions of risk. Ferraro (1995) developed casual models in which socio-cognitive variables, such as perceived risk, were shown to mediate the impact of other relevant socio-demographic factors. Similarly, Jackson (2004) notes that an erosion of trust in the capacity of the local community to manage the risks of crime impacts on how residents understand and relate to their environment. In short, fear of crime revealed itself to be a considerably more complex and mysterious proxy of public perceptions; not only was it able to measure discrete experiences of crime-related worries, but it automatically linked into a whole host of micro and macro-level factors. As Girling *et al* conclude:

“Researchers have begun to own up to diminishing confidence that they know precisely what it is being measured or that they are all capturing indices of ‘the same thing’. Whatever ‘it’ might be ‘fear’ turns out to involve multiple dimensions (Ferraro and LaGrange 1987; Killias 1990), vicarious as well as direct experiences (Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Smith 1986) and be open to varying conceptualizations as ‘an expression of uneasiness’ (Donnelly 1988), a judgement of government competence to deliver collective security (Taylor *et al.*, 1986) and an ‘expression of powerlessness and uncertainty’ (Smith 1989). In other words it involves abstractions from

experience – and hence by definition their meanings and attributions as well as the immediate impact of victimisation as such.” (2000:15)

Towards an interdisciplinary approach to fear of crime

Thus far, we have identified some of the key methodological and conceptual problems within fear of crime research. Crucially, we believe there is potential to improve the validity and utility of fear of crime research by drawing on related disciplines, and one way to proceed is to utilise the growth in knowledge concerning ‘everyday emotions’. This discussion will hopefully be of interest to our colleagues studying the fear of crime, but also to social scientists across the spectrum, who may appreciate an interdisciplinary enterprise which takes seriously the role of theory, research and emotion in analysing crime, society and psychology simultaneously.

Emotion has become an increasingly prominent issue in the humanities, social sciences and psychology (see Davidson et al. 2003; Turner and Stets, 2005), and there is now a large and expanding body of research on emotion emanating from these disciplines. In the criminological arena we have been able to draw upon the legacy of Durkheim and Elias who debated the relationship between human emotions and crime, punishment and social control. More recently, Karstedt (2002) insists, there has been a ‘return of emotions’ in criminal justice via the increasingly prominent voice of the victim, the use of restorative justice and increasingly emotionalised cultures of late modern societies (see Wouters, 1986; Williams, 2001). However, despite the apparent emotionality of crime and criminology, there are relatively few empirical studies that investigate the part that the broad emotional palette has to play in influencing our responses to crime or even the causation of crime or violence. De Haan and Loader (2002) further concur that the emotions remain a somewhat peripheral topic within theoretical criminology. Indeed, despite a small number of studies, focusing for example on shame (see Braithwaite, 1989), fear (see Hale, 1996) and anger or hate (Ditton et al, 1999; Frijda, 1986; Gadd, 2006), in criminological research there is little to aid the understanding of the wide ranging emotional experiences people often go through in the course of their day-to-day lives. Nevertheless, everyday, offenders, victims and witnesses bring their emotions to the court, ‘hate’ crimes and domestic violence offences are committed, offenders are asked to express their shame, the public ‘fear’ crime and ingest information on the latest crime story and impassioned demands for order are made by citizens and professionals alike.

As highlighted, the relative neglect of emotions in criminological work has not been replicated in other fields. Not only have there been a number of works in psychology (Frijda, 1986), a robust ‘sociology of emotions’ has developed in Britain, Europe and North America (Kemper, 1990; Wouters, 1992; Williams and Bendelow, 1998) and a number of intriguing ethnographic studies concerned simply with ‘how emotions work’ (Katz, 1999) or the real-life occurrence of emotions during everyday life have emerged (Hochschild, 1983).

