

# Fear and the problems of crime criminology essay



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Fear of crime is becoming a serious problem as a crime itself. According to the Government's British Crime Survey (BCS) of 2001/2, 30% of the UK felt crime increased 'a lot', and a further 30% thought it increased 'a little' in the previous two years (Home Office, 2002), compared to 33% 'a lot' and 65% 'a little' in the BCS of 2006/7 (Home Office, 2007). The media is a powerful method of distributing messages to local citizens, and the way that the media has portrayed messages and how people are affected by it. Throughout this essay we will be looking at how the media influences our understanding of crime, in relation to irrational fear of crime.

Fear plays a very important part in our daily life, and in human society as a whole. Fear of crime is a rational or irrational state of alarm or anxiety engendered by the belief that one is in danger of criminal victimisation (McLaughlin 2001, p. 118). There are many types of fears which we as individuals experience and they are internal fears, external fears, and subconscious fears. In keeping with psychological theories, Warr says that fear is not a cognitive or behavioral process; rather, 'fear is an emotion, a feeling of alarm or dread caused by an awareness or expectation of danger (Warr 2000, p. 453).

Research has shown that/ discovered that people with certain characteristics have greater levels of fear than others. Social background such as race, age, gender, and also education are to be associated to the cause of fear.

Those who have a low level of socioeconomic status such as low levels of education, low income levels and people that are venerable such as females, elderly and also those who live in a rural area are more concerned with the

problem of crime and which have a high level of fear (Thomas & Hyman, 1977). People with low level of income have high levels of fear states (McGarrell, 1997).

Many studies have shown the relationship between pervious victimization and fear of crime (Roundtree & Land, 1996) found that burglary victim's perception of risk of further victimization was predicted by their previous victimization. However, other researchers have found that has little effect, if any, on fear of crime

There are many ways with fear could creep on us one of these ways is the media . The mass media is a giant vehicle which has been introduced to do one thing, and that is for delivering recent and past information keeping public updated with all that's been going on in the country and finally to entertain. But the implications are that the media does less good and more harm concerning the practice of this method and its effect to the public. There two types of categorizes of mass media one: print media, which are new papers, magazines and many more and finally two: electronic media which is cover through TV news and other TV shows. Although they seem to overlap in many materials, they differ in subject matter in there delivery methods. Print media tends to be more factual based where as electronic media tend to focus more on visual aids to help relay the information. Fear of crime doesn't only affect the public but also many have impact on social norms that affect the ability to control crime and also ways of preventing crime from occurring.

Members of the public have very little/limited information of sources when it comes to crime, information regarding crime could come from friends, neighbors and community groups are important, as is first-hand experience. The media is believed to offer the most universal and important source of crime information for the majority of the public (Attorney-General's Department 1998; Warr 2000). Most of the media are interested in reporting the worthy stories, so the main stories which are covered are sensational crimes which have the most serious consequences for the victims examples of such crime are severe physical injuries, death, and loss of life savings. The reason why these are news worthy is because they are the latest new and rare events which occur. The media tend to provide more information on the most violent crimes which are occurring, and making the public belief that these crime are occurring on a daily based than they really are. Most media outlets tend to use these stories, covering crime is an attracting method to a bigger size audience, or using crime news as fillers when there is a shortage of other stories (Warr 2000).

At times the media may run campaigns that focus on a particular type of crime. This is called selective reporting, this creates an impression which is called a crime wave. What is a crime wave? It is media-constructed image that society is experiencing an increase in a specific criminal activity. Due to this crime wave many people will identify that there are large amount of risk of been a victim of these crimes which are shown. This increases the levels of fear within individuals by emphasizing the consequences of that particular crime (Warr, 2000).

By using these campaigns, the level of fear of individuals may also increase mainly by focusing on specific groups such as females and elderly. By showing these type of victims on the media people assume that members of these groups have a higher chance of been victims and likely to be attacked due to the way that the media exposes it (Ferraro, 1995). People tend to find these types of group to be an easy target of crime. The level of influence that one may get from the media depends on what the type of media it is, with personal experiences and individual characteristics.

There are different way which people interpret the media and the way that they report crime, and the level of influences which they have. They have been many researches done in this field to determine the relationship between viewing crime and the level of fear, which is due to psychological differences. Research suggests that people that are more fearful seem to watch a lot more crime type media and pay more attention to it rather than people that are less fearful who watch less amount of crime type media.

There are other people who are influenced by the media, people that have previously been a victim of crime or even been a witness, and finally people that live in a high crime rate areas or, just by been a victim or a person that lives in a areas which has a high crime let alone individual fears are high but seeing the same thing occurring elsewhere and in your area on the television news will increase levels of fear even more. One many turn the television and be shocked with imaged of violence, war, and stories of unsuspecting people which have been a victim in their own comminutes. We can ask ourselves the question is the crime or is it the media hype; there is many

countless TV show which is committed to the depiction of criminal activities fouled by law enforcement agencies with the helping hand of the law.

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan , & Sign, 1980) States that people who watch more television than other are likely to feel a greater risk from crime, believe that crime is more than just what the stats shows, and in this case take more percussion to be safe. They find that crime shown on television is considerably more violent, random, and dangerous than crime in the “ real” world. The researchers argue that viewers internalize these images and develop a “ mean world view” or a scary image of reality.

Different type of media has selection processes which are chosen on the basis of their capability to deliver the message to the target audiences. Certain media such as TV, have a bigger and larger audience capacity than newspapers which means that they can show limited of information in the time span that they have been given. The media tends to find that by showing criminal activities whether it is on TV or the newspaper people are interested and wanting to find out more information regarding what has occurred. Although the media beliefs that by showing criminal activities is worth wile and as long as people buy our products (newspapers) we will get money at the same time letting people know what is happening but, not taking into count that by showing such behavior they are putting fear into each individual and making people feel uncomfortable living in the area which crime is occurring on a daily based whether it is a burglary, or rape, and other serious crime.

In conclusion we can see that the media has a big influence on the public whether it is through television or printed on the paper. The media distribute a whole heap of information to the public but, not realizing that some information that has been broadcast is affecting the public and also way of preventing things to occur. The media believes that whatever they are broadcasting is good for the public but not knowing that the only thing that they are doing is putting fear into the public by showing criminal behavior on television, this is not only to elderly people of different genders but also putting fear into little kids and children making them unsecure to even walk on the street or go anywhere in that matter. According to research the media has a large contribution to the amount of fear that one has, whether that person has been a victim or not but, by watching the media levels of fear tend to increase and making people scared, and believing that the media is correct and we should believe what they have to say, to a degree the media does broadcast information that is helpful.