
Introduction to the Special Issue *Fear of Crime in the Capitals of South Eastern Europe*

Welcome to this special issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice and Security* devoted to fear of crime in South Eastern Europe. Since the 1960s, fear of crime has played a central and increasing role in criminological discussions and surveying crime and crime related issues. In the surveys, researchers ask about criminal victimization and the effects of victimization, fear of crime and attitudes towards punishment. Lee (2001: 467) points out: "Since the late 1960s the fear of crime has progressively become a profoundly engaging field of study for criminologists and other social researchers." In some aspects, the public discussion about fear of crime became more important than crime itself. The past few years are characterized by increasing efforts for more safety and security which has led to intensified discussions on the extent, nature, emotions and responses to crime, especially in Western industrialized countries.

Politicians discovered this topic and found out that elections can be won by promising the public more safety and security. So governing through crime gradually became an important topic, not only in the USA but also other Western countries; a culture of control was invented, developed and maintained (Simon, 1997; Garland, 2001). In Germany, for example, the proof of further dangerousness of incarcerated offenders before release by psychological or psychiatric experts, the results of these prognosis, became more an important topic. The media report more about the increasing fear of crime and trigger the desire for more safety in general population.

Some politicians, especially those from the conservative arena, propose the "solution" (prevention) of the problem (crime) by demanding harsher penal laws and more severe punishment of criminals. In this regard, a new punitiveness developed (Pratt, Brown, Brown, Hallswort, & Morrison, 2005). Especially in Western countries, the increasing punitiveness is experienced in daily crime control practices and more punitive attitudes of the public. Kury and Shea (2011) have also documented the same trend for other countries around the world.

The measurement of fear of crime produced a fear of crime feedback loop. On one hand, the results of surveys show how big the problem is and this had the effect that more surveys were carried out to clear the overwhelming problem (Lee,

2001: 480). On the other hand, as we know today, the conceptualization of fear of crime is until today more or less unclear and the measurement of the complex concept is often not very valid. Vanderveen (2008: 39) points out: "Fear of crime is a diffuse term that embraces all kinds of (sub)concepts. These (sub)concepts as well as their interrelations appear to be inconsistent, unclear and therefore not very fruitful." (see also, Kury & Obergfell-Fuchs, 2008) Fear of crime itself has not been a culturally known concept prior to the transfer of Western crime-related concepts to other countries. Given this background it is not surprising that the international results about fear of crime are inconsistent and that methodological studies showed a strong influence on the results by measuring the unclear concept (Farrall, Bannister, Ditton, & Gilchrist, 1997; Farrall & Gadd, 2004). The authors of a research project presented in this issue of the journal have experienced a similar problem. In translating a survey to Slovene, Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian and Albanian languages, researchers had a serious debate on a cultural meaning of fear of crime as a prevailing term used in the studied countries is still feelings of (in)security which is also a flabby concept. Surveys of fear of crime in Germany confirm the British results (Kury, Lichtblau, Neumaier, & Obergfell-Fuchs, 2005) and previous surveys in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina confirm the importance of the same fear of crime factors (Meško, Kovčo Vukadin, & Muratbegović, 2008). A challenge for further research is to improve the measurement of fear of crime and making a clearer conceptualization of the topic. The chapters from six different cultural environments of South Eastern Europe presented in this special issue might be a good beginning of this challenge.

A group of researchers from the Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Maribor (Slovenia), Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb (Croatia), Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Faculty of Security Belgrade (Serbia) and Faculty of Security, University of Bitola (Macedonia) held a meeting at the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security in Ljubljana in 2008 and agreed about a comparative study on fear of crime in capital cities of the republics of former Yugoslavia. The research group consisted of Professor Gorazd Meško (head of research project), dr. Ljubo Vošnjak (coordinator), dr. Irma Kovčo, dr. Elmedin Muratbegović, dr. Sladjana Đurić and dr. Oliver Bačanović. Research consultants were Professor Helmut Kury and dr. Helmut Hirtenlehner. In the final stages of the project, dr. Matevž Bren joined the research team to provide additional statistical insights to the data analysis. Trained undergraduate and graduate students under the supervision of members of the research conducted data collection.

The research group had some previous experience in joint studies on fear of crime in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Sarajevo (Meško, Fallshore, Muratbegović, & Fields, 2007; Meško et al., 2008). Researchers discussed conducting a survey and other methodological issues and agreed about a literature review to be made in the following months. The first three months in 2009 were devoted to an active preparation of the survey and planning the data collection. During this period, the survey was translated from German to the native languages and then translated back into German. Additional items were included in the survey and a pilot study was conducted prior to data collection in the capital cities (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo,