One of the leading works of everyday emotional experience thus far is the collection of studies conducted by Scherer et al (2004). Their research focused on describing how regularly certain emotions occurred in everyday life, and on identifying demographic, personal and contextual factors that influence these experiences. Methodologically, this work drew attention to the ecological and external validity of

the results, and posed basic but pertinent questions relevant to exploring everyday emotions. In sum, these rich and diverse studies have considered what emotions *are*, and were able to develop a sophisticated understanding of the emotional experiences people typically go through in the course of their day-to-day lives. As such, an imaginative and significant corpus of work exists upon which an analysis of crime fears and criminology might usefully draw. Moreover, it is very likely that criminology will be able to contribute in unique and important ways to debates about the role and sway of emotions in crime and society. The following sections review some of the main issues highlighted by contemporary research into everyday emotions and consider key implications for fear of crime research.

Research on everyday emotions – a complex picture

As noted above, Scherer et al's influential work examined the incidence of emotions in ordinary 'everyday' life, the potential risk factors and the typical appraisal and reaction patterns. The study employed a population survey methodology in which data were canvassed from more than 1,000 German and French speaking adults. There were two waves of the study, conducted four years apart. Participants were asked to report an emotional event that happened yesterday as well as to verbally label the experience. The extent of emotional complexity among their respondents was expressed by the fact that respondents used 775 different words and phrases to describe their emotions on the previous day. In fact, this work demonstrated that there are numerous ways in which people interpret and understand their emotional responses. Scherer et al (2004) stated that there were as many emotions as there are 'appraisal combinations' or interpretations. Along these lines Ben-Ze've (2000) and Katz (2004) have also highlighted the complexity and enormous diversity of human emotion in normal day-to-day life.

Nevertheless, despite the vivid assortment of emotions reported by participants in Scherer et al's study, both sweeps, four years apart, produced very similar distributions of emotional descriptions and frequencies. This work mapped a wide array of emotional activity, but also revealed structural regularity. Moreover, individuals were better able to manage and adapt to significant world events than one might have expected.

Ben-Ze've (2000) distinguishes between five main types of everyday affective phenomena: emotions (such as fear, envy, anger, and guilt), sentiments or enduring emotions (enduring grief or love), moods (such as being cheerful, gloomy, down), affective traits, (such as trait anger or shyness etc) and affective disorders (such as depression and anxiety). Although there is considerable overlap between the various 'types,' the distinction between them is important as it represents the possible reasons why an individual might respond to stimuli in a certain way; someone who is fearful of crime when being followed at night is different to someone who is arbitrarily scared of crime due to a psychiatric condition.

According to Turner and Stets (2005), everyday emotions are influenced by a range of factors, all of which should be taken into consideration. Emotions involve certain elements. These include: 1) biological reaction of key body systems such as the nervous system in the brain or hormonal influences (raised heart rate, tears etc); 2) socially constructed cultural definitions and checks on what emotions 'should' be experienced and expressed in a given situation (social desirability); 3) the application

of common linguistic labels provided by culture and an individual's semantic ability to describe an event or feeling; 4) the external expression of emotions through facial, vocal and/ or linguistic actions and 5) perceptions and appraisals of contextual objects or events. In short, being in a state of fearing crime should be a considered multi-dimensional event. However, the authors also suggest that not all of these elements need to be present for emotions to exist. For example, people have unconscious emotional memories which trigger biological actions, which may later prompt physical cues to themselves and others. At other times, individuals may repress their emotions with the result that they do not experience the emotion or signal it to others at any level.

How often do we experience emotions?

Wilhelm (2001) and Myrtek's (2004) work conclude that most people experience some kind of emotion on a daily basis. Similarly, Scherer et al. (2004) found that one in two individuals is likely to experience at least one strong emotion on any given day. The most frequent emotions were happiness (9.1%) and anger (8.6%), which reflect results in similar studies. The most pertinent results to those of us in the fear of crime arena indicate the low frequency of 'basic' emotions, thought to be central to everyday thinking¹. Fear was a relatively rare emotion; 1.2% of the respondents reported experiencing fear on the previous day, although anxiety was more common (6.5%). Scherer et al noted that while it is possible that less intense experiences of fear did occur, they could not have been consciously remembered or perceived. They conclude: "Serious fear situations are few and far between in the normal course of events", (2004: 520). Indeed, Averill (2004) has also reflected that fear is an infrequent emotion and rarely experienced outright. Similarly, other 'basic emotions' registered low frequencies: love was 0.8%, hate 0.2%, jealousy 0.2%, hope 0.1%, envy 0.1%, shame 0.1% and contempt in at less than one tenth of one percent. While these emotions may be considered normal 'expressive' fodder in popular culture and to have a strong motivational force on our daily behaviour, they may actually be much less common than we think. Other commentators have mused that we may expect certain emotions to be more prevalent than they actually are because of their symbolism and significance;

