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Media Exposure to Crime, Fear of Crime, and Social Interaction Anxiety

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Walden University
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Abstract

Media Exposure to Crime, Fear of Crime, and Social Interaction Anxiety

by

Genea Shoulders

MA, University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2013

BS, East Texas Baptist University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

In 2000, approximately 30% of all news stories in mass media focused on crime. According to research, increased exposure to the media directly correlates to an increased fear of crime; however, little research has been conducted into this influential relationship and the extent of which it could affect a person's social interaction anxiety. Therefore, the study's purpose was to examine the relationship and consequential impact of media exposure and the extent of which the fear of crime had on individuals' social interaction anxiety levels. Through a quantitative approach, this study used the theory of cultivation. Question one examined the effect of media exposure and the degree of which the fear of crime had on individuals' social interaction anxiety levels. Question two examined all variables together after controlling demographics. A quantitative correlational survey design included data from 150 residents of a major west coast city who were exposed to crime through different media sources 2 weeks prior to the survey. This study used multiple regression and hierarchical multiple regression testing, residents' levels of social interaction anxiety was impacted by the amount of media exposure and levels of fear of crime. This held true after controlling for demographics; however, age was the only significant predictor for individuals' social interaction anxiety level. Future researchers should replicate this study in different counties across a west coast state to determine if residents' social interaction anxiety differs across counties. State and local government agencies may use the findings as a basis to enact laws and codes regulating mass media as well as establishing social programs that alleviate the public's fear.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Cultivation theory (e.g., Gerbner, 1958; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorelli, 2015; Potter, 2014; Reber & Chang, 2000; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999) states that the more time that people spend in contact with mass media, the more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those sources. In 1969, Gerbner simplified his theory when argued that as people's amount of media exposure increases, so does their fear of crime. Due to the substantial focus by mass media on violent crime, the public's sense of safety may be significantly reduced in public spaces.

In this study, I examined this phenomenon in Los Angeles County by surveying 150 residents of Los Angeles County, who were at least 18 years old, and who indicated that they have watched, listened to, or read about crime stories in the mass media during the previous two weeks. This study used a series of three questionnaires to answer all research questions.

By utilizing Rosen, Whaling, Carrier, Cheever, and Rokkum's (2013) Media and Technology Scale, which employs a 5-point Likert scale, I identified the amount of exposure by participants to TV and the Internet.

By utilizing the Harmonisation Office of National Statistics' (2015) Crime and Fear of Crime Scale, which employs a 5-point Likert Scale, I identified participants' level of fear of crime upon exposure to crime stories through TV or Internet sources.

I used Mattick and Clarke's (1998) Social Interaction Anxiety Scale, which employs a 5-point Likert Scale, to identify participants' level of social interaction anxiety upon exposure to crime stories on TV or the Internet and the level of their fear of crime.

In this chapter, I describe why I chose the topic of media and fear of crime, then review the problem and purpose of the study. Next, I described the significance of the study, followed by descriptions of the theoretical foundation and nature of the study. I then presented operational definitions of the terms used in the study. These definitions were followed by a description of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. After a discussion of the scope of the study, the chapter concludes with a review of major elements in the study.

Background of the Study

In 2014, I, an African American who grew up in Texas, moved to the city of Palos Verdes in Los Angeles County, where I soon experienced a kind of racism that I had never encountered in my native state. Caucasian Texans may harbor racist attitudes privately, but are outwardly friendly. In California, my experience was that Caucasians tended to avoid me rather than show open geniality or hostility. I pondered on the reasons for this behavior and considered the possibility of mass media playing a role. When I encountered cultivation theory (see Callanan, 2012; Gerbner, 1969; Kohm & Waid-Lindberg, 2012; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999) in my graduate studies, I believed that I discovered an explanation for this evasive behavioral trait. This study is the result of that speculation.

Statement of the Problem

The mass media was recognized by researchers (e.g., Surette, 2007) as a primary source of the public receiving information pertaining to crime. Dixon and Linz (2000) found that approximately 30% of all news stories in mass media, both print and broadcast, included reporting on criminal activity. Reiner (2007) contends that the mass media distort the public's perception of crime occurrence by disproportionately focusing on violent crimes, thereby inhibiting people from engaging fully with others in public spaces. Gibson (2014) argues that when the media in American cities presents stories focused on criminality, the public's fear of crime increases, therefore decreasing social interaction.

Statement of the Purpose

In this study, I examined the phenomenon of increased social interaction anxiety in public spaces in Los Angeles County through the lens of cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969), to determine if the amount of media exposure to crime and the level of fear of crime contributes to this behavior. The point of this study was to evaluate the relationships between societal consumption of media messages, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety.

Significance of the Study

Up to this point, no one has studied the level of fear and presence of social interaction anxiety of the people in Los Angeles County, and to what degree this fear can be attributed to the mass media. Thus, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature. Furthermore, when members of state and local governments have access to the

results of this study, they will be able to enact laws and codes to regulate the mass media for the purpose of moderating the public's level of fear regarding violent crime in public spaces. In addition, they can use the study's results to establish social programs to alleviate public fear. Policymakers and public safety directors may also allocate resources, like law enforcement, to communities in need. Also, the mass media may be willing to self-regulate their programming for the benefit of the public.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Gerbner's cultivation theory (see Gerbner, 1958; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan et al., 2015; Potter, 2014; Reber & Chang, 2000; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999; Riddle, 2009). According to this theory, the more time people spend watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and participating in social media on the Internet, the more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those mass media sources. In other words, the pictures and messages conveyed by the mass media shape the public's view of reality (Riddle, 2009). In Gerbner's (1958) words, "massive attention to [the media] results in a slow, steady, and cumulative internalization of aspects of those messages, especially the aspects with ideological import" (p. 95). Or, as Shanahan and Morgan (1999) phrased the issue in relation to television, "watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold specific and distant conceptions of reality" (p. 3).

Nature of the Study

Rationale of Selection of the Design

When developing the research questions for this study, I considered why it is important and how the results can help law enforcement agencies. Therefore, a goal of this study was to bring awareness to poor or weak social relationships due to citizens' perceptions of property and violent crimes presented throughout the media.

Participants

As identified by counties, 150 Los Angeles County residents, who were at least 18 years old, and who indicated that they had watched, listened to, or read about crime stories in the mass media during the previous two weeks, were surveyed.

Instruments

The consent form. Prior to taking the survey, participants read and provided their consent by returning a completed survey. To protect their privacy, no consent signatures were requested. This assured that their identities remain anonymous.

The survey one instrument. Rosen et al. (2013). The media and technology usage scale. *Computers and Human Behavior, 29*, 2501-11.

This survey measured the study's first independent variable, the amount of exposure the participants have to TV and the Internet.

The survey two instrument. Harmonisation Office of National Statistics. (2015). *Crime and fear of crime scale*. Titchfield, England: Author.

This survey measured the study's second independent variable, the participants' fear of crime.

The survey three instrument. Mattick and Clarke. (1998). Social interaction anxiety scale. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, *36*, 455-470.

This survey measured the study's dependent variable, the participants' level of social interaction anxiety.

The Statistical Analysis Software

I used IBM SPSS software and SurveyMonkey to analyze statistical data—determining, among other factors, how the Los Angeles County public's social interaction anxiety varies by demographic characteristics.

Procedures

The participants were located, identified, and surveyed by SurveyMonkey, which sent me the results. I then analyzed the data to answer the research questions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research question one. How does the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impact social interaction anxiety?

The alternative hypothesis one. The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County have a high social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The null hypothesis one. The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County have no social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The research question two. In Los Angeles County, what is the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender)?

The alternative hypothesis two. There is a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

The null hypothesis two. There is no relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

Research Variables

The first independent variable. In this study, the first independent variable was the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure to crime stories.

The second Independent Variable. In this study, the second independent variable was the Los Angeles County public's level of fear of crime geared toward violent or property crimes in the county.

The dependent variable. In this study, the dependent variable was the level of social interaction anxiety among the residents of Los Angeles County.

The mediating variables. In this study, the mediating variables included certain demographic characteristics of the participants, including that of race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

Operational Definitions

Crime: Behavior related to the commission of law-breaking (Dixon & Linz, 2000a).

Property crime: A theft-type offense that includes the taking of money or property, but no use or threat of force is brought against the victim (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).

Demographic characteristics: Factors that identify an individual's race or ethnicity, educational level, income, gender, age, and etcetera (Lane & Meeker, 2003).

Fear of crime: An emotional response to criminal acts or prior victimization (Ferraro & LaGrange, 1987).

Media: The different types of news broadcastings, either local or national (Lane & Meeker, 2003).

Messages: Propositions, assumptions, and points of view that are understandable only in terms of the social relationships and contexts in which they are produced (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999).

Purposive sampling: Is a nonprobability sampling technique in which units are selected because the investigator judges that the units somehow are representative of the population (O'Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008).

Social interaction or engagement: The participation of individuals in desirable activities with others (Glass, De Leon, Bassuk, & Berkman, 2006; Thomas, 2012).

T-test: A test of statistical significance requiring an interval dependent variable. It is often used to test whether the difference between the arithmetic averages of two groups is significant (O'Sullivan et al., 2008).

Two-step model: Sampling method in which the developer selects respondents based on two criterions. For example, the selection of 142 cities or villages, then the random selection of 20 addresses within these cities from the telephone directory (Custers & Van Den Bulck, 2011).

Victimization: The process of being physically and illegally harmed by another person or persons (Austin, Furr, & Spine, 2002).

Violent crime: An offense that involves the use of physical force or threat of physical force (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants would answer the survey questions honestly, including their age and their residency in Los Angeles County. I also assumed that the methodology would answer the research questions. I had no assumptions about the role of demographic variables in the study, especially race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that the results for the population of Los Angeles Count may not be able to be generalized across populations of other cities in America. More generally, the study's quantitative approach to the subject limits the responses of the participants to quantifiable characteristics, unlike the unrestricted nature open-ended essay questions or personal interviews. Secondly, one of the survey instruments

considered for this study was developed in the United Kingdom and may present a different perspective then that of the United States. In the effort to address these limitations, I made sure that all scores aligned with each survey instrument, as well as provided a response participants could mark if they chose to not respond to a question.

Scope of the Study

In this study, I only investigate the effect of mass media and fear of crime on residents in Los Angeles County. Individuals who were not Los Angeles County residents or who consumed no media were not included in the study.

Delimitations of the Study

One delimitation of this study, related to the sample, was my decision to study one county in the nation, albeit a major one, rather than all counties in the country, which would be beyond the means of one researcher to accomplish in a reasonable amount of time. A second delimitation placed upon the research was that the study was completed within one year.

Summary

This study was based on cultivation theory, which states that the more time people spend in contact with mass media, the more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those sources. Given the mass media's heavy focus on violent crime, the public's sense of safety in public spaces may be significantly reduced. In this study, I examined this phenomenon in Los Angeles County.

I use three questionnaires (Harmonisation Office of National Statistics, 2015; Mattick & Clarke, 1998; Rosen et al., 2013) to survey 150 residents of Los Angeles

County, who were at least 18 years old, and who indicated that they had watched, listened to, or read about crime stories on TV or the Internet during the previous two weeks.

In Chapter 2, I review 50 studies that cover the topic in various cities of the United States, Mexico, and Europe.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Restatement of the Problem and the Purpose

The mass media distorts the public's perception of crime rates by disproportionately focusing on violent crimes. This focus inhibits people from engaging fully with others in public spaces. In this study, I examined this phenomenon in Los Angeles County through the lens of cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969) to determine if the residents of that county have high, medium, or low levels of social interaction anxiety about entering public spaces, and to what degree they attribute their fear to the mass media and their level of fear of crime.

Summary of the Content of the Literature Review

The content of the literature review is divided into eight major themes: () general fear of crime, (2) avoidance of public spaces, (3) fear of violent crimes, (4) fear of property crimes, (5) fear of property and violent crimes combined, (6) perceived risk and vulnerability, (7) fear of online crimes, and (8) miscellaneous fear.

Organization of the Literature Review

For each article reviewed, I describe the purpose of the study, and then its location, participants, and research method. This is followed by a review of the study's results and a summary of its recommendations for future research.

Literature Search Strategy

The library databases/search engines used. In the search for relevant literature, I utilized Academic Search Complete, with which I was able to review articles from

several databases at once. Those databases included but were not limited to SAGE Premier, Political Science Complete, and PsycINFO. With ProQuest, I was able to search through topics such as communication, criminal justice, and health science. As an alternative approach, I also reviewed ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global as well as Walden University Dissertations and Theses. In addition, I used the search engines of Google and Google Scholar to obtain literature on topics of interest.

The search terms. In the search for relevant literature, I utilized key words such as *crime*, *fear*, *media*, *risk,* and *victimization*. In addition, I used a combination of words such as *media and fear of crime, age and fear of crime,* and *media consumption and fear.*

The scope of the literature. When reviewing literature for this study, I went back 5 years while focusing on the topics of media and fear of crime. Once I found relevant articles, I looked at the references at the end of each one to find more literature related to media and fear of crime. When determining seminal literature in the field of interest, I found that the three most cited works in the articles she reviewed were Gerbner and Gross (1976), Ferraro and LaGrange (1987), and Dixon and Linz (2000).

Theoretical Framework

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory was first devised by Gerbner (1958) and later elaborated upon by other authors (see Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan et al., 2015; Potter, 2014; Reber & Chang, 2000; Riddle, 2009; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). The essence of the theory is that the more time people spend watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and participating in social media on the Internet, the

more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those mass media sources. That is, the pictures and messages conveyed by the mass media shape the public's view of reality (Riddle, 2009). In Gerbner's (1958) words, "massive attention to [the media] results in a slow, steady, and cumulative internalization of aspects of those messages, especially the aspects with ideological import" (p. 95). Or, as Shanahan and Morgan (1999) phrased the issue in relation to television, "watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold specific and distant conceptions of reality" (p. 3).

Rationale for Choosing Cultivation Theory

I chose this theory because it was directly related to the research questions. Because I wanted to establish how and to what extent exposure to mass media's coverage of crime stories impacts the residents of Los Angeles County in terms of their feeling safe enough to enter public spaces, this was the theoretical approach most relevant to the topic.

How Cultivation Theory Has Been Used in Similar Prior Studies

The Boda and Szabo, 2011 study. In this study, conducted in Budapest, Hungary, the participants reported that they largely ignored the news media and fictional crime series in their assessment of crime and the criminal justice system, since they felt that the media manipulate audiences. Thus, cultivation theory was not applicable to this population.

The Callanan, 2012 study. This author found that as consumption of newspaper and television news increased in southern California, so did fear of crime, just as

cultivation theory predicts. However, newspaper and television drama had little impact on fear of crime.

The Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015 study. These authors used cultivation theory to argue that fear of crime is increased by consumption of television programming. The authors assumed that the fear levels of women would be elevated more than those of men, which proved to be correct. However, they also assumed that the fear levels of white women would be elevated more than those of women of color, which proved to be incorrect.

The Custers and Van den Bulck, 2011 study. These authors, who relied on cultivation theory, found that increased consumption of television in Flanders, Belgium, predicted higher levels of fear of crime, just as the theory predicts.

The Custers and Van den Bulck, 2013 study. Again studying a population in Flanders, Belgium, these authors, still relying on cultivation theory, found that media consumption of sexually violent news stories was *not* a predictor for the level of that fear, and thus cultivation theory was not confirmed in this case.

The Gibson, 2014 study. This author, relying on cultivation theory, found that when the media in American cities featured stories about criminality, the public's fear of crime increased, confirming the theory.

The Jamieson and Romer, 2014 study. These authors, relying on cultivation theory, found that as violence in TV programming rose and fell, so did the participants' fear of crime in general. This correlation confirmed the predictions of cultivation theory.

The Kohm, Waid-Lindberg, Weinrath, Shelley, and Dobbs, 2012 study. These authors, relying on cultivation theory, found that media consumption of crime stories was indeed a predictor of fear of crime among American and Canadian undergraduate students, thus confirming the theory.

The Nellis and Savage, 2012 study. These authors, relying on cultivation theory, found that the amount of exposure to TV news about terrorism was positively associated with fear of terrorism among participants in New York City and Washington, D.C., thus confirming the theory. The findings indicated that the female participants were more afraid of terrorism than the males, which also confirmed the theory.

Review of Other Studies That Have Used Similar Methodologies

There are many studies that used methodologies similar to this current study. The following reviews of eight relevant studies reflect the extensive research that is being done in this field and demonstrates the manner in which it continues to progress.

In 2011, Custers and Van den Bulck used a two-step model to select 1,394 participants for their study. A linear regression was used to analyze the participants' fear of crime. A multiple regression was used to analyze the correlation between the participants' television viewing and their fear of crime.