Belgrade, Skopje and Pristine), which took place in spring 2009. Preliminary results were presented at the European Society of Criminology conference in September 2009 in Ljubljana (Vošnjak, Šifrer, & Meško, 2011; Vošnjak & Meško, 2009; Djurić, Popović-Čitić, & Meško, 2009; Meško et al., 2009). After the conference, each member of the research team wrote about fear of crime in the respective capitals, and some of the researchers published their findings in various national and international publications, and presented their research at several national and international conferences (Meško, 2009; Meško, 2010; Meško, 2011; Meško, Hirtenlehner, Vošnjak, & Virjent, 2009; Meško, Hirtenlehner, & Vošnjak, 2009; Hirtenlehner, Meško, & Vošnjak, 2009; Hirtenlehner & Meško, 2011). In addition, doctoral students were included as junior researchers in the research project and dealt with particular aspects of fear of crime (Vošnjak, 2011; Jovanova, 2011). The research project was financed by the Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia but the majority of costs and human resources was the responsibility of each partner. After four years of comparative research, six papers about fear of crime in each capital are presented in this volume.

In the applied methods review we would first like to address the sampling methods applied in the study. The sampling procedure was a multi-stage random probability method, and was carried out in four stages. Primary sampling units (urban neighbourhoods only) were defined; inside the primary sampling units, sampling points (i.e. the streets or parts of the streets) were precisely defined – each sampling point was defined as a path with a specific starting point and given direction of the pollsters' movement. In that way, a list of 40 precisely defined paths was obtained for each city. Inside each sampling point, 10 interviews were conducted. The selection of a household was carried out using the random-route technique. The disposition of households was defined according to the city size and the type of settlement. The selection of one respondent per household was on the "next birthday" selection-key. Changing the designated respondents was allowed only after three unsuccessful attempts. The interviewing process was carried out by trained undergraduate and graduate students and supervised by senior researchers and research assistants from the participating universities. Apart from the permanent supervision of the interviewing process by the staff of the universities, and in accordance with international research standards, a check of at least 15% of the effective interviews was performed in each city using some of the back/checks. A pilot study was also conducted prior to data collection in the capital cities. All of these factors ensure high validity of collected data and in this way a stratified random sample in total 2,377 respondents was collected.

Second, for the purpose of this study, a 106 item questionnaire originally in German (Hirtenlehner et al., 2009) was employed. The questionnaire was translated to the native languages and for the improvement of the accuracy translated back. Researchers from the participating universities also thoroughly compared the translated questionnaire regarding denotative and connotative meaning of questions and statements.

Third, we present an overview of the methods applied in the presented studies. The first article provides a comparative study on fear of crime in six capital cities. It presents results of validity and reliability tests, a factor analysis

and regression analysis of factors of fear of crime. The purpose of factor analysis is to test the questionnaire for factor validity. In factor analysis, maximum likelihood extraction with eigenvalues greater than one was conducted by sections of the questionnaire. In cases of multiple factors, direct oblimin rotation was performed. The second article presents the selected fear of crime factor studies. The third article examines the three-dimensional concept of fear of crime (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) with three aims: 1) to investigate gender differences in the emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of fear of crime; 2) to investigate the impact of victimization on different dimensions of fear of crime in men and women; and 3) to investigate the relation of incivilities to different dimensions of fear of crime. In order to compare men and women, a t-test for independent samples was used, and to answer the second and third research question, a hierarchical regression analysis (with age and education entered in the first step as controls, victimization in the second step, and incivilities in the last step) was conducted. Other articles attempt to show the impact by which neighbourly relations and social (dis)organization have on the citizens' perceptions of the so-called fear of crime by applying factor and regression analysis. Socio-psychological and socio-demographic regression models were also tested.

To conclude the methods overview, we stress that all the articles address relevant research questions, have an adequate structure, explain relevant research results, apply adequate methods, results are well interpreted, and literature is contemporary and up to date. For further analysis, according to the nested structure of the data (citizens within neighbourhoods within cities within countries), multilevel analysis may be conducted revealing parts of fear that could be allocated to the individuals and parts that individuals share within the certain neighbourhood and within the city. As mentioned in the Introduction, fear of crime or measures of people's perceptions of insecurity is not a simple phenomenon and therefore this issue may help researchers make a clearer conceptualization of the topic.

This issue begins with an article by Meško, Vošnjak, Muratbegović, Budimlić, Bren and Kury providing an overview of a comparative study on fear of crime in six capital cities (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Skopje and Pristine). The article presents results of validity and reliability tests, a factor analysis and regression analysis of factors of fear of crime. In the second article, Gorazd Meško presents the most relevant research on fear of crime in Slovenia and reflects upon the results from the 2009 survey on fear of crime in Ljubljana. The third article, by Irma Kovčo Vukadin and Tajana Ljubin Golub, examine the relationship between, gender, incivilities and past victimization. Elmedin Muratbegović and Fahrudin Memić examine the situation regarding fear of crime in Sarajevo from the neighbourhood disorder perspective in the fourth article. The fifth article, by Oliver Bačanović and Nataša Jovanova, examines the nature and intensity of fear of crime in inhabitants of Skopje.

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Gorazd Meško, Helmut Kury, Matevž Bren, Ljubo Vošnjak
Guest Editors

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