"Fear, love, hate, jealousy, hope, envy, shame and contempt are perceived to be frequent since they appear to have tremendous impact upon our behaviour. While these emotions seem to shape our behaviour in many circumstances, the findings of the study under discussion (Scherer et al, 2004) indicate that they may have less impact than we think. Similarly aeroplane accidents are perceived to be more frequent than their actual occurrence because their immediate impact – the death of so many people at one time – is so great and attracts large media attention. Accordingly we consider their impact upon our life as more profound than it actually is." (Ben-Ze've and Revhon, 2004: 583)

Perhaps this low occurrence of 'basic emotions' (including fear) signifies the growing importance of other social and cultural emotional considerations. It has been

¹ Although there are cultural differences in how emotions are expressed and interpreted, it has been widely accepted that some emotions are basic and universal. Many writers (see Darwin, 1872; Emde, 1980; Turner, 1996) have agreed that happiness, fear, anger and sadness are universal (Turner and Stets, 2005).

purported that basic emotions were some of the most important, both qualitatively and quantitatively due to their function in individual and evolutionary development. However, the environment we now live in has posed new emotional stimuli, emotional processes - particularly complex social, political and philosophical ones. As Ben-Ze've comments; "social comparative concerns have become as crucial as the self-preservative biological concerns and cannot be reduced to them" (2000:104). However, Scherer et al remind us, that despite being a rare event, the significance of fear as an emotion should not be underestimated. Fear is described as a "phylogenetically continuous emotion" which produces important biological, emotional responses essential for the maintenance of health and the avoidance of imminent danger; "the fact that it is apparently a relatively rare event, at least in modern western democracies, does not detract from its important role in the emotion repertoire of humans" (Scherer et al, 2004:557).

What does it mean to be fearful?

If fear is rare, what does it actually mean to think about crime and fear of crime in everyday life? Similar to the approaches adopted in the above-mentioned studies, Gabriel and Greve (2003) argue that fear of crime research needs to utilise approaches that are sensitive to the intricacies of fear as experienced by individuals. They argue that it is essential to distinguish conceptually between fear which is due to a 'personal trait' and a 'momentary affective' state. There are clear and important differences, the authors maintain, between a fear of crime that passes quickly in response to very specific surroundings, and a general disposition or trait of being afraid of becoming a victim of crime. Individuals who have dispositional fear consider more situations as being significant indicators of crime, are more likely to experience fear in a given situation and probably more intensely. The importance of this contribution is that the distinction demonstrates that fear of crime can be experienced very differently in terms of individual relevance, explanation and consequences. Along these lines, some people may experience fear on a regular on-going basis on account of their individual characteristics and psyche – perhaps parochially described as 'nervous' or 'vulnerable', while others are more likely to respond to specific stimulus.

Furthermore, not all behaviours indicative of fear will have been prompted by a fearful experience. For example, taking out insurance, locking one's car and home may be an everyday precautionary action taken to minimise one's risk of crime, but is not necessarily provoked by a fear-inciting situation. These sorts of 'safety precautions' are taken daily by the vast majority of people without an accompanying emotional theme-tune - similar to decisions to take exercise, moderate alcohol intake or eat well to maintain general well-being and avoid the onset of ill-health.