Callanan (2012) used probability sampling of California residents to determine fear of crime with a varied demographic. The study was conducted statewide between March and September of 1999. The author used a random digital dialing protocol and a computer-generated telephone interviewing system to carry out the research. There were 4,245 completed surveys, which averaged 40 minutes to complete.

The dependent variables included questions related to fear of crime. The independent variables were media outlets, including newspapers, local TV news broadcasts, reality crime shows, and TV crime dramas. The mediating variable was the respondents' likelihood of becoming a victim of specific crimes in their community. The demographic variables included the respondents' education, age, income, and gender. An ordinary least-square regression test, a standard error test, and a standard regression test were used to analyze the data. These tests allowed the author to determine the relationship between crime-related media stories and perceived risk and fear of crime.

The authors Kohm et al. (2012) examined fear of crime among college students from four universities using a self-administered survey. Three schools were in the United States and one was in Canada. Kohm et al. (2012) looked at three different vicarious victimization experiences among social and personal situations (e.g., hearing about a friend or relative being victimized). The students at the American universities were examined in March, April, and August of 2007 and 2008. The students at the Canadian university were examined in September of 2010. This gave Kohn et al. time to adapt their survey to Canadian terminology and practices.

A purposive sampling technique was used to obtain data from volunteers in different departments at each university. There were 1,466 students who participated in the study; 397 students from the Canadian university and 1,069 from the three American universities. A t-test was conducted to analyze the reliability of the different responses from the Canadian and American students. The authors used an ordinary least-square regression and regression coefficients to examine the data.

Nellis and Savage (2012) used a telephone survey to decide whether media consumption influenced perceived risk of victimization and fear of terrorism. The study was conducted in March and April of 2006, of which 532 surveys were collected. The participants had to be at least 18 years old and reside in New York City or Washington, D.C. Through the utilization of a random sampling tool called Survey Sampling Incorporated, the authors obtained the information needed to accomplish their study's purpose. Each survey lasted approximately 15 minutes and focused on exposure to terrorism news stories throughout media outlets and the participants' perceived risk of violence to themselves.

In 2013, Custers and Van den Bulck once again studied fear of crime, this time by utilizing a standardized self-administered survey to examine the relationship between exposure to crime-related stories in the media and fear of crime. The data was collected in March of 2010 from 546 participants who were over the age of 18. A two-step randomization process was used to select participants for the study. A total of 55 cities in Flanders, Belgium, were chosen, in which 40 addresses were randomly selected from the telephone book.

A structural equation test was conducted to determine the best fit of the coefficients and their significance. Chi-square was used to verify the fit of the model and the chi-square degrees of freedom ratio. The comparative fit index and the root means square error of approximation were used in the statistical analysis.

Jamieson and Romer (2014) conducted a content analysis of the Coding of Health and Media Project (CHAMP) when analyzing changes in the national exposure to violent

TV content from 1950 to the present (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 1993). The coders were given specific definitions of violence, so that they understood what to look for in each episode. The Gallup Poll was used to asses citizens' fear of crime as well as their perception of the occurrence of crime. SPSS 20.0 was used to run statistical tests on each study question. A adjusted R-square analysis was also used as well as , a best-fitting polynomial function, robust standard errors, and the Tucker-Lewis Index to analyze their data.

Callanan and Rosenberger (2015) examined the relationship between various crime-related media stories by using a computer-generated phone system. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact that crime stories had on respondents of different genders. The participants were 4,245 California citizens over the age of 18. The survey consisted of 100 questions pertaining to perceived victimization, fear of criminality, crime story consumption, and thoughts on the criminal justice system. An evaluation of two dependent variables (perceived risk of neighborhood crime and the level of participants' fear), two independent variables (media consumption and prior criminal victimization), and six moderating variables (race, gender, age, education, income, and living status) was used to address the research question. An ordinary least-square regression model was used to determine risk of criminal victimization and fear. A z-test was used to identify whether the regression analysis differed across racial groups and gender. A t-test was ran to determine if a gender difference existed.

Peer Reviewed Literature

Zhao, Lawton, and Longmire (2010) evaluated the relationship between property and violent crime and fear of crime at the individual level. By utilizing a telephone questionnaire between May 1 and June 3, 2008, the researchers collected surveys from 652 residents of Houston, Texas; 319 (48.93%) of were female and 333 (51.07%) were male. Categorized by race, 333 (51.07%) of the participants were White, 156 (23.93%) were Black, 104 (15.95%) were Hispanic, and 59 (9.05%) were "Others."

The results indicated that participants' were fearful of crime in direct relationship to the number of crimes committed within an average of 528 feet of their home. Females and older respondents reported higher levels of fear of crime than males and younger respondents. Individuals with lower education were generally more fearful of crime than individuals with higher levels of education. Therefore, the results concluded that there was no correlation between the participants' race and their fear of crime. The authors recommended that future research replicate their study by examining specific types of property and violent crimes in relation to individuals' fear of crime.

In 2011, Boda and Szabo examined how and how much Hungarian citizens rely on the media when interpreting issues of crime and their perception of criminal justice system. The authors collected data from 27 participants between the ages of 20 and 24 in Budapest, Hungary, between March and April 2010. The participants were divided into three focus groups of nine individuals each.

The participants reported that they largely ignored the news media and fictional crime series in their assessment of crime and the criminal justice system, since they felt that the media can manipulate their audiences. Nevertheless, the participants felt that violent crime is one of the biggest problems in Hungary. Furthermore, they felt that the criminal justice system does not protect them or society at large from crime. The authors recommended that future research pay more attention to participants' personal experiences.

In this same year, Custers and Van den Bulck determined the extent to which media consumption correlated to fear of crime. Cultivation theory argued that individuals with prior victimization experienced higher levels of fear when they view crime-related stories throughout the media. The authors assumed that viewing crime-related stories on TV would have a stronger correlation to fear of crime than experiencing similar stories through other mediums.

The authors surveyed 142 undergraduate students from a communication course in Flanders. There were 1,394 completed surveys obtained from citizens over 18 years of age. The results supported the authors' hypothesis that increased consumption of television predicts higher levels of fear of crime. The authors recommended that future research explore multidimensional factors associated with fear of crime.

Heber (2011) studied how fear of crime is affected by reports of crime in newspapers. After studying the types of violent and property crimes reported in 167 articles in four Swedish national newspapers, the author learned that correlation existed between fear of crime, gender differences, and the level of exposure readers had to stories

about crime. In Sweden, 81% of adults read a national newspaper daily. The results indicated that women interviewed for newspaper articles were more fearful of becoming the victims of sex crimes, whereas men interviewed for the articles were more fearful of becoming the victims of crimes related to their occupations. The author suggested that future research quantify gender differences regarding fear of crime by actually surveying male and female victims and non-victims.

In addition, Rhineberger-Dunn (2011) assessed juvenile crime by reporting similar accuracy by newspapers in metropolitan areas of different sizes. A total of 953 newspaper articles were related to juvenile delinquency from the Metropolitan Statistical Area from 2002 to 2006, also included were statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 survey. From the data, newspapers in larger metropolitan areas reported higher rates of juvenile crime than newspapers in small metropolitan areas. Furthermore, newspapers cover violent crimes at a higher rate than property crimes in large metropolitan areas. The author suggested that future research examine how juvenile crime in different sized metropolitan areas is covered by other media, compared to coverage by newspapers.

In 2012, Alper and Chappell examined three theoretical models that explained fear of crime. The *vulnerability model* argued that vulnerable people such as women, blacks, seniors, the poor, and the physically disabled are more likely than others to fear being criminally victimized (see Clemente & Kleiman, 1976; Hindelang, 1974; Kennedy & Silverman, 1985; Warr, 1984). The *disorder model* argued that decreased social and physical interaction in an environment leads to a greater fear of crime (Wilson &

Kellings, 1982). The *social integration model* argues that when residents respond collectively to neighborhood problems, fear of crime can be reduced (Hale, 1996).

The authors collected data from 628 participants living in a city in the southeastern United States by using a telephone survey. When they reviewed the three theoretical models, the authors found that gender was not significantly related to fear of property crime or fear of violent crime. The participants' racial makeup was not significantly related to fear of violent crime but was related to fear of property crime. Individuals who had actually been criminally victimized had a greater sense than other individuals of environmental disorder, had a greater distrust of their neighbors, and had more fear of being victimized by violent or property crime. In general, the researchers found that all three theoretical models were equally useful in explaining fear of property and violent crime. The authors recommended that future research should replicate their study by using a larger sample size and analyzing specific types of violent and property crime.

In 2012, Callanan studied the impact that multiple forms of crime-related media stories have on White, Latino, and African American respondents' perception of crime risk and fear of crime in their neighborhood. By employing a probability sampling technique, the authors collected 3,712 surveys for their statistical analysis. The author found that as media consumption increased, so did fear of crime. Fear of crime was significantly higher among African Americans and Latinos than among Whites.

However, newspaper and television drama had little impact on fear of crime. Local television news reports about crime elevated the perception of neighborhood crime

risk more than other variables (e.g., income, education, and age). Female perception of neighborhood crime risk was significantly higher than that of their male counterparts. The author recommended that future research should include more variables that measure dimensions of media information-processing.

Cook and Fox (2012) examined whether individuals who had been physically assaulted or sexually assaulted in the past were more fearful of violent crime than individuals who had not been physically or sexually assaulted in the past. After obtaining surveys from 282 undergraduate students at a southeastern university, the researchers found that women were more fearful of violent crime than men. However, contrary to their expectation, the researchers found that victims of physical assault and sexual assault were no more fearful of violent crime than non-victims. Furthermore, both men and women had high levels of fear of home invasion. The authors suggested that future research should more carefully compare the fear of violent crime among victims of physical assault and victims of sexual assault.

Foster, Giles-Corti, and Knuiman (2012) determined if fear of physical offense was a deterrent from walking in public. The authors first hypothesized that individuals who report high levels of fear of crime are less likely to walk in their neighborhood than individuals who report low levels of fear of crime. The authors then hypothesized that fear of walking would be greater for recreational walkers than for transport walkers. The authors collected data from 1,044 first-time home buyers in Perth, West Australia, who were over the age of 18 and had lived in their neighborhood for at least 12 months.

A self-report questionnaire asked the participants questions pertaining to environments within a 10-to-15-minute walk from their home. The researchers found that both of their hypotheses proved to be true. The authors recommended that future research determine whether neighborhood efforts to deter crime will minimize the fear of crime among recreational walkers.

In addition, Jorgensen, Ellis, and Ruddell (2012**)** examined individuals feelings of safety in public parks that have other people around than in public parks in which they were alone. The authors collected 540 surveys from volunteer participants in Salt Lake City and the campus of the University of Utah. The participants were presented with 24 photos that illustrated various locations in a park, from deserted to crowded. The authors found that the participants were more fearful of entering deserted spaces than crowded ones. Furthermore, the female participants were more fearful than the male participants, irrespective of how crowded the spaces were. The authors recommended that future research place participants in actual parks rather than just viewing pictures.

Additionally, Kohm et al. (2012) examined three victimization perspectives connected to college students' social and personal environments. The indirect victimization model (Weinrath, Clarke, & Forde, 2007) argued that secondhand information influences a person's fear of crime. Similarly, cultivation theory argues that as the number of hours individuals spend consuming crime stories increases, so will their fear of crime.

The authors argued that the relationship between media consumption of crime stories and fear of crime was associated with traditional and situational factors. The

authors used a self-administered questionnaire to obtain information from 1,466 undergraduate students in three American universities and one Canadian university.

The authors discovered that media consumption of crime stories was an accurate predictor of fear of crime. The participants also reported higher levels of fear of crime when they used the Internet for dating and social communication. The authors recommended that future studies examine similarities and differences between American and Canadian television news programs about crime.

Lai et al. (2012) studied the relationship between violent crime in neighborhoods and the residents' specific fear of being burglarized. After surveying 737 residents of Houston, Texas, between May and June 2008, the researchers discovered that there was no correlation between non-burglary crimes in the neighborhoods and the residents' fear of burglary. However, there was a correlation between non-burglary crimes in the neighborhoods and the residents' fear of crime in general.

When the authors took distance into account, they found that if there were burglary crimes within a half-mile to a mile of residents' homes, the residents' fear of being burglarized increased as the distance from their homes to the burglarized homes decreased. Nevertheless, the African American residents were less fearful of being burglarized than the Caucasian residents, irrespective of their distance from the burglary crime scenes.

The authors suggested replicating their study, but with an increased focus on socioeconomic factors in the neighborhoods. They also suggested that future studies

distinguish residents' fears of burglary, depending on how recently burglaries had occurred in the neighborhoods.

Lane and Fox (2012) obtained 2,414 questionnaires from inmates in 14 jails in Florida. Some of the inmates were current or former members of gangs, and other inmates had never belonged to gangs. The authors concluded that the female inmates were more fearful of violent crime than the male inmates. As for the males, the current, former, and non-gang members all feared personal crimes more than property crimes. However, the former gang members and non-gang members feared property crimes more than the current gang members did. The authors suggested that future research compare fear of sexual assault on the street as opposed to in jails or prisons.

Lee and Hilinski-Rosick (2012***)*** determined whether lifestyle risk behaviors of college students related to a decrease in the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) argued that individuals who engage in activities outside their home are at greater risk of being victimized. The lifestyle exposure hypothesis (Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978) "argued that there are unusual personal and lifestyle factors that either increase or decrease the danger of becoming a victim" (p. 649). The authors expected college students who engaged in risky behaviors to be less likely to fear crime on campus than students who do not participate in risky behaviors.

The authors collected data from 3,472 undergraduate students from 12 universities across the United States. Regarding race and age, the authors found that fear of crime was greater among younger, non-white students than among older, white

students. Gender was identified as being positively related to fear of crime, as the female participants reported higher anxiety levels than the males. Prior victimization and engagement in risky behaviors was positively correlated with fear of theft, but not with any other crime. Thus, the authors recommended that future research further explore the relationship between fear and prior victimization.

Lorenc et al.'s (2012) article on "Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways" examined the linkage between fear of crime and participants' well-being. The authors found that fear of crime significantly affected people's health, anxiety, social well-being, and avoidance behaviors (e.g., in unsafe neighborhoods). On the other hand, the authors note that crime prevention interventions that raise the public's awareness of crime can sometimes have adverse effects by increasing public anxiety. Since the authors did not conduct their own empirical study, they did not make recommendations for future research.

Radar, Crossman, and Porter (2012) studied the physical and social vulnerability levels among individuals, focusing on understanding why certain groups of people fear crime more than others. By utilizing information from the Center for Race, Religion, and Urban Life (CORRUL, 2006) and the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the authors collected 2,610 surveys from respondents across the United States.

Slightly more than one-third (37%) of the respondents felt unsafe in their neighborhood within the past year, whereas slightly less than two-thirds (63%) of the respondents felt safe in their neighborhood within the past year. When the authors considered racial makeup, 48% of the participants were White, 20% were Black, 20%

were Hispanic, 7% were Asian, and 4% classified themselves as “Other.” Three-fourths (75%) of Blacks and slightly more than four-fifths (82%) of Hispanics were more likely to report being fearful than Whites, whereas Asians and “Others” were not significantly different from Whites in this respect.

Female respondents reported higher levels of insecurity than their male counterparts. Older respondents and those in poor health were also more likely to report higher levels of insecurity. The authors recommended that future research explore the interconnections between physical and social vulnerability in relation to fear of crime in greater depth.

Rengifo and Bolton (2012) studied the impact that various dimensions of fear of crime, and behavioral adaptations to that fear, have on individuals’ perception of risk and disorder. The authors used information from the British Crime Survey (2007-2008), to examine the data from 11,315 respondents in England and Wales. They found that individuals with higher levels of fear of crime and lower levels of disorder were also those with higher voluntary participation in their places of work. Not only did higher participation in voluntary activities correlate with fear of crime and perception of disorder, but it also shaped the behavioral patterns of the respondents. That is to say, the more the respondents engaged in voluntary activities in their work, the lower their level of fear of crime. The authors recommended that future research study how individuals’ use of leisure time relates to their fear of crime.

Vilalta (2012) focused on residents’ fear of crime in Mexico City after they installed home security systems, which included high walls, reinforced windows, and

watchdogs. After surveying the residents of 1,549 homes during an eight-week period in August and September 2007, the author found that nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) felt secure being alone in their homes, while the other half felt insecure. In fact, the residents with the high walls felt the most insecure. Furthermore, only slightly more than a quarter of the residents (28.4%) felt secure when they were out in their neighborhoods. The author suggested that future research study whether or not security systems deter criminal activity.

To conclude this year, Nellis and Savage (2012) studied participants' fear of terrorism. In March and April 2006, the researchers surveyed 527 adult participants, of whom 296 (56.2%) were females and 231 (43.8%) were males, all of them living either in New York City or Washington, D.C. Of the 527 participants, 381 (72.3%) were White and 146 (27.7%) were non-White.

Regarding victimization by terrorists, the participants reported being more fearful for their family members than for themselves. When considering the credibility of the media, the participants reported that the media were only moderately accurate in their presentation of news about terrorism (3.82 on a scale of 1 to 7). The amount of exposure to TV news about terrorism was positively associated with fear of terrorism. Again, as evidenced by other studies, female participants were more afraid of terrorism than males. Furthermore, the non-White participants thought that the risk of terrorism was greater than the White participants thought. The authors recommended that future research replicate their study by evaluating participants' fear of terrorism over a longer period of time.

In 2013, Chadee and Ng Ying determined that a general fear level was a better predictor of fear of crime than perceived risk of victimization. The self-interest model used by these authors argued that the short- or long-term impact of an issue takes a toll on a person's well-being.

The authors used a comparative multistage sampling method in June 2009 to gather 1,197 responses from residents living in Trinidad in the Caribbean. Regarding gender, the female respondents reported higher stress levels than the male respondents. The authors recommended that future research explore a broader area of general fear to determine its role in emotional fear behaviors.

Custers and Van den Bulck (2013) article on "The cultivation of fear of sexual violence in women: Processes and moderators of the relationship between television and fear" identified a relationship between fear of crime and sexual violence shown on television news programs in Flanders, Belgium. These authors relied on cultivation theory, similarly to this study, which assumed that the consumption of crime-related stories over time influences individuals' perceptions of crime.

In March 2010, the authors used a standardized questionnaire to gather data from 546 female respondents over the age of 18 who lived in one of the 40 zip codes selected at random from the Flanders telephone book. The authors concluded that fear of sexual violence among women was related to perceived risk, but media consumption of sexually violent news stories was not a predictor for the level of that fear. The authors suggested that future research study males as well as females.

In this same year, Goodall, Slater, and Myers (2013) examined the impact of alcohol-related crime stories in newspapers on individuals' fear and anger. The authors collected data from 789 adult men and women randomly chosen from across the United States. The authors concluded that when alcohol played a role in violent crimes, the respondents' anger toward the accused increased. Furthermore, the respondents who were more frightened by the crimes tended to hold society responsible, whereas those who were less frightened tended to blame the accused. The authors suggested that future research should differentiate the role of alcohol in different types of violent crimes.

Hanslmaier (2013) studied the impact that personal criminal victimization and news of local crime rates have on fear of local crime and life satisfaction. The author collected 3,245 questionnaires from respondents living in 413 German counties in January and February 2010. The author collected 195 (6.0%) questionnaires from participants reported having been criminally victimized in the previous two years, of whom 162 (83.08%) experienced theft, 28 (14.36%) experienced assault, and 5 (2.56%) experienced both crimes.

The victims of crime reported higher levels of fear of local crime and lower levels of life satisfaction than the non-victims. Furthermore, those participants who were highly exposed to crime news through their local newspapers were more fearful of local crime than the participants who consumed fewer stories about local crime news in their local newspapers. The author recommended that future research replicate this study by collecting data over a longer period of time.

Hawdon, Rasanen, Oksanen, and Vuori (2013) identified how fear of violent crime affected individuals' and groups' sense of well-being. The authors collected 700 surveys randomly from participants between the ages of 18 and 74, who lived in Helsinki, Finland, in the southeastern part of the country (and its capital), and Ostrobothnia, in the western part of the country. The authors concluded that when the crimes targeted individuals, social solidarity declined; however, when the crimes targeted groups or communities (as in the case of terrorism), social solidarity increased. The authors suggested that future research evaluate how crime and fear operate among a population in daily life after mass tragedies.

Henson, Reyns, and Fisher (2013) examined individuals' intensity of fear of online interpersonal victimization and its predictors. After collecting data from 838 students in the Midwest, the authors found that students were more afraid of online interpersonal victimization by a stranger than by a friend, acquaintance, or current or former intimate partner. Perceived risk influenced respondents' fear of online interpersonal victimization for all types of victim-offender relationships (i.e., relationships between victims and strangers, friends, acquaintances, or current or former intimate partners).

The authors concluded that significantly positive correlation existed between direct (in-person) victimization and fear of online interpersonal victimization by a current or former intimate partner. The authors recommended that future research further explore the nature and predictors related to fear of online crimes.

Hirtenlehner and Farrall in (2013) examined the connection between modernization and fear of crime by comparing two theoretical approaches suggested by Hough (2009): the *generalized insecurity approach* and the *expanded community concern approach*. The former argued that "free-floating, amorphous anxieties about modernization are directly projected onto crime" (p. 12); whereas the latter argued that "abstract anxieties about social change require the prism of local conditions in order to convert into fear of crime" (p. 18). In other words, fear of crime is either caused by social changes on an international scale or social changes on a local scale.

After collecting 651 questionnaires from 312 males (47.93%) and 339 females (52.07%) over the age of 20 in Linz, Austria, the authors found support for both theoretical approaches, with a slight trend towards the generalized insecurity model. The authors acknowledged, however, that "pathways into fear of crime may differ from country to country, depending on the sociocultural and political-institutional makeup of a society" (p. 5). The authors recommended that future research "take into consideration the broader cultural and institutional makeup of a society and their interaction with sentiments of insecurity" (p. 20).

Kappas, Greve, and Hellmers (2013) examined how older adults express greater precautionary behaviors toward crime than their younger counterparts by, for example, not leaving home after dark, avoiding certain streets, avoiding strangers, and so on. The authors collected data from 528 young, middle-aged, and older adults in Lower Saxony, Germany, in the summer of 2009 and January 2010. Of the 528 participants, 308 (58.33%) were between the ages 18 and 30, 106 (20.08%) were between the ages 50 and

64, and 114 (21.59%) were between the ages of 65 and 84. (It was unexplained why individuals between the ages of 31 and 49 were not included in the study).

The authors concluded that older adults were more fearful of crime than younger and middle-aged adults, and felt less safe than the other two groups. However, there was no significant difference between the three age groups in regard to their evaluation of their own neighborhood safety. The authors recommended that future research study what specific behavioral factors account for these differences among the three age groups.

Lane and Fox (2013) article "Fear of property, violent, and gang crime: Examining the shadow of sexual assault thesis among male and female offenders" examined the impact of sexual and nonsexual assault on female and male inmates in 14 (70%) of the 20 jails in the state of Florida between 2008 and 2009, in regard to those inmates' fear of being victimized in jail by other inmates. The researchers collected data from 2,345 inmates, 1,746 (74.46%) of whom were males, and 599 (25.54%) of whom were females.

The authors found that a majority of the inmates were young, non-White, non-gang members. The female inmates were more likely to be White than the male inmates; the female inmates were also less likely than the male inmates to be involved in gangs, either currently or previously. Furthermore, more than half (51%) of the female inmates reported having been sexually assaulted in jail, as compared to only 7% of the male inmates. On the other hand, the male inmates reported a higher rate than the female inmates of having been violently victimized non-sexually, especially by gang members, in incidents that did not involve theft of property. The female inmates were more fearful

than the male inmates of being victimized sexually or non-sexually, but they were less fearful than the male inmates of being victimized by gang members. The authors recommended that future research compare levels of fear of sexual assault among inmates and non-inmates.

Examining a theoretical approach, Ozascilar (2013) tested the shadow of sexual assault theory, which argued that women who fear being sexually assaulted experience increased fear of other crimes. The author surveyed 1,051 undergraduate students of both genders at Lund University, in southern Sweden. The author concluded female students were indeed more afraid of crime than males. In fact, females fear of crime was twice as high as that of the males, and applied equally to violent and nonviolent crime. The author suggested that future research test the validity of the shadow of sexual assault theory among the general population.

In this follow-up to the previously reviewed study, Rhineberger-Dunn (2013) examined how 231 articles published in newspapers from five small metropolitan areas portrayed juvenile offenders and their victims. Once again utilizing statistics from the Metropolitan Statistical Area table of 2002 to 2006, as well as statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau's survey in 2000, the author found, first, that the newspapers portrayed juvenile offenders as committing more violent crimes than property crimes; second, that the newspapers reported that most juvenile offenders are male. The author suggested that future research focus more on the victims of juvenile offenders than on the offenders themselves.

In addition to prior research, Stodolska, Shinew, Acevedo, and Roman (2013) evaluated the impact of crime on outdoor recreational activities among Mexican American youth in the South Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago, which the locals refer to as "Little Village." The authors interviewed 25 adolescents between May and November of 2010, found that most of the participants reported that crime was an issue in their community, which had a greater impact on the older participants than the younger ones. All the youths felt safest participating in leisure activities near their home, near the home of a relative, and during school hours, when many people are around. The authors recommended that their study be replicated with participants from other racial groups.

Vieno, Roccato, and Russo (2013) examined fear of crime as a function of one's environment and as a function of individual and societal characteristics. After obtaining data from 16,306 participants in 27 European countries, the authors found that the lowest levels of fear of crime occurred in Scandinavian countries, whereas the highest levels occurred in Eastern European countries. In general, the level of fear of crime increased as the researchers examined data from north to south and from west to east. Furthermore, the authors found that living in big cities was associated with increased levels of fear of crime. As for individual and societal characteristics, the researchers found the highest levels of fear of crime among women, seniors, unemployed or poor individuals, and persons with low levels of education. The authors recommended that future research replicate their study by evaluating psychological vulnerabilities associated with fear of crime.

To conclude this year, Visser, Scholte, and Scheepers (2013) studied how fear of crime and feelings of vulnerability impact individuals at the national level rather than the local level. Using two cross-sectional surveys conducted in 2006 and 2008, the authors analyzed the responses of 77,674 individuals from 25 European countries. The authors found, for example, that individuals in Eastern European countries expressed higher levels of fear of crime and vulnerability than did individuals in Nordic countries. Surprisingly, there was no relationship between feelings of vulnerability and the size of the immigrant population in the countries. Also surprisingly, a higher level of crime in a country resulted in increased trust in law enforcement. Female respondents showed higher levels of fear of crime and feelings of vulnerability than their male counterparts. The authors recommended that future research replicate their study by using a smaller sample size over a longer period of time.

In 2014, Breetzke and Pearson identified the occurrence of crime in one's neighborhood impacts one's level of fear of crime. The authors analyzed police records in New Zealand between 2008 and 2010, during which 347,679 incidents of crime were reported. The researchers, who surveyed 8,000 random participants, found that females were significantly more fearful of crime than males. Also, individuals who had previously been victims of crime were more fearful of crime than were non-victims. Furthermore, individuals who lived in poverty areas were more fearful of crime than individuals who lived in more prosperous areas. The authors recommended that a similar study be conducted by other nations.

Creighton, Walker, and Anderson (2014) article "Coverage of black versus white males in local television news lead stories" examined which male racial group, Black or White, was represented more often in leading stories on TV, and how this representation related to police reports of arrests for that period of time. The authors used data from the four main TV stations in Omaha, Nebraska to review 364 news stories reported between September and November 2012, analyzing the 188 that were related to crime.

In September 2012, there were a total of 101 lead stories, 68 (67%) of which were associated with criminal activity. In those 68 stories, Black males were the primary suspects in 51 (75%), and White males were the primary suspects in 17 (25%).

In October 2012, there were a total of 50 lead stories, 33 (66%) of which were crime-related. Out of the 33 stories, 23 (70%) presented a Black male as the primary suspect, compared to 10 (30%) that presented a White male as the primary suspect.

In November 2012, there were a total of 37 stories, 15 (41%) of which were crime-related. Of the 15 stories, Black males were the primary suspect in 6 (40%), and White males accounted for 9 (60%).

Of the 116 crime-related stories in the three months, 80 (69%) presented Black males as the primary suspect and 36 (31%) presented White males as the primary suspect. When the researchers examined the police records of actual arrests during those three months, they found that Whites accounted for 61% of the primary suspects, and Blacks accounted for 39%. Since only the suspect and arrest results for November were in line with the actual statistics, the authors found that there was a clear racial bias in the media portrayal of criminal suspects. The authors recommended that future research replicate

their study by evaluating television news in Omaha, Nebraska, over a longer period of time.

Gibson (2014) meta-study found that when the media in American cities featured stories about criminality, the public's fear of crime increased. Furthermore, the public regarded black neighborhoods as more unsafe than white neighborhoods. Gibson recommends that urban communication scholars should consider how fear of crime affects quality of life in urban settings.

Jamieson and Romer (2014) to examined the accuracy of cultivation theory's prediction that prolonged exposure to TV violence increases the public's fear of crime in general and their perception of local crime rates. By utilizing Brooks and Marsh's (2009) Coding of Health and Media Project, which contains data about the top 30 prime-time dramas on network television between 1972 and 2009, the authors statistically analyzed a total of 475.4 hours of commercial-free programs.

On a scale of 1 to 10, the authors concluded that violence in TV programming decreased from 6.5 in 1972 to 1.4 in 1996, and then rose to 3.7 in 2009, as determined by 20 undergraduate students who were trained to master a code book of rules for the identification of violence and other types of content. During this same period from 1972 to 2009, the public's fear of crime declined from its highest point in the 1980s, when 42% of the public feared crime, to 2001, when 30% of the public feared crime, and then rose again in 2009, when 37% of the public feared crime.

Furthermore, national crime rates predicted the public's perception of local crime rates, but (despite cultivation theory) violence on TV did not. On the other hand,

prolonged exposure to TV violence did increase the public's fear of crime. The authors recommended that future research systematically evaluate how the accuracy of the predictions of cultivation theory has changed over time.

In 2014, Krause studied the impact of crime-related media coverage on citizens' attitudes toward crime control. The authors hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between exposure to crime and support for authoritarian crime control. After collecting data from 503 residents of Guatemala City, Guatemala, the author concluded that there was not a significant relationship between fear of violent crime and support for authoritarian crime control. On the other hand, if the respondents distrusted their local governments, they tended to support strict crime control. The author suggested that future research compare Guatemala City with other Central American cities that experience problems with crime control.

Malinen, Willis, and Johnston (2014) studied the impact of media reports of sexual offenses on the attitude of the public toward recently released sexual offenders. The authors hypothesized that individuals would have less negative attitudes toward sexual offenders if they were exposed to informative stories rather than the fear-inducing stories that are common in the media. The authors also expected female respondents to have a greater negative impression of sexual offenders than male respondents.

After collecting data from 87 first-year psychology students at a New Zealand university, the authors found that sensationalized stories did indeed increase negative attitudes toward sexual offenders among both males and females, but female attitudes

were significantly more negative than those of males. The authors suggested that future research examine the longevity of attitudes toward sexual offenders.

Stein (2014) used the broken window model (cf. Hinkle, 2015), to evaluate the relationship between community disorder and fear of crime in three small American cities: a city in the Midwest with a population of 26,985; a city in the Northeast with a population of 17,967; and a city in the East with a population 5,563.

From police reports and responses to a questionnaire from 892 residents, the author found that the majority of the residents felt safe in their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, there was a strong relationship between community disorder and fear of crime. The author suggested that future studies be made of trust among neighbors as a determinant of how safe people feel in their communities.

Steinmetz and Austin (2014) article “Fear of criminal victimization on a college campus: A visual and survey analysis of location and demographic factors” studied fear of crime among 235 college students over the age of 18 in relation to the six most dangerous places on the campus of the University of Louisville. After showing the students twelve photographs of six locations on campus, the authors found that enclosed walkway photos brought about the highest levels of fear and victimization among both genders, although the males were less fearful than the females. The authors suggested that future research explore the association between fear of crime and different types of school events.

The study (Yu, 2014) examined the impact that perceived crime seriousness, perceived risk of victimization, and actual victimization experiences have on fear of

cyber-crimes. The author surveyed 270 students at an urban university in the Midwest: 148 females and 122 males. Perceived risk of victimization and perceived crime seriousness were significant predictors for fear of online scams. Students who frequently shopped online had more fear of online crimes than those with minimal online shopping experience. Not surprisingly, female students were more fearful of online crimes than the male students. The author suggested that future research replicate this study by using a different sampling population.

In 2015, Brands, Schwanen, and Van Aalst interviewed 30 students between the ages of 18 and 25 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Each student was interviewed three times. The researchers found that the respondents felt safer in areas that were well lit as opposed to non-well-lit places. Surprisingly, the presence of police in the area only made a third of the respondents feel safer, whereas the other two-thirds reported no change in their fear of crime from this factor. The researchers suggested that future research should use larger samples.

Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015 studied how crime-related stories had different impacts on female and male residents of California over the age of 18 (surveying 2,454 females and 1,791 males). Like the present author, these authors used cultivation theory to argue that fear of crime is increased by consumption of television programming. The authors assumed that the fear levels of women would be elevated more than those of men, which proved to be correct. However, they also assumed that the fear levels of white women would be elevated more than those of women of color, which proved to be incorrect, since the fear levels of both groups were statistically the same. The authors

recommended that additional studies be made of gender and racial differences in relation to fear of crime.

Dixon (2015) studied the racial representation of perpetrators of crime, victims, and police officers in television programs broadcast in the Los Angeles area between 2008 and 2012. By utilizing the Equal Probability of Selection Method (Rosenthal & Steen, 2012), the author statistically analyzed 117 news programs, finding that approximately 30% of those programs featured some criminal act, approximately half of which were violent, including murder. As for racial makeup, Whites represented 27% of the persons in the 117 programs, Blacks represented 27%, Latinos represented 41%, and "Others" represented 5%.

The author found that Blacks were accurately portrayed as victims, offenders, and police officers. Latinos were overrepresented as offenders and underrepresented as victims and police officers. Whites were overrepresented as victims and police officers, and underrepresented as offenders. The author recommended that future research replicate this study by utilizing a larger sample size of news programs and also by considering nonviolent as well as violent crimes.

In this follow-up study, Dixon and Williams (2015) extended Dixon's (2015) prior research by evaluating whether cable news outlets differed from network news outlets in their treatment of social categories in crime portrayals. The authors analyzed a total of 146 news programs broadcast in the Los Angeles area, of which 90 (61.64%) presented at least one crime story.

In both cable news and broadcast news programs, the authors found that Whites were accurately represented as both perpetrators and victims, whereas Blacks were underrepresented in those same roles. Latinos were overrepresented as both legal and undocumented immigrants, whereas Muslims were overrepresented as terrorist suspects. The authors recommended that future research replicate their study by analyzing the representation of additional racial and ethnic groups, especially Asians.

Examining a theoretical approach, Hinkle (2015) used the broken window thesis, which expects the residents of more organized communities in eastern Los Angeles (i.e., those with higher levels of building maintenance, policing, etc.) to have lower levels of fear of crime than residents of more disorganized communities, which proved to be correct. Like Callanan and Rosenberger (2015), Hinkle found higher levels of fear of crime among females than among males. However, unlike Vieno et al. (2013), Hinkle did not find elevated levels of fear of crime among older residents. Hinkle recommended that future research examine all the emotional and perceptual reactions of individuals to crime.

In connection to prior avoidance studies, Hughes, Gaines, and Pryor (2015) examined how victimization, bullying, drug use, and media exposure were related to the avoidance of school by 15,425 students in grades 9 to 12 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The authors found that the avoidance of school was due to the examined factors varied by racial demographic. For example, Hispanic students were more likely to miss school than White students. The threat of being victimized by a weapon significantly increased school avoidance among all racial groups.

In addition, fear of sexual assault was a significant predictor for school avoidance for White and Black students while being hit by a partner was significant among the Hispanic and multiracial population. For female respondents, electronic bullying, being Hispanic, and carrying a weapon were predictors for school avoidance. For males, being threatened with a weapon, forced sex, and property damage were predictors were school avoidance. The authors suggested that future research compare the effects of crime in neighborhoods to crime in schools.

Luo, Ren, and Zhao (2015***)*** examined fear of crime by neighborhood and by home by using a random sample of landline phones, thereby obtaining data from 2,393 participants over the age of 18 in Houston, Texas, between 2010 and 2012. The authors found that female and senior participants felt safer in public than in their homes, whereas the male and younger participants felt equally safe in both settings. The authors suggested that similar research be conducted on other geographical locations.

To conclude, Ozascilar and Ziyalar (2015) identified predictors of fear of crime in association with the impact of fear of sexual assault and perceived risk of crime among college students in Istanbul, Turkey. A total of 723 questionnaires were administered to undergraduate students at eight universities in Istanbul. From the data, the authors determined that female students' fear levels of sexual assault were significantly higher than those of male students. Perceived risk was the strongest predictor for fear of nonsexual crimes (burglary, robbery, theft, etc.). Also, perceived risk was higher among women for all fear categories. The authors recommended that future research explore these gender differences in greater depth.

Research by Theme

There were eight themes that emerged from the studies reviewed, which were presented in the order of importance to my research.

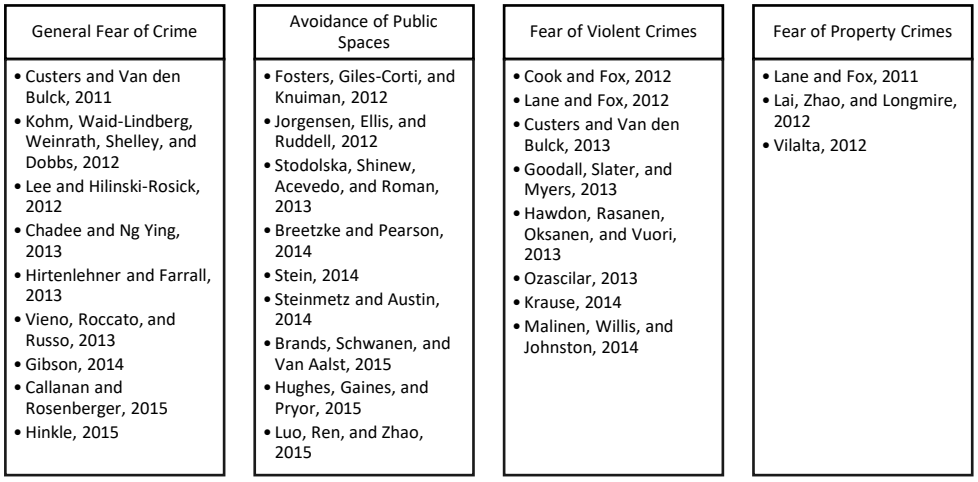

Figure 1. research themes by importance.

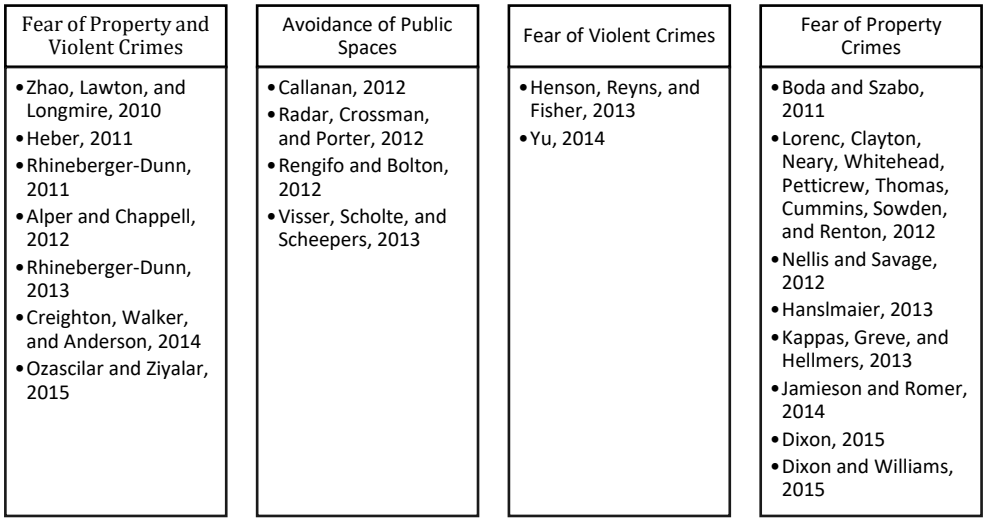

Figure 2. research themes by importance.

Current Research Based on Research Variables

All the studies reviewed here examined the same variables as the ones that is explored in the present study—that is, (1) amount of media exposure, and (2) level of fear of crime. Furthermore, all the studies reviewed here examined similar demographic variables. Nine of the studies reviewed here, like the present study, examined avoidance of public spaces as a form of social interaction: (1) Brands et al. (2015); (2) Breetzke and Pearson (2014); (3) Foster et al. (2012); (4) Hughes et al. (2015); (5) Jorgensen et al. (2012); (6) Luo et al. (2015); (7) Stein (2014); (8) Steinmetz and Austin (2014); and (9) Stodolska et al. (2013).

Rationale for Variables Selection

This study determined whether media exposure to news stories and fiction stories about violent crime and property crime (independent variable no. 1) increased the fear of crime (independent variable no. 2) among the residents of Los Angeles County, and decreased their level of social interaction anxiety (dependent variable). The demographic variables (race/ethnicity, age, and gender) were the controlling variables for this study.

Research Design

Differing Mythologies with Similar Outcomes

The Gibson, 2014 study. This was neither a quantitative nor a qualitative study, but a meta-study—that is, a review of studies conducted by other researchers. Nevertheless, the author confirmed the predictive value of cultivation theory, since all the studies reviewed found that when the media in American cities featured stories about criminality, the public's fear of crime increased.

The Heber, 2011 study. This author used a qualitative method of interviewing men and women in Sweden about the kinds of crimes of which they feared to be victims. The author found that women were most fearful of being the victims of sex crimes, whereas men were most fearful of being the victims of crimes related to their occupations.

The Lorenc et al. (2012) study. In this meta-study, the authors reviewed literature regarding the association between individuals' fear of crime and their physical and psychological well-being. The reviewed literature showed that fear of crime significantly affects individuals' health, level of anxiety, their perception of their social well-being, and their avoidance behaviors (e.g., in unsafe neighborhoods). Surprisingly, crime prevention interventions that raise the public's awareness of crime can sometimes unintentionally increase public anxiety.

Summary

With the exception of one study conducted in Hungary (Boda & Szabo, 2011), where the population was distrustful of the media and government authorities, all the studies reviewed here, both quantitative and qualitative, confirmed the predictive value of cultivation theory. Specifically that increased media exposure to violence increased the public's fear of crime in general, and more so among females than males.

What was unknown was how the public's fear of crime and the degree of their exposure to media related to their level of social interaction anxiety. This gap in the available literature was filled by the present study—at least in relation to the residents of Los Angeles County.

In Chapter 3, Methodology, I described how I obtained participants for the study, the survey instruments I used, the procedures for conducting the surveys with the participants, the ethical issues involved with the study, and the methods used to analyze my data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The mass media distort the public's perception of crime rates by disproportionately focusing on violent and property crimes. This distortion inhibits people from fully engaging with others in public spaces, therefore creating a sense of fear. In this chapter, I first describe how the research design derived from the problem statement, then I review the role of the researcher. Next, I describe the population, or participants, in this study. This description is followed by an explanation of the sampling and setting procedures, and then by the procedures for recruitment, instrumentation, and operationalization.

I then present operational definitions of the terms used in the study. This is followed by a description of how I analyzed the data. After a discussion of the threats to the validity of the study, the chapter concludes with a review of the relevant ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

How the Research Design Derived from the Research Questions

When developing the research questions for this study, I considered the question of "why it is important" and "how such results will help law enforcement agencies." Therefore, a goal of this study was to bring awareness to poor or weak social relationships due to citizens' perceptions of property and/or violent crimes presented throughout the Television and Internet. As a result of not addressing this concern, there may be a decrease in the level of trust and unity among different racial groups.

The first research question of this study was: How does the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impact social interaction anxiety in public spaces?

The second research question of this study was: In Los Angeles County, what is the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender)?

This study used the following three questionnaires, which employ a 5-point Likert scale, to answer both research questions.

The Media and Technology Scale, developed by Rosen et al. (2013), allowed me to identify the amount of exposure by participants to TV and the Internet—thereby collecting data in response to media exposure aspect of each research question.

The Harmonisation Office of National Statistics' (2015) Crime and Fear of Crime Scale enables me to identify participants' level of fear of crime—thereby collecting data in response to the fear of crime aspect of each research question.

Mattick and Clarke's (1998) Social Interaction Anxiety Scale allowed me to identify participants' level of social interaction anxiety—thereby collecting data in response to the social interaction anxiety aspect of each research question.

By using the Demographic Questionnaire, I was able to correlate the data collected by the other three surveys with demographic variables—thereby collecting data in response to the second research question.

Restatement of the Study's Variables

The study's first independent variable was the amount of the participants' exposure to TV and the Internet.

The study's second independent variable was the participants' fear of crime.

The study's dependent variable was the participants' level of social interaction anxiety.

The study's moderating variables were the participants' demographic characteristics.

Time and Resource Constraints Consistent with the Design Choice

Since the data for the three surveys and the Demographic Questionnaire were collected by SurveyMonkey, the research design did not face any time constraint when reaching the target goal of sixty days or 300+ surveys. The research design did not face any resource constraint particularly that of not having enough participants that fit the study criterions.

How the Design Choice Was Consistent with the Research Designs Needed to Advance Knowledge in the Discipline

The three survey instruments and the Demographic Questionnaire used in this study obtained quantitative data about the first and second independent variables, the one dependent variable, and the three demographic factors of gender, age, and race/ethnicity.

The Role of the Researcher

The Researcher as Observer

I only analyzed data collected online from anonymous participants provided by SurveyMonkey.

The Role of the Researcher During Data Collection

I had no role during the collection of data other than to pay $23 per month to SurveyMonkey for its data-collection services.

The Anonymity of the Relationship Between the Researcher and the Participants

I had no contact whatsoever with the participants, so there was no personal or professional relationship between myself and the participants that could compromise the objectivity of the study. In other words, no biases or power relationships needed to be managed for the study to remain objective.

Other Ethical Issues

There were no ethical issues since the identities of the participants were unknown to me. I did not, for example, conduct a study in my work environment, so there were no questions of power differentials or conflicts of interest between myself and the participants. The only issue that might have conceivably caused ethical questions is the fact that SurveyMonkey attracts participants to respond to surveys by offering to make a small contribution to their favorite charity and by giving them opportunities to win sweepstakes. But this was unknown since there was no personal information collected from participants. However, these rewards are strictly regulated by the laws of the state of California, and, in any case, I had nothing to do with their distribution.

The Study Population

In order to be surveyed for this study, individuals needed to be 18 years of age or older, reside in Los Angeles County, and have regularly watched the local news on television and/or social media during the two weeks prior to their participation in the study. So that the target population would be reached, I opened the questionnaire to all SurveyMonkey's panelist who met the survey criteria for 60 days or until 300+ surveys was reached, whichever came first.

Sampling and Setting Procedures

The Sampling Strategy

SurveyMonkey used several different sampling strategies, from which I selected voluntary response sampling. A probability sampling method was not feasible for the study because not all participants had an equal chance of being included in the sample. Therefore, the use of a nonprobability sampling design such as voluntary response sampling allowed me to collect data from those who met the criteria of the study and were willing to complete the survey. The design was also a form of case selection in which the selection process was purposive rather than based on randomization or probability sampling (see Jupp, 2006).

A potential negative was that nonprobability sampling leads to less trustworthy responses when compared to the random sampling method; the usefulness of the data collected depends on the purpose of the study, the criteria for selecting unit samples, and how well each sample represents the population of interest. Voluntary response sampling provided an oversampling of those with strong opinions while undersampling those who

care less for the survey topic. I needed to make sure participants fully understood the purpose of the study through the informed consent form, word all questions in a manner that did not lead participants to answer in a particular way, and verify through the use of demographic and screening questions that participants represented the population of interest.

How the Sample Was Drawn

I used SurveyMonkey technology as much as possible, therefore two options were considered when reaching the target population. Option one, I could have selected participants from SurveyMonkey's panel based on pre-profiled targeting options such as basic demographic questions and/or behavioral questions. Option two, I asked specific screening questions and disqualify participants who don't meet the criteria. Thus, I used a combination of options one and two in which the basic demographic and behavioral questions designed by SurveyMonkey and specific screening questions were used.

The specific screening questions for this research used only SurveyMonkey panelists who were residents of Los Angeles County over the age of 18, lived in the county for at least 90 days, and watched crime-related news stories on TV or the Internet two weeks prior to participating in the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The participants were at least 18 years old, resided in Los Angeles County, and watched crime stories on TV or the Internet two weeks prior to the study. Anyone who did not meet the criteria were excluded from the study.