Emotional digestion and appraisal theory

In responding to Scherer et al's study, Goldie (2004) makes the point that emotional responses do not always immediately follow an event. For example, if you are robbed on the street, you may not feel a sense of anger until much later - perhaps days or months after the episode - when the full impact of the action has had time to 'settle' and 'digest' in your mind². As Goldie explains;

² Post-traumatic stress disorder, which may indeed follow an incident of serious personal violence, is not, by definition, felt until some time after the event.

“In much of our life – the life of the mind – the “event” is not so tightly connected to the emotion that it elicits. We feel emotions in looking backwards at events that took place long ago in our own lives: nostalgia, grief, sadness, regret and shame....”

Goldie (2004) argues that emotion-eliciting events can consist of different types of incidence, they may be felt ‘in the moment’ or following an event or crime for example; they may be registered by the individual’s unconscious mind, recalled later from memory or even fabricated and inflated by imagination and reappraised at will. Accordingly, some experiences of fear of crime may be difficult for a respondent to ‘anchor’ in their memory or talk about accurately. Indeed, Goldie (2004) highlights the subjective interpretation of thinking about facts and events that shape our emotional responses. A central point in emotion research and specifically ‘appraisal theory’ is that the very same event may be considered highly significant by one individual and irrelevant by another, depending on their personal, cultural and biological characteristics at that point in time. One person may become scared of crime because there are numerous teenagers hanging around the local streets, whereas others may feel a sense of belonging to a local community where young people are visible and playing outside. Even *imagining* a situation of potential danger may elicit fear or worry in one person but not in another (Warr, 1984).

Interestingly, there are numerous studies which have documented profound discrepancies between peoples’ concurrent and retrospective reports of emotional experiences (Gilbery and Ebert, 2002; Robinson and Clore 2002a, 2002b). Researchers have concluded that this is due, in part, to the highly fluctuating nature of emotions over time, as well as from place to place (Brandstatter, 1983; Fredrickson and Kahneman, 1993); the nature of memory (Scherer et al. 2004) and the way respondents integrate subtle nuances of their experiences when they are recounting historical emotional events (Kahneman, 1994). Exploring how respondents recall knowledge, Robinson and Clore (2002a, 2002b) distinguish between episodic and semantic knowledge; when people report their *current* or very recent feelings they are accessing their ‘episodic’ memory which is grounded in the specifics of time and place. Conversely, reports of feelings experienced in the past (more than two weeks previously) are drawing on ‘semantic’ knowledge. This information is conceptual in nature and draws upon people’s general beliefs related with this particular event. The actual experience may not figure prominently in these semantic reports because the experience is no longer accessible to the memory. Indeed, semantic knowledge allows respondents to characterise themselves, ‘in general’. This dynamic is supported by similar studies which have confirmed that people have fashioned beliefs and ideas about themselves which can be divorced from experiences in their everyday life (Klein, Babey and Sherman, 1997; Marsh and Yeung, 1998). Moreover, Robinson and Clore (2002a) maintain that individual beliefs about emotion are more heavily influenced by semantic, rather than episodic knowledge. As such, when surveys pose the question “how worried are you about burglary” the wording of this question is more likely to illicit vague ‘global’ summaries of intensity of worry or fear. Warr (2000) suggests that these summaries represent future orientated anxiety rather than a summary of past episodes or current feelings of physical fear (see also Sacco, 2005). However, a subtle but nevertheless significant rewording of this question which grounds the respondent into a specific time or place, such as “in the last two weeks

have you ever felt worried about burglary” is likely to prompt time-framed dependent experiences.

Critically, fear of crime research has already encountered a divergence between self-reported levels of fear. Farrall et al (2007) found that more general estimates of fear of crime did not neatly map onto experiential time-focused accounts of crime-fears. Specifically this work found that some 88% of respondents confirmed that they were worried (to some degree) about domestic burglary when presented with a standard (semantic) survey question – perhaps because they have a vivid and accessible image of risk. Yet when asked an additional time-limited question, 65% of the same sample reported that in the past 12 months that they had *not experienced* any events of worry about burglary. This study concluded that the results point towards of two manifestations of fear – one based on expressive or semantic inspired fear, and the other more grounded in the daily experience of everyday life. Fear of crime they maintain;