Power Analysis to Determine the Sample Size

I used the G-Power calculator developed by Faul, Erdfelder, Butcher, and Language (2009) to compute the statistical power analysis needed for her study. For this study, I used the *F*-test family with a statistical one-way ANOVA to determine the sample size. This sample also yielded the *F*-distribution (degrees of freedom), non-centrality parameters (degree to which the null hypothesis is false), and sample size. I manually had to input the effect size, error of probability, and the power of test significance. I used a 95% confidence level (the probability in which the sample accurately represent the target population) and +/- 5% margin of error (the range in which the results of the survey will fall between), therefore I was able to obtain an actual representation of the whole population, accurately concluding that the target population had been reached. I made sure that the total population had been reached prior to stopping data collection so that a full sample size was acquired. This included evaluation of each survey to make sure each question was answered as well as elimination of those with inadequate responses.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment Procedures

Every month, SurveyMonkey recruits millions of participants, offering them a choice of contributing 50 cents to a charity of their choice for every survey they answer or allowing the participants to enter a sweepstakes for prizes. SurveyMonkey avoids flooding participants with questionnaires, to ensure a high quality of recorded data. SurveyMonkey also took regular self-profiling surveys to help keep its demographic

information updated. SurveyMonkey worked with survey panel companies to ensure that the survey takers are willing participants who are vetted for quality.

Demographic Information to Be Collected

The demographic information collected included participants race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

Informed Consent

Prior to taking the survey, the participants read and acknowledge their consent by returning a completed survey, which assured them that their identity will remain anonymous and that no physical or psychological harm came to them as a result of taking the survey.

Collection of Data

For this study, SurveyMonkey collected responses anonymously. Therefore, no email reminder were sent out to those who partially complete or drop-out of the survey. Participants were selected based on identifying that they live in the state of California and reside within Los Angeles County. After establishing residency, Los Angeles County residents moved on to the study's two screening questions.

Debriefing Procedures

After completing the survey, participants were automatically taken to a SurveyMonkey web page, which thanked them for taking the survey and provided information about SurveyMonkey.

Follow-up Procedures

If participants wanted to receive a copy of the study's results, they could have provided an e-mail address to which I would send them a copy of the results upon publication.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The Developers of the Survey Instruments

The survey one instrument. Rosen et al. (2013). The media and technology usage scale. *Computers and Human Behavior, 29,* 2501-11.

This survey measured the study's first independent variable, the amount of the participants' exposure to TV and the Internet.

The survey two instrument. Harmonisation Office of National Statistics (2015). *Crime and fear of crime scale*. Titchfield, England: Author.

This survey measured the study's second independent variable, the participants' fear of crime.

The survey three instrument. Mattick and Clarke (1998). Social interaction anxiety scale. *Behavior Research and Therapy, 36,* 455-470.

This survey measured the study's dependent variable, the participants' level of social interaction anxiety.

The Appropriateness of the Survey Instruments to the Present Study

Collectively, the three surveys measured all the components of the present study's research questions.

Permission Letters from the Developers of the Survey Instruments

I received a permission letter from the authors of Survey 1. Survey 2 contains a privacy disclosure clause that permits researchers to use the survey for legitimate academic purposes. For permission to use Survey 3, I obtained permission from the original author who published in the, *Behavior Research and Therapy*. The two letters of permission and a copy of the disclosure clause were included in the Appendix to this study.

The Reliability and Validity of the Survey Instruments

The survey one instrument. ***Rosen et al. (2013) Media and Technology Usage Scale.*** All 15 subscales showed strong reliability and validity. The strongest subscales were Internet usage (Cronbach alpha .91) and television usage (Cronbach Alpha .61), both of which will be used by the present researcher.

The survey two instrument. ***The Harmonisation Office of National Statistics' (2015) Crime and Fear of Crime Scale.*** The authors used four subgroups (feeling safe; worries about crime; crime rates in areas; problems in areas) to determine the reliability and validity of their scale. Their data were in compliance with the Statistics and Registration Act of 2007.

The survey three instrument. ***Mattick and Clarke's (1998) Social Interaction Anxiety Scale.*** The authors proved their instrument to be reliable when the results yielded high internal consistency for all its 20 questions. As for validity, the authors stated that the discriminant validity of almost all the items is "sufficiently high to allow clinicians to confidently interpret individual items" (p. 467).

The Population the Instruments Survey to Establish Validity and Reliability

The survey one instrument. ***Rosen et al. (2013) Media and Technology Usage Scale.*** In this study, the authors surveyed two groups: undergraduate students and community members, both in the Los Angeles area.

The survey two instrument. ***The Harmonisation Office of National Statistics' (2015) Crime and Fear of Crime Scale.*** In this study, the authors surveyed individuals throughout the United Kingdom who were at least 16 years old.

The survey three instrument. ***Mattick and Clarke's (1998) Social Interaction Anxiety Scale.*** In this study, the authors surveyed 485 undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and 315 non-student friends of the students.

Operationalization for Variables

Definitions of the Variables Used

The first independent variable: In this study, the first independent variable was the Los Angeles County public's amount of TV and Internet exposure.

The second independent variable: In this study, the second independent variable was the Los Angeles County public's level of fear of crime.

The dependent variable: In this study, the dependent variable was the level of social interaction anxiety among the residents of Los Angeles County.

The mediating variables: In this study, the mediating variables included the demographic characteristics of race/ethnicity, age, and gender.

How the Variables Were Measured

All three parts of the survey contain 5-point Likert scales, so the response of each participant to each survey were totaled for analyses.

How the Variables/Scale Scores Were Calculated, What the Scores Represent, and an Example Item

For example, the media exposure section of Survey 1 has six items, for which the participant responded with an answer of 0 to 4, with 0 standing for no exposure, and 4 standing for exposure all day. Thus, if a participant answers with 4 to all six items, his or her total score for that section was 24, and his or her average score for that section was 4.0.

The Data Analysis Plan

Software Used for Analyses in This Study

I exported the data from SurveyMonkey into IBM SPSS software when I analyzed the data.

Explanation of Appropriate Data Cleaning and Screening Procedures

I used filters provided by SurveyMonkey to eliminate participants who did not meet the criteria for participation established by myself. Other filters were used to screen out the responses of participants who only answer a portion of the questions, who speed through the survey, who put the same response for every question, who provided unrealistic answers, and who gave inconsistent responses.

Restatement of the Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research question one. How does the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impact social interaction anxiety?

The alternative hypothesis one The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County have a high social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The null hypothesis one. The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County have no social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The research question two. In Los Angeles County, what is the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender)?

The alternative hypothesis two. There is a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

The null hypothesis two. There is no relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

The Statistical Tests That Were Used to Test the Hypotheses.

A sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression analysis was used to test the two hypotheses in this study. For each hypothesis, the dependent variable was the measure of

social interaction anxiety. For the second hypothesis, the demographic variables were included to control for any confounding that existed.

The model 1 (for Hypothesis 1):

$$\hat{Y} = a + B_1(\text{MediaUsage}) + B_2(\text{FearofCrime})$$

The model 2 (for Hypothesis 2):

$$\hat{Y} = a + B_1(\text{MediaUsage}) + B_2(\text{FearofCrime}) + B_3(\text{Race}) + B_4(\text{Education}) + B_5(\text{Income}) + B_6(\text{Gender}) + B_7(\text{Age})$$

Statistical Methods Used to Analyze the Data

The correlational statistic used. Preliminarily, a correlational analysis was used to investigate the relationships among all variables in the study. Specifically, bivariate correlations investigated the dependent variable paired with each independent variables and each of the demographic variables. Also, bivariate correlations determined each independent variable paired with each demographic variable.

The regression statistic used. A sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression model was used to investigate the relationship between the two independent variables (media usage and fear of crime) and the dependent variable (social interaction anxiety).

The analysis of variance statistic used. Analysis of variance or an alternative nonparametric method was used to determine the significance difference in the dependent variable across levels of the demographic variables. Post-hoc multiple comparison test with a Bonferroni correction was not used.

The Rationale for Inclusion of Potential Covariates and/or Confounding Variables.

Since this study obtained a representative sample of Los Angeles County residents; media usage, fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety varied among the demographic variables. Therefore, the inclusion of demographics as the covariate (mediating) variable was useful in controlling for a representative sample of the whole population.

How the Results Were Interpreted

The results of this study were interpreted based upon standard statistical guidelines.

Threats to Validity

Threats to External Validity and How They Were Addressed

Threats to the external validity of this study would come from the researcher applying the results of her investigation to populations outside of Los Angeles County. Since I did not make such applications, there were no threats to the external validity of my study.

Threats to Internal Validity and How They Were Addressed

Threats to the internal validity of this study would arise from the researcher drawing incorrect inferences from her data. I was able to eliminate this possibility, or at least heavily mitigate it, by avoiding any subjectivity in relation to my data and relied exclusively on statistical analyses.

Threats to Construct or Statistical Conclusion Validity

Threats to the construct validity of this study did not occur, specifically to that of not adequately defining the terms and measurements used in my study. I provided an extensive list of operational definitions of all the major terms used in my study to address this threat.

Threats to the statistical conclusion validity of my study did not arise, specifically to the exporting of data from SurveyMonkey. I was able to avoid this threat by going over my exporting techniques, repeatedly and thoroughly.

Ethical Procedures

All Agreements to Gain Access to Participants or Data

I created an account with SurveyMonkey, which included an agreement (see Appendix F) that gave me access to all the data that SurveyMonkey collects from the participants. In addition, SurveyMonkey required all participants to read and acknowledge their consent, by returning a complete survey. This form detailed to participant how all information was kept anonymous, therefore advising respondents that no identifiable information was collected.

The Treatment of Human Participants Related to Institutional Permissions

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University received copies of the agreement between the researcher and SurveyMonkey, as well as the consent form between the participants and SurveyMonkey. Since I had no direct contact with the participants, the IRB had no ethical concerns regarding my treatment of participants.

The Ethical Concerns Related to Recruitment Materials and Processes

Since SurveyMonkey recruited all the participants, there were no ethical concerns related to my recruitment materials or processes.

The Ethical Concerns Related to Data Collection

There were several participants who decided to withdraw from the survey, but were not penalized, so there were no ethical concerns related to the collection of data.

The Treatment of Data/Anonymity and Confidentiality

The identities of all the participants were anonymous, even to myself, so there were no issues related to confidentiality. Nevertheless, I kept the data in a file that was password-protected, and I will destroy all the data five years after the dissertation is concluded.

Other Ethical Issues

There were no other ethical issues related to this dissertation project.

Summary

This chapter began with a description of how the research design derived from the problem statement. Next, I reviewed the role of myself in this study. I then described the population of the study, I followed this explanation with the sampling and setting procedures, and then with a description of the procedures for recruitment, instrumentation, and operationalization.

Next, I presented operational definitions of the terms I used in the study. I then described how I analyzed the data. After discussing potential threats to the validity of the study, I concluded the chapter by reviewing the relevant ethical procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the occurrence of increased social interaction anxiety in public spaces in Los Angeles through the lens of cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969), to determine if the amount of media exposure to crime and the level of fear of crime contributes to this behavior. Therefore, the point of this study was to evaluate the relationship between societal consumption of media messages, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety. To accomplish this task, the study used an online research site (SurveyMonkey) to obtain responses from residents who are 18 years of age or older and reside in Los Angeles county.

The research question one. How did the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impact social interaction anxiety?

The alternative hypothesis one. The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had a high social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The null hypothesis one. The public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had no social impact on individuals' anxiety to interact socially.

The research question two. In Los Angeles County, what was the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender)?

The alternative hypothesis two. There was a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

The null hypothesis two. There was no relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

How the Research Method Unfolded

The process for this study first involved identifying what exactly I wanted to study. Once this was determined, I was able to identify a target environment based on an understanding of cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969), which suggests that as the amount of time spent consuming crime stories throughout media sources increases, so will an individual's fear of crime. What had not been examined through the cultivation theory lens was whether the media and fear of crime have any connection to social interaction anxiety among a specific population.

After moving to Los Angeles County in 2014 and witnessing how the media displays crime stories occurring throughout the county, I found that studying Los Angeles County would be a suitable choice for examining the relationship between media consumption, fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety. This study collected responses potentially from more than 10 million residents living in Los Angeles County. These residents had to identify as having watched crime stories on TV and/or Internet sources at least two weeks before the study and be over the age of 18.

In this study, there were two independent variables, which included the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and the public's level of fear of crime. The dependent variable included the level of social interaction anxiety among the residents of Los Angeles County. This study included demographic characteristics of race/ethnicity, age, and gender as the mediating variables. A correlational analysis was used to investigate the relationship between all variables used in the study. Specifically, bivariate correlations were used to investigate the dependent variable paired with each independent variable and each of the demographic variables. Also, a bivariate correlation was used to determine each independent variable paired with each demographic variable.

When examining each hypothesis, a sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression was used. By using a sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression model, the research was able to account for any statistical amount of variance among the dependent variable after accounting for all variables used in the study. A sequential (hierarchical) multiple regression was also used to determine the relationship between the two independent variables and the dependent variables. An analysis of variance, or alternative nonparametric method, was used to determine the significant difference in the dependent variable across levels of the demographic variables. No adjustments were needed in this study, as all statistical tests were run appropriately. I am not sure what this means?

Organization of Chapter

A summary of the data collection process. The online surveying site SurveyMonkey was used to collect responses anonymously from participants. Participants were selected based on their residency in the state of California. Upon

establishing residency, California residents must have answered “Yes” to the two screening questions: “Do you reside in Los Angeles County?” and “Have you watched crime stories on TV or the Internet within two weeks prior to today?” Once participants had answered “Yes” to both screening questions, they were directed to the “Informed Consent Form” and then proceeded to the survey. Participants were asked a series of questions directly related to media consumption, fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety levels. To conclude the survey, participants were asked three demographic questions pertaining to their gender, age, and race/ethnicity.

A summary of the results. To address the first research question, the results indicated there to be a significant relationship between the independent variables of media consumption and fear of crime, and the dependent variable of social interaction anxiety. Therefore, the public’s amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County has an impact on an individual’s anxiety to interact socially. Addressing, the second research question, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses indicated a relationship between the public’s amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. Therefore, the results of this study concluded that residents of Los Angeles County generally had increased levels of social interaction anxiety upon exposure to crime stories published throughout the media and fear of crime levels.

A summary of presentation of the results. There is a series of 12 tables and figures (scatter plots) used to present the results of this study. Each figure or table includes a description specifying how to read and interpret the data presented and the

relation to the research variables and/or question. Table 1 illustrates the correlational relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Table 2 interpreted the results for the ANOVA test in which one can view how the dependent variable differed across all demographic variables. Table 3 illustrated the descriptive statistics for continuous variables. Table 4 presented the findings for the frequency distributions for categorical variables. Tables 5 and 6 displayed all results from two different multiple regression tests. Tables 7 and 8 then presented the findings from the hypothesis coefficients analyses. Figures 1 and 2, displayed the authors of each literature review in the order of importance. Figure 3 then featured a scatter plot illustrating the relationship between the independent variable of fear of crime and the dependent variable of social interaction anxiety. Figure 4 scatter plot detailed the relationship between the independent variable of media exposure and the dependent variable of social interaction anxiety. Figure 5 presented the results from the normal probability analysis, which indicates the normality assumption to be satisfied. Finally, Figure 6 revealed the result from the testing of the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values.

A summary of answers to the research questions. Research question one determined the impact of the amount of media exposure and levels of fear of crime had on Los Angeles County residents' social interaction anxiety levels. A multiple regression analysis was used to investigate this relationship. Results indicated, that the overall model predicted social interaction anxiety. In general, both media exposure and levels of fear of crime contributed to Los Angeles County residents' social interaction anxiety levels, although only the fear of crime variable contributed significantly to participants' levels of

social interaction anxiety.

The research question two determined the relationship among Los Angeles County residents' amount of media exposure, levels of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender)? A hierarchical multiple regression analysis with a two-step process investigated the relationship among these variables. The first process examined the three demographic variables against the dependent variable of social interaction anxiety. The results yielded a statistically significant relationship to social interaction but only accounted for 7% of the total variance. Thus, the second step included all demographic questions and the two independent variables; yielding a statistically significant relationship explaining 13% of the total variance in the dependent variable of social interaction anxiety. Therefore, it was stated that there was a relationship between Los Angeles County residents' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for all demographic variables.

Data Collection

Data Collection- Time Frame

The time frame for this study was sixty days or 300+ surveys. After launching the survey on SurveyMonkey it took roughly thirty days to obtain 590 responses. Of these responses, 178 respondents answered yes to both screening questions. After reviewing all responses, there were a total of 150 respondents who completed the entire survey. Thus, the responses from these 150 respondents were included in the data analyses. The response rate consisted of the "percentage of survey respondents from a sample who

respond to a questionnaire" (see O'Sullivan, Rassel, and Berner, 2008). O'Sullivan, et al. (2008) provided the following equation to calculate the response rate (p. 174):

$$number\ of\ completed\ surveys \div total\ number\ of\ respondents \times 100$$

$$= response\ rate$$

$$150 \div 590 \times 100 = 25.42\%\ responserate$$

The base number of 100 was based on crime rates usually being evaluated per 100 of the population (see O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Therefore, the response rate was 25.42%.

Data Collection- Discrepancies

There was one discrepancy that occurred during data collection that was not presented in Chapter 3. When evaluating the demographic variables, this study considered gender, race/ethnicity, and age. The age category included the following groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-64, 65-74, 75+, and a decline to state option. In SurveyMonkey, the age category was separated by the following: 18-24, 25-34, 45-54, 55-64, 65+, and a decline to state option. Secondly, this study's race/ethnicity categories included: African American/Black, Caucasian/White, Native American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Other, and decline to state. On the other hand, SurveyMonkey used the following categories: White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, another race, and decline to state. Although these categories differentiate slightly, no data was effected as SurveyMonkey automatically collected the information and their categories were used in the data

analyses. This study did benefit from extended race/ethnicity categories as there were several respondents who selected race options that were not originally presented.

Baseline Discrepancies and Demographic Characteristics

There were a total of 590 responses to the survey. Of the 590 responses, there were 178 participants who provided "Yes" to both screening questions. Of these 178 qualifying respondents, a total of 150 respondents provided responses to all items of the survey. Survey participants included 96 females (64%), 53 males (35.3%), and 1 who declined to state their gender (0.7%). The age range for the study sample was between 18 and 65+ (99.3%), with 14% between the ages of 18 and 24, 30% between the ages of 25-34, 19.3% between the ages of 35-44, 17.3% between the ages of 45-54, 8.7% between the ages of 55-64, 10% over the age of 65, and 0.7% who decline to state their age. The racial/ethnicity make-up of the study included 62 Caucasians at 41.3%, 17 African Americans at 11.3%, 39 Hispanics at 26%, 17 Asians at 11.3%, 1 American Indian at 0.7%, 2 Native Hawaiians at 1.3%, 8 respondents identifying as another race representing 5.3%, and 4 respondents who declined to state their race equaling 2.7% of the total sample. Therefore, the analyses for the study was based on a sample size of 150.

Representation of Sample Population

O'Sullivan et al. (2008), explained the incidence rate as the common rate measure referring to the number of people who get a disease over a specific period of time, usually a year (pg. 340). These authors suggested this definition could be used for other situations such as being a victim of crime or having an accident. Considering, the interest of this study, the incidence rate measured total population data collected by the Census Bureau

in 2018. Therefore, the total number of Los Angeles County residents (10.11 million) were expected to qualify for the survey during the allotted time period was divided by to the total number of residents in the state of California (39.56 million); as seen in the equation:

$$population\ of\ Los\ Angles\ County \div total\ population\ of\ California$$

$$= estimated\ incidence\ rate$$

$$10.11 \div 39.56 = 25.56\%\ estimated\ incidence\ rate$$

Thus, the estimated incidence rate was calculated at 25.56%. Upon data collection, results yielded a 38.49% incidence rate which is 12.93% higher than the expected incidence rate calculated prior to the collection of data.

Results of Basic Univariate Analysis

Correlations among all the variables included in the analysis were calculated and were provided in (Chapter 4, Table 1). I used the following codes for each categorical variables: Gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Decline), Race (1 = White or Caucasian, 2 = Black or African American, 3 = Hispanic or Latino, 4 = Asian or Asian American, 5 = American Indian or Alaska Native, 6 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 7 = Another Race, 8 = Decline), and Age (1 = <18, 2 = 18-29, 3 = 30-44, 4 = 45-60, 5 = >60). It was seen in the table that both independent variables (Media Exposure and Fear of Crime) were statistically significantly correlated to the dependent variable (Social Interaction Anxiety), although the Media Exposure variable was only weakly correlated with Social Interaction Anxiety. Of the demographic variables, the only one that was strongly correlated with the dependent variable was age. The hierarchical multiple

regression analysis controlled for the demographic variables to determine if the two independent variables contribute significantly to the variation in Social Interaction Anxiety over and above the demographic variables.

Table 1

Correlations (N = 150)

Variables	SIA	ME	FC	G	A	R
Social interaction anxiety (SIA)	1					
Media exposure (ME)	0.153*	1				
Fear of crime (FC)	–0.297***	–0.161*	1			
Gender (G)	0.055	–0.173*	–0.065	1		
Age (A)	–0.252**	–0.330***	0.251**	0.049	1	
Race (R)	–0.021	–0.043	–0.134*	0.033	0.006	1

Note. Statistical significance: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***p , 0.001

A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to determine if values of the dependent variable (Social Interaction Anxiety) differed significantly among the levels of the demographic variables (Gender, Age, and Race/Ethnicity). The results were provided in (Chapter 4, Table 2) and shows that there was no significant difference in Social Interaction Anxiety among the levels of gender, age group, or race. The F statistic used in ANOVA was the ratio of the variance between subjects to the variance expected due to chance (error) and was used as a single value to describe the differences between independent samples. The value of the ratio was used to determine whether differences were large enough to be attributed to a factor effect, or if they were due simply to chance effects. An F value near 1.00 indicated that the differences between the groups were roughly the same as expected due to chance. An F value substantially greater than 1.00 indicated that at least one sample was significantly different from the

others. The p-value for the F statistic indicated a value of F as substantially greater than 1.00 ($p < 0.05$) or not ($p > 0.05$).

Table 2

ANOVA Results

		Social interaction anxiety			
Variable	Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	F	*p*-value
Gender	Male	25.06	15.52	0.771	0.464
	Female	27.66	17.77		
	Decline to state	12.00	-		
Age	18-24	33.14	15.24	1.857	0.092
	25-34	30.11	15.80		
	35-44	25.03	15.93		
	45-54	25.81	20.41		
	55-64	18.77	12.21		
	65+	20.73	17.68		
	Decline to state	12.00	-		
Race/ethnicity	White or Caucasian	26.48	18.20	1.146	0.338
	Black or African American	23.35	14.67		
	Hispanic or Latino	28.67	17.70		
	Asian or Asian American	25.65	14.30		
	American Indian or Alaska Native	56.00	-		
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	37.00	14.14		
	Another race	27.25	15.47		
	Decline to state	12.00	-		

Results

Descriptive Statistics

There were 178 respondents who answered “Yes” to both screening questions, are you a resident of Los Angeles County and did you watched crime-related news stories two weeks prior to completing the survey. Of these eligible respondents, 150 provided responses to all items on the survey. Thus, the following analyses was based on a sample size of 150. This was ample respondents based on two suggestions for sample size determinations. First, Stevens (1996) suggested having 15 participants per predictor (independent) variable. Since this study has two predictor variables, the suggestion was to have at least 30 participants. Second, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggested a sample size at least as large as 50 plus eight times the number of independent variables. This suggested a minimum sample size of 66. The obtained sample size of 150 was well above both of these suggested minimums.

It was important to note that the dependent variable (Social Interaction Anxiety) and the two independent variables (Fear of Crime and Media Exposure) were calculated based on responses to numerous items. The dependent variable (Social Interaction Anxiety) was calculated by summing the responses to the 20 items on the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale. Each item allowed a response on a scale of 0 (not at all anxious) to 4 (extremely anxious). Three items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated more anxiety and lower scores indicated less anxiety for all 20 items on the survey. Thus, the sum of the responses for all 20 items ranged from 0 (not at all anxious)

to 80 (extremely anxious). This sum was used as the dependent variable for each respondent.

The two independent variables were calculated similarly. The Fear of Crime independent variable was calculated by summing the responses to the 19 items on the Crime and Fear of Crime Scale. Each item allowed a response on a scale of 0 (unsafe/fearful/worried/crime problems) to 4 (safe/not at all fearful or worried/no crime problems). Three items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated less fear of crime and lower scores indicated more fear of crime for all 19 items on the survey. Thus, the sum of the responses for all 19 items ranged from 0 (very fearful of crime) to 76 (no fear of crime). This sum was used as the Fear of Crime independent variable for each respondent.

The Media Exposure independent variable was calculated by summing the responses to the 6 items on the Media and Technology Usage Scale. Each item allowed a response on a scale of 0 (never) to 4 (all day). Higher scores indicated more exposure to media and lower scores indicated less exposure to media for all 6 items on the survey. Thus, the sum of the responses for all 6 items ranged from 0 (no exposure to media) to 24 (all day exposure to media). This sum was used as the Media Exposure independent variable for each respondent.

The following tables provided the descriptive and demographic characteristics for a sample of 150 participants.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables

Variables	Social interaction anxiety	Fear of crime	Media exposure
Mean	26.79	34.23	14.12
Standard deviation	16.98	15.08	4.55
Range	0 – 68	4 – 71	0 – 24

Table 4

Frequency Distributions for Categorical Variables

Variables	Level	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	53	35.3
	Female	96	64.0
	Decline to state	1	0.7
Age	18-24	21	14.0
	25-34	45	30.0
	35-44	29	19.3
	45-54	26	17.3
	55-64	13	8.7
	65+	15	10.0
	Decline to state	1	0.7
Race/ethnicity	White or Caucasian	62	41.3
	Black or African American	17	11.3
	Hispanic or Latino	39	26.0
	Asian or Asian American	17	11.3
	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.7
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2	1.3
	Another race	8	5.3
	Decline to state	4	2.7

Statistical Assumptions

The statistical assumptions necessary for hierarchical multiple regression were linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity. Scatter plots (Chapter 4, Figures 3 and 4) were for each independent variable against the dependent variable show an oblong oval shape suggesting a linear trend. Thus, the linearity assumption was satisfied.

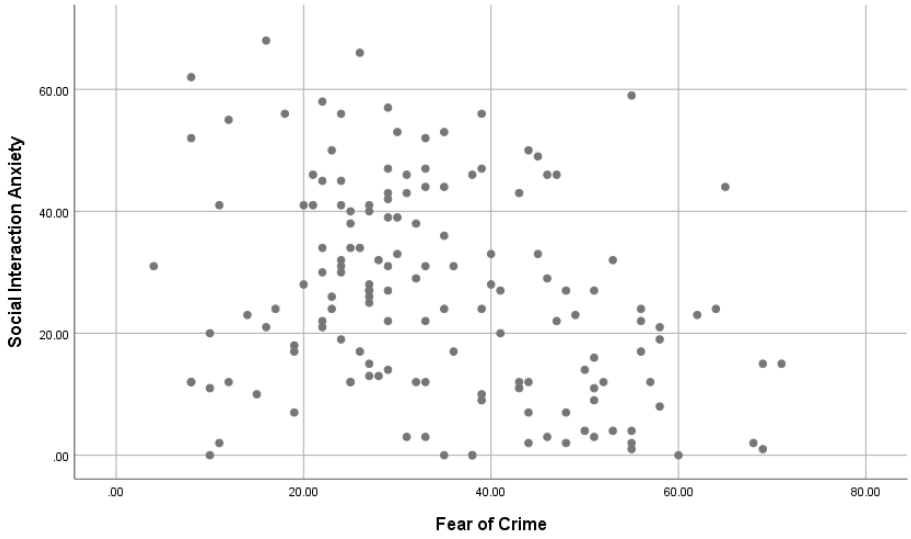

Figure 3. scatter plot of fear of crime against social interaction anxiety.

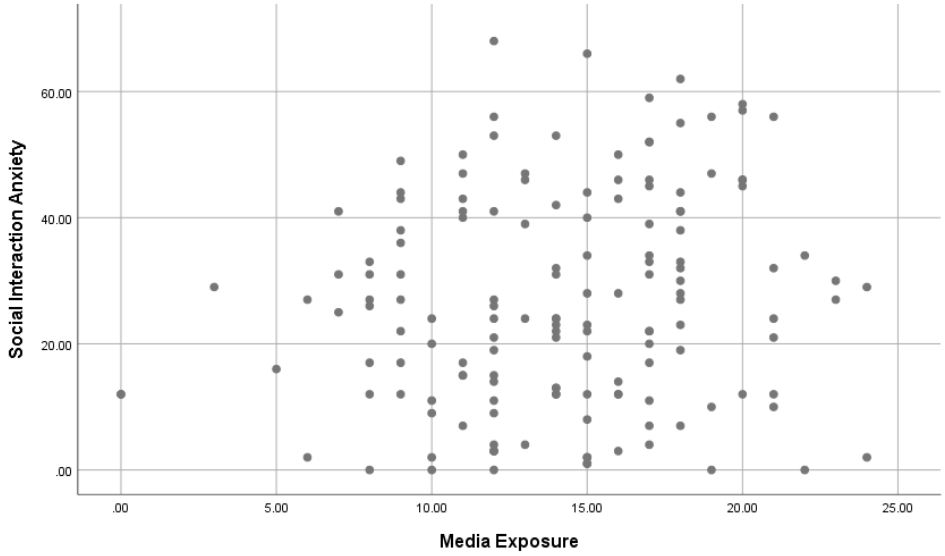

Figure 4. scatter plot of media exposure against social interaction anxiety.

A normal probability plot was used to investigate the normality assumption. In (Chapter 4, Figure 5) the normal probability plot provided results in which it showed a reasonably straight diagonal line from bottom left to top right, indicating the normality assumption was satisfied.

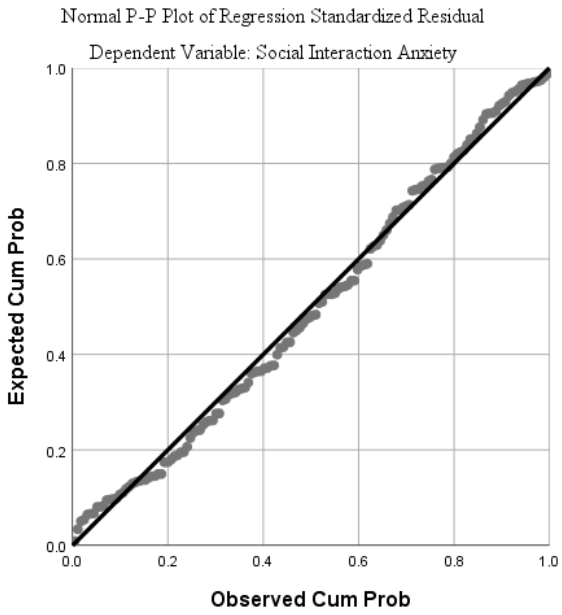

Figure 5. normal probability plot.

A plot of the standardized residuals against the standardized predicted values was used to investigate the assumption of homoscedasticity. This plot was given in (Chapter 4, Figure 6) a rectangular scatter showed that most of the points concentrated in the center. This indicated that the homoscedasticity assumption was satisfied. This plot was also used to demonstrate that the sample had no outliers in that all points were less than three units from the center.

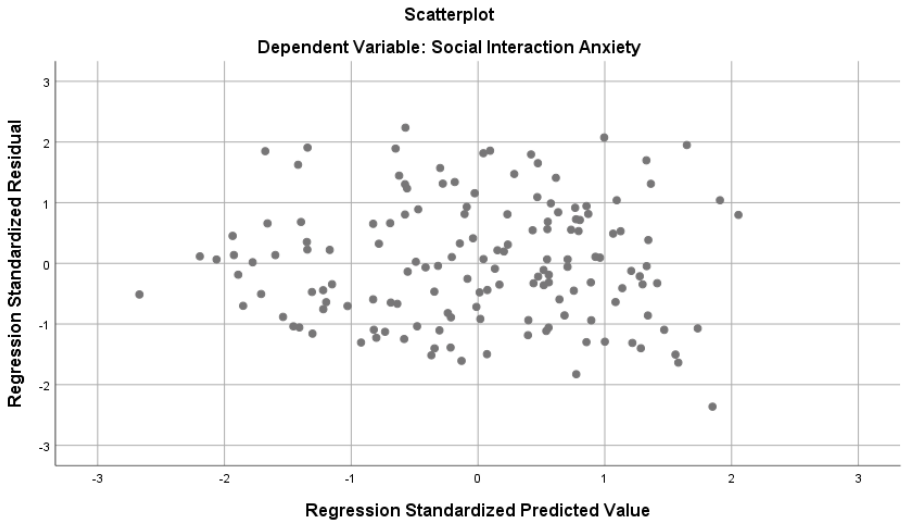

Figure 6. plot of standardized residual against the standardized predicted values.

In addition to the assumptions mentioned, the independent variables were not highly correlated with each other. Highly correlated independent variables presents a problem known as multicollinearity. Results from the hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed a tolerance value for the independent variables and the control variables ranging between 0.850 and 0.977 (none less than 0.10) and the variance inflation factors ranging between 1.023 and 1.176 (none above 10). This indicated that multicollinearity is likely not a problem in this sample.