‘represents a continuum of feelings which are distributed along a spectrum between two distinctly different ideal typical emotional reactions. At one end, the most emotive aspect is the experience(s) of having felt fearful in a specific situation. At the other, is a set of attitudes or opinions which are brought forth when people are asked to discuss their feelings about crime. This ‘invocation of attitude’ – which surveys provoke and measure – we shall refer to as the ‘expressive’ dimension of the fear of crime (in contrast to the ‘experiential’ dimension)’. (2007:1)

Farrall and colleagues explored the idea that respondents who reported ‘expressive’ fear, but who had not experienced any memorable crime fears in the past year were comparable to the ‘worried well’ in the health literature – a concept which describes people who express anxiety about their health despite not having any appropriate symptoms (see Garfield, 1970; Lombardo, 2004). They suggest that the ‘responsibilisation’ of individuals to protect themselves from crime and the high-profile circulation of images of crime in society have raised the general salience and prominence of ‘risk’. They go on to suggest that the ‘worried well’ who are relatively protected from crime may, nevertheless feel at risk and obligated to protect themselves from the future victimisation. Moreover, crime is a richly symbolic issue and public sensibilities about crime and fear of crime may express their assessments of cohesion, social control and civility (see Jackson, 2004). Sparks et al (2001) agree that people’s appraisal of fear of crime is deeply connected to their unconscious interpretation of their environment and space and that crime discourse is a particularly pertinent area in which to discover the impact of social and political change on people’s everyday experience of life.

New directions in everyday emotions research: methodological issues

While work in the field of everyday emotions has opened up new ways of looking at emotional responses and provided a multidimensional view of our emotional life, it has also raised a series of methodological questions concerned with the internal as well as the construct validity of such methods. If everyday emotions are revealed to be complex thought processes which individuals experience in very personal and diverse ways, exploring the incidence and experience of the fear of crime is also a

multifaceted and methodologically challenging arena. Being alert to the issues identified here will not only increase the general validity of any study, but also will better inform our understanding of how people understand, process and ‘manage’ the fear of crime.

Evidently, we need to exercise greater sensitivity and seek more accuracy in the way we understand and interpret survey reactions on the fear of crime. How often do people actually feel ‘fear’ - are other less severe reactions more appropriate? How intense is this reaction and what are the implications for respondents – how do they cope with fear? If we were to let participants speak in their own language would they use the term fear and if not, how would they describe their feelings? Specifically, attempts to acquire knowledge about the frequencies of emotions in daily life are confronted with conceptual problems, such as how moods and unspecific emotional states can be distinguished from emotions. Even though studies may ask respondents to only report incidences in which they felt “fear” or “worry”, it is very likely that participants will also report what they perceive to be similar states, such as ‘anxiety’, ‘dissatisfaction’ or ‘mild concern’ for example. Are we at risk of misinterpreting any reaction as a specifically fearful one? Clearly, we need to pay close attention not just to the presence of these emotions but also their intensity and frequency.

Interestingly, Katz advocates that as research strategies begin, researchers should deliberately shed any assumptions about the topic, their field of work and the theory or traditions surrounding these issues. He develops an alternative, theoretically grounded research strategy, based on a theory of ‘social ontology’ that urges researchers to describe how social conduct is 1) created through symbolic interaction, 2) operationalised as a communicative action and 3) shaped by corporeal processes. By developing a ‘naturalistic social ontology’ one can guard against artificial descriptions or meaningless data gathering. This process begins with simply describing the phenomena as it is experienced by people in their everyday lives. Such an empirically and theoretically grounded description is the first building block to theory development he stresses;

“One initially asks not which theories the data validate and which they invalidate, but which ideas will best guide the description of social life into forms of data. Such a theory predicts nothing substantively differentiating about the causes of the matters to be explained, but at the same time it does predict something essential. The central claim is that unless the researcher describes phenomena according to their nature, explanatory theories will surely be wrong” (Katz, 2002: 258)