Findings- Exact Statistics and Probability Values

Addressing, the first research question, a multiple regression was used to investigate the relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and the two independent variables, Media Exposure and Fear of Crime. The results indicated that the overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.099$, $F(2, 148) = 8.164$, $p < 0.001$. A summary

of the regression coefficients was provided in (Chapter 4, Table 5) and but also indicated that only the fear of crime variable significantly contributed to the model.

Table 5

Coefficients for Model Variables

	B	β	*t*	*p*	Bivariate *r*	Partial *r*
Media Exposure	0.396	0.107	1.352	0.179	0.153	0.110
Fear of crime	–0.316	–0.280	–3.536	0.001	–0.297	–0.279

Thus, the public's level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had an impact on an individual's anxiety to interact socially. For every one unit increase in the coded level of fear of crime (indicating a lower fear level), the social interaction anxiety goes down by about 0.3. However, the amount of media exposure did not contribute significantly to an individual's social interaction anxiety.

Addressing, the second research question, a hierarchical multiple regression was used to investigate the relationship between Social Interaction Anxiety and the two independent variables (Media Exposure and Fear of Crime), while controlling for the demographic variables (gender, age group, and race/ethnicity). In the first step, the three demographic variables alone were entered into the model. While this model was statistically significant, $F(3, 145) = 3.573$, $p < 0.016$, it explains only about 7% of the variance in Social Interaction Anxiety, $R^2 = 0.069$.

In the second step, the three demographic variables were retained and the two independent variables were included as well. This model was also statistically significant, $F(5, 143) = 4.310$, $p = 0.001$, and explained about 13% of the total variance in social interaction anxiety. The inclusion of the two independent variables explained an

additional 6% of the total variance in social interaction anxiety, after controlling for the demographic variables, R^2 Change = 0.062, $F(1, 143) = 5.111$, $p = 0.007$. Using the following codes for each categorical variables: Gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Decline), Race (1 = White or Caucasian, 2 = Black or African American, 3 = Hispanic or Latino, 4 = Asian or Asian American, 5 = American Indian or Alaska Native, 6 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 7 = Another Race, 8 = Decline), and Age (1 = <18, 2 = 18-29, 3 = 30-44, 4 = 45-60, 5 = >60); in (Chapter 4, Table 6) each table gave the regression coefficients for the models in steps 1 and 2.

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Model Variables in Hierarchical Multiple Regression

	R	R^2	R^2 Change	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*
Model 1	0.262	0.069*					
Gender				2.366	2.766	0.069	0.856
Age				–2.798	0.878	–0.256**	–3.187
Race/ethnicity				–0.199	0.738	–0.022	–0.270
Model 2	0.362	0.131**	0.062**				
Gender				2.093	2.740	0.061	0.764
Age				–1.883	0.925	–0.172*	–2.035
Race/ethnicity				–0.481	0.725	–0.052	–0.663
Media exposure				0.239	0.313	0.064	0.763
Fear of crime				–0.283	0.094	–0.247**	–3.005

R^2 = amount of variance explained by the independent variables in the model
R^2 Change = additional variance in dependent variable
B = Unstandardized coefficient
β = Standardized coefficient (values are converted to the same scale for comparison)
SE = Standard Error
t = estimated coefficient (*B*) divided by its own *SE*. If $t < 2$, the independent variable does not belong in the model
Statistical significance: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***p , 0.001

Thus, there was a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

However, the amount of media exposure did not contribute significantly to an individual's social interaction anxiety. In addition, gender and race/ethnicity were not significant indicators of an individual's social interaction anxiety.

Findings- Confidence Intervals

Hypothesis one argued that the public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had a social impact on an individual's anxiety to interact socially. Therefore, a 95% confidence interval was used for each coefficient estimated in the model for hypothesis 1. With a 95% confidence, the coefficient for Media Exposure (B_1) was estimated to be between -0.183 and 0.974 and with 95% confidence, the coefficient for Fear of Crime (B_2) was estimated to be between -0.493 and -0.139. Additionally, only the amount of Fear of Crime had a significant impact on social interaction anxiety ($p = 0.001$), as seen in (Chapter 4, Table 7).

The model 1 (for hypothesis 1):

$$\hat{Y} = a + B_1(\text{MediaUsage}) + B_2(\text{FearofCrime})$$

Table 7

Hypothesis 1 Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(*Constant*)	31.875	5.690		5.602	.000	20.632	43.118
	Media exposure	.396	.293	.107	1.352	.179	-.183	.974
	Fear of crime	-.316	.089	-.280	-3.536	.001	-.493	-.139

a. Dependent Variable: Social Interaction Anxiety

Hypothesis two argued that there was a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. Using the following codes for each categorical variables: Gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Decline), Race (1 = White or Caucasian, 2 = Black or African American, 3 = Hispanic or Latino, 4 = Asian or Asian American, 5 = American Indian or Alaska Native, 6 = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 7 = Another Race, 8 = Decline), and Age (1 = <18, 2 = 18-29, 3 = 30-44, 4 = 45-60, 5 = >60). A 95% confidence interval was calculated for each coefficient estimated in the model for hypothesis 2. With a 95% confidence, the coefficient for Media Exposure (B_1) was estimated to be between -0.380 and 0.858 and the coefficient for Fear of Crime (B_2) was estimated to be between -0.469 and -0.097. Likewise, the coefficients for Race (B_3), Gender (B_4), and Age (B_5) was estimated to be between -1.915 and 0.953, -3.324 and 7.510, -3.711 and -0.054, respectively. It is important to note that only the age variable

and the level of fear of crime had an impact on social interaction anxiety, as seen in (Chapter 4, Table 8).

The model 2 (for hypothesis 2):

$$\hat{Y} = a + B_1(\text{MediaUsage}) + B_2(\text{FearofCrime}) + B_3(\text{Race}) + B_4(\text{Gender}) + B_5(\text{Age})$$

Table 8

Hypothesis 2 Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients			95.0% Confidence interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(*Constant*)	31.859	5.648		5.640	.000	20.695	43.022
	Gender	2.366	2.766	.069	.856	.394	-3.100	7.833
	Age	-2.798	.878	-.256	-3.187	.002	-4.534	-1.063
	Race/ethnicity	-.199	.738	-.022	-.270	.788	-1.657	1.259
2	(*Constant)*	36.529	9.056		4.034	.000	18.628	54.429
	Gender	2.093	2.740	.061	.764	.446	-3.324	7.510
	Age	-1.883	.925	-.172	-2.035	.044	-3.711	-.054
	Race/ethnicity	-.481	.725	-.052	-.663	.509	-1.915	.953
	Media exposure	.239	.313	.064	.763	.447	-.380	.858
	Fear of crime	-.283	.094	-.247	-3.005	.003	-.469	-.097

a. Dependent Variable: Social Interaction Anxiety

Findings- Effect Size

It is important to know that when using multiple regression the effect size calculation is transferred into the R^2 value and/or the R^2 Change. Thus, the standard effect size is 0.05 (see Field, 2013, pg. 472). Model 1 had a R^2 value of (0.069) which tested the demographic variable against the dependent variables of social interaction anxiety. In addition, the R^2 Change of (0.062) was a result of the testing of media

exposure, level of fear of crime, and all demographic variables against social interaction anxiety. Therefore, both models resulted in a large effect.

Post-Hoc Analyses Testing

There were no post-hoc analyses performed on the data in this study.

Additional Statistical Testing of Hypotheses

There were no additional statistical testing of the hypotheses that were not already presented in Chapter 3. This study included results from a hierarchical multiple regression analyses (linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity), a One-way Analysis of Variance, a correlational analysis, and a multiple regression analysis.

Summary

Research Question 1 Findings

Research question one examined the impact of residents of Los Angeles County social interaction anxiety after accounting for the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime. Using a multiple regression analysis, I was able to investigate the relationship between the amount of media exposure, levels of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety. The results indicated that the model as a whole was statistically significant, ($R^2 = 0.099$, $F(2, 148) = 8.164$, $p < 0.001$). However, media exposure was not statistically significant over and above the level of fear of crime and could therefore be dropped from the model. While the model only explained 10% of the variation in social interaction anxiety, this does not negate the importance of the significant relationship between fear of crime and social interaction anxiety. Because this study was mainly

interested in the relationships among the variables rather than prediction, a low R^2 value is tolerable.

Research Question 2 Findings

Research question two examined the impact in which the demographic variables of race/ethnicity, age, and gender had on residents of Los Angeles County amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety. A two-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to investigate such a relationship. In the first step, the demographic variables alone were evaluated, of which a 7% variance explained a statistically significant relationship. The second step evaluated the three demographic variables along with the two independent variables of which the model explained a 13% variance. Although this R^2 value is quite low, this does not negate the importance of the statistically significant variables in the model. Since this study is mainly interested in understanding the relationships between the variables rather than in prediction, a low R^2 value is tolerable. There was a statistically significant relationship between residents' level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety level after controlling for all demographic variables. The media exposure variable was not significant over and above the level of fear of crime after controlling for all demographic variables. Age was the only demographic variable significantly related to social interaction anxiety.

Fear of crime and social interaction anxiety were statistically negatively related. This seems counterintuitive. For this to make sense, one needs to look at the way fear of crime and social interaction anxiety were coded. Low values for fear of crime meant very

fearful while higher values meant no fear. Low values for social interaction anxiety indicated no anxiety while higher values indicated extreme anxiety. Because a negative relationship was observed, as the coded value for fear of crime goes up (indicating lower levels of fear), the values for social interaction anxiety go down (indicating lower anxiety). This is more intuitive and agrees with previous literature. For every one unit increase in the coded level of fear of crime (indicating a lower fear level), the social interaction anxiety goes down by about 0.3. This same relationship holds when controlling for the demographic variables.

Age and social interaction anxiety were also negatively related. For every one unit increase in age, the social interaction anxiety value decreases by 2 when fear of crime is included in the model. This seems to indicate that as one ages, the level of social interaction anxiety decreases.

Conclusion

Summary of the Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime had on Los Angeles County residents' social interaction anxiety level. The basis for this examination was Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory in which it is assumed that as an individual's amount of media exposure increases, so does their fear of crime. What was not examined through the theory was whether or not media exposure and fear of crime also impacted one's social anxiety levels. Therefore, this study examined such an impact.

This study examined the County of Los Angeles, California which had an estimated 10.11 million residents. There were a total of 590 responses to the survey. Of those, 178 answered "Yes" to both screening questions. After reviewing the 178 surveys, only 150 completed the whole survey. Therefore, a total of 150 responses were included in the data analyses. Of the 150, 53 were males, 96 were females, and one participant declined to state their gender. Participants ages ranged from 18-65+ with 30% (45 participants) of the total population falling in the 25-34 category. Of all race/ethnicity variables, the White and Caucasian category had the highest participation rate at 41.3% (62 participants). The second highest group was the Hispanic or Latin category at 26% (39 participants). This study used the estimated incidence rate (the percentage of residents who were estimated to qualify for the survey) to determine that the sample was a representation of the entire population. After comparing the estimated incidence rate of 25.56% to the actual incidence rate of 38.49%, there was a 12.93% difference. Consequently, it was stated that the sample was a representation of the whole population.

Research question one examined the impact that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime may have had on Los Angeles County residents' level of social interaction anxiety. The results revealed that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime had a significant impact on Los Angeles County residents' social interaction anxiety. Research question two examined the relationship the demographic variables of race/ethnicity, age, and gender had on residents' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety. The results revealed a relationship between the

public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for all demographic variables.

In prior research, several authors concluded with similar results as presented in this study. For example, Zhao, et al. (2010) evaluated the relationship between property and violent crime and fear of crime at the individual level. The authors concluded that participants' fear of crime directly related to the number of crimes committed within an average of 528 feet from their homes. In another study, authors found that when crime stories in American cities feature criminality, the public's fear of crime increased (Gibson, 2014). In connection to prior research, I was surprised to find that residents' amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impacted their level of social interaction anxiety. I was also surprised to find that a relationship existed between the amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. In sum, I was surprised by all results of this study and happy to find that the results of this study provided additional knowledge and understanding of the cultivation theory.

Transitional Material

In Chapter 5, I explain how findings from this study confirmed, disconfirmed, or extended knowledge in the modern discipline. I also explain how the theoretical perspective of the cultivation theory continued through the evaluation of the findings. The presentation of the limitations of the study allowed me to see how everything changed from the original limitations presented in Chapter 1, to the actual limitations

presented during data collection. Ending Chapter 5, I provided potential social change influences and suggestions for future researchers to examine.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

Purpose and Nature of Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1969) by determining if the amount of media exposure to crime and the level of fear of crime contributes to social interaction anxiety. The study was conducted to bring awareness to poor or weak social relationships due to citizens' perception of property and violent crimes presented throughout the media. Therefore, this study evaluated residents of Los Angeles County who were over the age of 18 and had viewed crime stories published across TV and Internet sources two weeks before having completed the survey. The survey included two screening questions, 45 questions from three separate survey instruments, and three demographic questions. The study used the IBM SPSS software and a series of statistical tests to analyze the data.

Why and How the Study Was Conducted

In 2000, Dixon and Linz found that approximately 30% of all news stories in mass media, both print and broadcast, included reports on criminal activity. Thus, the mass media was recognized by researchers as a primary source of the public's receiving information about crime (Surette, 2007). It was also suggested that the mass media distorts the public's perception of crime occurrence by disproportionately focusing on violent crimes (Reiner, 2007). Therefore, this study examined the basis of the cultivation theory and its relationship to the residents of Los Angeles County's social interaction anxiety. Research question one examined how the Los Angeles County public's amount

of media exposure and the level of fear of crime impacted social interaction anxiety. Research question two then examined the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, the level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling the three demographic variables.

Summary of Findings

There were 590 responses to the survey. Of this, 178 respondents answered "Yes" to both screening questions. After reviewing these 178 responses, 150 respondents completed the entire survey. Therefore, these 150 responses were included in the data analyses. A multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the relationship between social interaction anxiety and the two independent variables. The analysis revealed that residents of Los Angeles County social interaction anxiety were impacted by the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime. However, the amount of media exposure did not significantly contribute to an individual's social interaction anxiety.

Research question two used a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to investigate the relationship between social interaction anxiety and the two independent variables after controlling for the three demographic variables. By using a two-step process, the results revealed a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for the demographics. However, gender and race/ethnicity were not significant contributors to individual's social interaction anxiety. In sum, the results revealed a relationship among all variables.

Interpretation of the Findings

Confirmation and Extension of Knowledge

This study examined the relationship between the amount of media exposure, fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety levels. The basis for this examination was the use of the cultivation theory, which argued that as the amount of media exposure increased so would an individual's fear of crime levels (Gerbner, 1969). To extend this theory, researchers looked at how this understanding related to some specific outcomes. For example, Zhao, Lawton, and Lawton (2010) examined the relationship between property and violent crime and an individual's fear of crime levels. The authors found that an individual's fear of crime levels directly related to crimes that occurred within 528 feet from their home. Of the 652 respondents, women and older residents reported higher levels of fear in comparison to men and younger residents.

In 2012, Foster et al. examined whether physical offenses were a deterrent from walking in public places. Based on a self-reported questionnaire with questions about environments within a10-to-15 minute walk from their home, the authors found that those who reported higher levels of fear of crime were less likely to walk in their neighborhood. Also, the authors found that fear of crime was greater for recreational walkers (those who walked for fun) than transport walkers (those who had to walk to get to work). In a similar study, Stodolska et al. (2013) examined the impact outdoor recreational activities had on Mexican-American youth in the South Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. The authors found that the majority of the 25 participants reported that crime was an issue in their neighborhood. Therefore, all the participants

reported feeling safer by participating in leisure activities near their home, near relatives' homes, and during school hours.

Across the world in New Zealand, Breetzke and Pearson (2014) examined whether the occurrence of crime in a neighborhood impacted one's level of fear of crime. The analysis included 347,679 crimes reported between 2008 and 2010, of which the authors found that women reported higher levels of fear of crime than men. Also, those who lived in impoverished areas were more fearful than individuals living in prosperous areas. In a final study, Luo et al. (2015) examined fear of crime in one's neighborhood and near their home. The analysis included data from 2,393 participants over the age of 18 and lived in Houston, Texas between 2010 and 2012. The authors found that women and senior participants felt safer in public settings than in their homes in comparison to men and younger participants who felt equally safe in both settings. Therefore, to extend prior research, the current study examined the data points of the amount of media exposure, levels of fear of crime, and levels of social interaction anxiety.

The study examined residents of Los Angeles County who were over the age of 18 and had watched crime stories published across different media sources two weeks before completing the survey. There were 178 respondents who answered "Yes" to both screening questions but only 150 respondents completed the survey. Therefore, 150 responses were used in the data analyses. The research found that the public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had an impact on an individual's anxiety towards social interaction. I also found a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety

after controlling for demographics. However, gender and race/ethnicity alone were not significant indicators of an individual's social interaction anxiety levels.