In order to produce a more authentic picture of what fear of crime actually means to respondents, data collection efforts need to minimise the potential for measurement errors in survey based studies. Methodologists have long been concerned with the validity of the results from surveys, since measurement errors can easily affect the validity and reliability of the data. Cognitive interviewing techniques were designed by an interdisciplinary team of methodologists and psychologists in the 1980s for the very purpose of estimating the impact of measurement errors. Specifically, the overall aim is to use cognitive theory to understand how respondents perceive and interpret questions and to identify potential problems that may arise in prospective survey questionnaires. For example, an interviewer will probe the comprehension of the

question; the ability of the respondent to recall relevant information; the decision process involved in reaching answers to questions and how these processes operate in the context of a research process. Cognitive interviews are a useful means for pre-testing questionnaires, particularly where the subject matter is sensitive or complex. As such, cognitive interviewing techniques might be a particularly valuable method in fear of crime research, usefully employed to allow researchers to go 'back to basics' and investigate what fear of crime tools are actually measuring.

This chapter has demonstrated that how we conceptualise 'fear' and 'worry' in criminological circles and within popular culture requires thoughtful expansion. Fear of crime has commonly been considered in exclusively negative terms, as a social *problem* which impacts of peoples' quality of life and sense of safety. However, some degree of worrying about crime is both an inevitable and ordinary experience for most people. As Gladstone and Parker (2003) note, worry is not a typically pathological process, it has functional properties, such as prompting the mental reminder to lock the house or check the burglar alarm. When people say they are worried about crime it is very likely that some of these respondents at least are describing a type of worry which is not detrimental to their well being, but has motivational qualities which leads them to take common precautions, such as locking their car, taking insurance or purchasing security lights for their property. These actions may indicate they are aware or alert to the possibility of becoming a victim, but do not necessarily mean these respondents are experiencing feelings of fear, anxiety or vulnerability. Indeed, it is clear that further research is required to explore the multiple personalities of fear and what it represents to people in the course of their daily lives.

Work in emotional research also suggests that respondents are more likely to recall negative experiences. If a researcher asks a respondent about their last experience of fear or worry about crime they may only recall the most memorable and possibly the most serious experience. For example, a respondent is more likely to remember a time when they were concerned about being robbed, rather than a time when they briefly thought something may have been stolen from their car. Scherer et al. (2004) report that respondents have a tendency to associate the term 'event' in a survey with the most dramatic incidence they can recall. As such, delicate internal thoughts, perhaps about less serious crimes or more subtle worries are easily missed. Accordingly it is essential that 1) different crimes are considered separately and 2) we assume that less intense experiences of fear of crime are not consciously remembered and consequently have a reduced impact.

Everyday emotion research has also revealed that respondents are simply not very good at recalling emotional responses for survey purposes. The recall of an event or experience depends on its proximity and recent events are more accessible. One method for minimising response error is to employ a narrow time frame in interview or survey questions which limits respondents to a specific reference period which they will be able to recall more accurately. For example, "in the last 12 months have you worried about...?" Nevertheless, retrievals are influenced by a tendency to reconstruct events or experiences so as to make them consistent with memories and subsequent interpretations. Respondents are unlikely to be succinct or clear when describing their past emotional experiences in which numerous thoughts and feelings may have been intertwined. Consider this example: a person may become *worried* that their car has been stolen when they cannot locate it in an unfamiliar car park they find

disorientating, he or she becomes *scared* of not being able to get home late at night and then feels *concerned* about the consequent financial implications as they search for their car. Eventually the person is *resigned* to the fact that the car has been stolen and begins to think about making alternative arrangements and later *relieved* when they realise they were confused and it was parked on a different floor. In this situation a respondent has gone through a range of brief emotional encounters and asking them to summarise this into one word or phrase is highly reductive. Indeed, much of the difficulty in defining and studying emotion is due to the extraordinary changeability of the process, which can be hard to pin down into specific researchable ‘chunks’. The use of multiple research methods including both qualitative and quantitative techniques which allow respondents more freedom to define their own and various emotional reactions to crime may help us to better understand the properties of fear of crime and the consequent impact of such emotions on individual perceptions.

The prolific work of Jack Katz provides imaginative methods for exploring emotions as they occur in everyday life. Katz (2004: 611) argues that formalised survey research ‘ . . . functions as a surgical courier service for distant intellectual audiences, hastily cutting out and neatly packaging experiences that have taken subjects a messy lifetime to form.’ He describes how social phenomena can be more usefully approached in four alternative ways: ethnographically, interactionally, diachronically, and with attention to corporeal practices. To be precise, his study on ‘how the emotions work’ (1999) uses in-depth reports and videotapes of participants to investigate the emotional life of people in their daily routines. By using video, he was able to capture the ‘invisible’ features of events and emotional dilemmas, and as such was able to provide a unique glimpse into the hidden, perhaps unexpected aspects of a person’s life and thought processes. One chapter from this work focuses on crying and he demonstrates the wide variety of circumstances in which people cry. His examples demonstrate how crying might be spontaneous, controlled or contrived and may express latent emotions as well as immediate concerns. Similarly, exploring perceptions of disorder in Chicago, Sampson and Raudenbush (2004) supplemented a neighborhood survey with a systematic social observation. This involved their research team driving a sports utility vehicle at five miles per hour down every street in a sample of Chicago neighbourhoods. On both sides of the vehicle a video camera recorded captured social activities and physical features, while a trained observer completed a log for each block. By the end of the study, the research team had observed 23,816 blocks. A random sample of 15,141 logs and videos were then coded to measure features of the streets, buildings, businesses, and social interaction. Sampson and Raudenbush (2004) claim the experimental nature of their design was able to generate a more sophisticated interpretation of how residents understand their immediate environment by exploring the correlates for perceived disorder, while controlling for reliably observed (videoed) disorder . Intriguingly, they concluded that economic deprivation and racial diversity had the greatest influence on perceptions of disorder and that residents clearly “supplement[ed] their knowledge with prior beliefs informed by the racial stigmatization of modern urban ghettos” (2004:336).

Evidently, as long as it is possible to make the requisite observations, direct observation is often a useful method for measuring behaviour in natural settings. Indeed, naturalistic studies produce ‘thick’, detailed descriptions of the context, stimuli and reach of human emotion in everyday life. In fear of crime research this approach may be useful in identifying more precisely what fear, crime and society

actually mean to people. In so doing it would go beyond its narrow parameters and would allow respondents to use their own words (and actions) to describe what might be better classified as concern, panic, a passing thought, worry, anger or frustration.

Conclusion

The fear of crime is a topical issue of social and political relevance. It has attracted a great deal of research. However, much of this work seems hampered by a lack of clarity and ambition. It is even possible that standard approaches inadvertently exaggerate the fear of crime problem (Lee, 1999, Farrall and Gadd, 2004); distort the nature of fear as it is experienced in everyday life (Gabriel and Greve, 2003; Farrall et al, 1997) and fail to recognise the functional as well as expressive aspects of the language of crime fears (Jackson, 2006). Throughout our recent work we have tried to develop the argument that researching emotional responses to crime involves important psychological and social considerations. This chapter has given a flavour of some of our thinking in this regard. If we are to continue with this endeavour, ways forward might include drawing upon the research on the psychology of emotional self-report and risk, the sociology of everyday emotions and public sensibilities to crime. Our own recent work has sought to identify two manifestations of the fear of crime; one is intimately grounded in the daily experience of everyday life, the other is better described as more diffuse anxiety - expressive fears regarding the cultural meaning of crime (Farrall et al, 2006 & 2007; Gray et al, 2006; Jackson et al, 2006). The fear of crime is a fascinating social phenomenon that might be advanced by a multi-disciplinary dialogue capable of deepening our understanding of the wide variety of emotions that resonate through our thoughts, perceptions and discussion of crime. In so doing, we may invigorate some stagnant areas of theory and research and open up new lines of substantive enquiry.

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