In addition to the research questions, I examined two different hypotheses. Hypothesis one argued that the public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County has high or no social impact on an individual's anxiety to interact socially. Hypothesis two argued that there would be no relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. I found that all categories of the demographics impacted the amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety but it must be noted that only the age category significantly impacted the independent and dependent variables. In sum, I was able to extend prior research through examining the relationship that the amount of media exposure and the level of fear of crime had on residents' level of social interaction anxiety.

Findings - Theoretical Foundation

This study used Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory which states that the more time people spend watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and participating in social media on the Internet, the more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those mass media sources. Riddle (2009) then presented the same theory in simpler terms by arguing that the pictures and messages conveyed by the mass media shape the public's view of reality. Therefore, I considered literature that used the cultivation theory as the theoretical foundation while also examining media, fear of crime, and some specific outcome.

Callanan (2012) found that as the consumption of newspaper and television news increased in southern California, so did fear of crime. In the same year, Nellis and Savage (2012) used the cultivation theory to examine how the amount of exposure to TV news about terrorism impacted New York City and Washington, D.C. fear of terrorism. The authors found that as residents' amount of media exposure to terrorism news increased, so did their fear of terrorism. In 2014, Gibson confirmed the cultivation theory when it was concluded that the media in American cities featured stories about criminality, the public's fear of crime increased. Callanan and Rosenberger (2015) used the cultivation theory that fear of crime is increased by consumption of television programming when considering demographic characteristics. After reviewing the literature on the cultivation theory, I considered how findings from prior research relate to the results of the current study.

Research question one determined Los Angeles County residents' amount of media exposure and their level of fear of crime impacted their social interaction anxiety level. The outcome concluded that I would reject the null hypothesis while accepting the alternative hypothesis which states that the amount of media exposure and the level of fear of crime had an impact on residents' level of social interaction anxiety. Consequently, the findings confirmed the foundation of Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory.

Research question two of the present study examined the relationship among the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and gender). Based on the results,

I rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, which argued there was a relationship between the publics' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. In sum, findings of the study aligned with prior research and Gerbner's (1969) definition that argued that as the amount of media exposure increases, so will one's level of fear of crime.

Limitations of the Study

Generalizability, Validity, and Reliability

In 2018, Los Angeles County had a total population of 10.11 million residents' (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Of the 10.11 million residents, 590 responses were collected from Los Angeles County residents. Of these responses, 178 residents answered "Yes" to both screening questions. After reviewing the data, only 150 surveys were completed. Therefore, results from the 150 responses revealed that residents' social interaction anxiety was impacted by the amount of media exposure and their level of fear of crime. Since this study had a small sample size; future research may or may not be able to generalize to other geographical locations. Additionally, this study did not use any open-ended questions; therefore residents' responses may have been skewed based on the lack of this choice.

Also, I mentioned in Chapter 1 one of the survey instruments used was developed in the United Kingdom but did not pose a different perspective than that of the United States. However, results revealed very similar findings to studies done in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world that used the same instrument. When considering validity, I was able to draw meaningful and useful information from all data collected.

For example, the results revealed that a relationship existed between residents of Los Angeles County's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and level of social interaction anxiety. Through reliability, this study was able to confirm prior scoring measures for all three instruments used. In sum, this study confirmed several measures, methods, and outcomes used in prior research.

Recommendations

Future Research Recommendations

In 2012, Jorgensen et al. examined whether or not participants felt safer in a public park that had other recreating versus a public park in which there were no other recreating. The authors found that women participants reported increased fear in public parks depending on the number of people in the environment. In the same year, Lee and Hilinski-Rosick (2012) examined whether lifestyle risk behaviors of college students decreased in their likelihood of becoming a victim. Collecting data from 3,472 undergraduate students, the authors found that fear of crime was greater among younger non-white students than among older white students. In the following year, Kappas et al. (2013) examined whether older adults displayed greater precautionary behaviors toward crime versus their younger counterparts. After evaluating 528 responses, the authors found that older adults were more fearful of crime than their younger and middle-aged counterparts. Therefore, the following strengths and limitations assisted in my recommendations for future research.

One strength of this study was that all data was collected within the United States; rather than other parts of the world. By doing so, this eliminated further research needed

on areas outside the United States and time constraints that go along with collecting data around the world. Another strength was the ability to collect data within my current area of residents, Los Angeles County. This helped me gain knowledge on why it was important to collect data on residents' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and level of social interaction anxiety. In addition to the strengths of this study, there were several limitations. First, this study focused only on Los Angeles County, therefore data may or may not be able to be generalized to other populations. Second, several survey instruments were used, of which one was based out of the United Kingdom.

To address these limitations, I presented two study questions. Research question one examined the impact of the amount of media and level of fear of crime had on residents of Los Angeles County's level of social interaction anxiety. Based on 150 responses, results revealed that residents' level of social interaction anxiety was impacted by their amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime. Research question two then examined the relationship between the residents of Los Angeles County's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for the demographics of race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The results revealed a relationship between the race/ethnicity, age, and gender of the respondents when considering their amount of media exposure to crime news, their level of fear of crime, and their social interaction anxiety levels. In conjunction with these studies strengths and limitations, the findings of this study assisted my recommendations for future research.

First, researchers could examine how the racial representation of suspects presented throughout crime news impacts residents' social interaction anxiety levels after

accounting for their amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime. By doing so, researchers would gain knowledge on residents' perspectives to socially interact with others in public settings upon exposure to crime stories that may display one racial group more than another. In addition to evaluating suspects' race in crime news stories, future researchers could replicate the present study by examining different larger counties within California. This would allow for future research to determine if residents' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety differ among counties in the state. Individuals within state and local governments should pay close attention to data presented from this study, as it would help enact laws and codes that better regulate information the mass media publishes. Also, community organizations could use the information to create programs to help alleviate public fear. In addition, policymakers and public safety officials could use the information to better allocate resources to communities in need.

Implication for Social Change

Implication for Social Change - Individual, Societal, and Policies

This study examined the impact that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime had on residents of Los Angeles County's level of social interaction anxiety. Therefore, research question one examined how the Los Angeles County public's amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impacted their level of social interaction anxiety. Research question two then examined the relationship between the amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for the demographics of race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The results revealed

that the overall model significantly predicted social interaction anxiety among residents of Los Angeles County. Also, there was a relationship between the amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. However, it is important to note that the age category was the only demographics characteristic that significantly indicated an individual's social interaction anxiety. With these results in mind, the following are implications for potential social change in Los Angeles County.

First, state and local officials can use the data when evaluating laws that regulate how the mass media presents crime stories to the public. It is my hope that this will alleviate the public's level of fear regarding violent crime in public spaces. Also, these officials can use the data to help establish social programs alleviating the public's fear of violent crimes. For example, officials could work with non-profit organizations to create crime awareness programs that can be offered to residents regularly. These programs would include educational classes in which residents are made aware of the crime problem in the area and provided with preventative measures they can take to protect themselves in public.

Secondly, policymakers and public safety directors can use the data to help aid them in the allocation of resources to communities in need. For example, public safety directors could use the information when determining which communities within Los Angeles County need more law enforcement officers. Finally, the mass media could use the data to self-regulate their programming measures for the benefit of the public. By doing so, it is the hope that the media would see the damage being done to the public

based on the content they have released on crime stories. To conclude, the data from this study would help individuals at all levels better understand residents' fear of social interaction in public spaces and how to implement measures that could alleviate such fear.

Social Change - Theoretical Foundation

In 1969, Gerbner's cultivation theory argued that the more time people spend watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and participating in social media on the internet, the more likely they are to equate reality with what they hear and see on those mass media sources. Therefore, this study used the basis of cultivation theory to examine the impact that the amount of media exposure and the level of fear of crime had on residents of Los Angeles County's level of social interaction anxiety. Collecting data from residents of Los Angeles County who were over the age of 18 and had watched crime stories throughout media sources two weeks before taking the survey, this study was able to address all research questions. By doing so, I was able to collect information on residents' level of social interaction to media exposure and fear of crime.

The overall results revealed that residents' social interaction levels directly related to the amount of time spent consuming crime news stories and their overall level of fear of crime. Therefore, the data contributed to the understanding of residents' social interaction anxiety levels, in turn allowing local and state officials and policymakers to understand the need for social programs that alleviate residents' fear of crime in public spaces. Also, the cultivation theory and findings assist in understanding the need for the

mass media to self-regulate the type of information they release and to pay closer attention to the consequences of their actions.

Social Change- Practice

Based on the findings of this study and Gerbner's (1969) definition of cultivation theory which stated that the more time an individual spends consuming crime news throughout media sources, the more likely their level of fear of crime will increase; I recommend the following practices for social change. First, residents could practice random acts of kindness by helping those in their community who have fallen victim to violent crimes rather than turning a blind eye. Second, I urge local and state officials to consider the data to create programs within local organizations that educate the public on crime awareness and how to protect themselves. Furthermore, I urge public safety officials to evaluate the data and determine how to provide communities in need with more law enforcement officers.

Finally, I strongly recommended that policymakers reconsider policies that regulate the content for which the mass media releases crime-specific stories to the public. For example, policy changes could require that the mass media uses verbiage that alleviates fear rather than increases fear. To conclude, I recommend that all government officials at the state and local levels consider the findings of this study when developing public awareness programs that alleviate fear of crime while building better social interaction among individuals.

Conclusion

Take Home Message

In 2007, Surette found that the mass media represented the primary source for the consumption of information. Before this finding, Dixon and Linz (2000) determined that approximately 30% of all stories published throughout the mass media pertained to criminal activity. Therefore, Reiner's (2007) study concluded that mass media has a way of distorting the public's perception of crime occurrence by disproportionately focusing on violent crimes. As a result, Gibson (2014) argued that the public's fear of crime is impacted by stories that focused solely on crime.

This study examined the relationship between the amount of media consumption, residents' level of fear of crime, and residents' level of social interaction anxiety through the lens of the cultivation theory. In Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory argued that the more time people spend watching television, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, and participating in social media on the internet, the more likely they were to equate reality with what they hear and see on those mass media sources.

The study used a quantitative approach to address two research questions. Research question one examined how Los Angeles County residents' amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime impacted their social interaction anxiety level. The null hypothesis argued that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had no social impact on an individual's anxiety to interact socially. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis argued that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime in Los Angeles County had a high impact on an individual's anxiety to

interact socially. Research question two examined the relationship among Los Angeles County residents' amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for the demographics of race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The null hypothesis argued that there would not be a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis argued that there would be a relationship between the public's amount of media exposure, level of fear of crime, and social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics.

A total of 590 responses were obtained from residents in Los Angeles County. Of this, only 178 respondents answered "Yes" to both screening questions: "Do you live in Los Angeles County?" and "Have you watched crime news stories throughout media sources within two weeks before taking this survey?" After reviewing all 178 responses, 150 respondents completed the entire survey. Thus, these responses were included in the data analyses. Research question one was addressed by using multiple regression analysis in which the results indicated that the amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime contributes to residents' social interaction anxiety levels. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis. Research question two used several steps of hierarchical multiple regression analysis to determine that a relationship existed between the public's amount of media exposure, their level of fear of crime, and their level of social interaction anxiety after controlling for demographics. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis.

Recommendations for future researchers suggested extending on this study by examining whether or not the racial representation of suspects in crime stories impacts residents' level of social interaction, after accounting for their amount of media exposure and level of fear of crime. Also, future researchers could replicate this study by examining different larger counties within California, to determine if levels of social interaction anxiety differ among county residents. Considering social change, state and local governments should consider the data to enact laws and codes that better regulate presentation of crime stories throughout mass media sources. Public safety officials could use the data to work with local organizations to help create educational programs on crime awareness and self-protection when in public spaces. Additionally, public safety officials could consider the data when allocating resources such as law enforcement to communities in need. To conclude, this study not only extended on prior research but also provided significant data for which state and local officials can consider.

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Appendix A: Dissertation Approval Letter

Dear Ms. Shoulders,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, " Media Exposure to Crime, Fear of Crime, and Social Interaction Anxiety."

Your approval # is **11-08-19-0498821**. You will need to reference this number in your dissertation and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on November 7, 2020. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. This includes maintaining your current status with the university. Your IRB approval is only valid while you are an actively enrolled student at Walden University. If you need to take a leave of absence or are otherwise unable to remain actively enrolled, your IRB approval is suspended. Absolutely NO participant recruitment or data collection may occur while a student is not actively enrolled.

If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 10 business days of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the Documents & FAQs section of the Walden web site: http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMUx43pZegKlmdiQ_3d_3d

Sincerely,
Libby Munson

Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link: http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

Appendix B: Demographic Questions

Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Decline to state

Age:

- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65+
- Decline to state

Race/Ethnicity:

- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Another race
- Decline to state

Appendix C: E-mail Correspondence Between Dr. Rosen and Genea Shoulders Regarding Use of the MUTAS

California State University [redacted]

George Marsh
Applied Cognition Laboratory

Department of Psychology [redacted]

December 6, 2018

I am happy to give Genea Shoulders permission to use the Media and Technology Usage and Attitudes Scale in any way she wishes. I have provided her the scale and further information on its various uses. If you have further questions please feel free to contact me at [redacted]

Sincerely,

Larry D. Rosen, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus and Past Chair of Psychology

Appendix D: Harmonised Office of National Statistics Terms and Conditions Regarding Use of the Crime and Fear Scale

Please read these terms and conditions carefully. If you do not agree to be bound by them, please do not use the site. The terms and conditions on this website may be changed at any time without notice.

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Appendix E: Harmonised Office of National Statistics Reproduction of Information Open Government License

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Appendix F: E-Mail Correspondence Between Dr. Mattick and Genea Shoulders Regarding Use of the SIAS

Hi Genea

Sounds like interesting research.

You are free to use the scales. You have full permission.

They are presented in Mattick and Clarke BRAT 1998. Scoring is there as well.

Best.

Richard P Mattick.
UNSW Australia.
+61 419409010.
Sent from iPhone.

Appendix G: Permission Letter to Conduct Research Using SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey Inc.
www.Surveyonkey.com

For questions, visit our HelpCenter:help.surve
monkey.com

Re: Permission to Conduct Research Using SurveyMonkey

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is being produced in response to a request by a student at your institution who wishes to conduct a survey using SurveyMonkey in order to support their research. The student has indicated that they require a letter from SurveyMonkey granting them permission to do this. Please accept this letter as evidence of such permission. Students are permitted to conduct research via the SurveyMonkey platform provided that they abide by our Terms of Use at https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/terms-of-use/.

SurveyMonkey is a self-serve survey platform on which our users can, by themselves, create, deploy and analyze surveys through an online interface. We have users in many different industries who use surveys for many different purposes. One of our most common use cases is students and other types of researchers using our online tools to conduct academic research.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact us through our Help Center at help.surveymonkey.com.

Sincerely,

SurveyMonkey Inc.

Appendix H: The Media and Technology Usage Scale

L. D. Rosen, K. Whaling, L. M. Carrier, N. A. Cheever, & J. Rokkum. (2013). Using the media and technology usage scale. *Computers and Human Behavior*, *29*, 2501-11.

Instructions: For each item, please circle the number indicating your response to the specific question. There are 6 questions, which should not take more than 5 minutes to complete.

Media Usage Scale

A. TV Viewing Subscales
   1. How often do you watch TV shows, movies, etc. on a TV set?
      0. Never
      1. Once a week
      2. Once a day
      3. Several times a day
      4. All day
   2. How often do you watch video clips on a TV set
      0. Never
      1. Once a week
      2. Once a day
      3. Several times a day
      4. All day

B. Internet Searching Subscales
   3. How often do you search the Internet for news on any device?
      0. Never
      1. Once a week
      2. Once a day
      3. Several times a day
      4. All day
   4. How often do you search the Internet for information on any device?
      0. Never
      1. Once a week
      2. Once a day
      3. Several times a day
      4. All day
   5. How often do you search the Internet for videos on any device?
      0. Never

1. Once a week
2. Once a day
3. Several times a day
4. All day

6. How often do you search the Internet for images or photos on any device?
    0. Never
    1. Once a week
    2. Once a day
    3. Several times a day
    4. All day

Appendix I: The Crime and Fear of Crime Scale

Harmonisation Office of National Statistics. (2015). *Crime and fear of crime scale*. Titchfield, England: Author.

Instructions: For each item, please circle the number indicating your response to the specific question. There are 20 questions, which should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

Feeling Safe

7. How safe do you feel walking alone within 15 minutes from your home after dark?
    0. Very safe
    1. Fairly safe
    2. Neutral
    3. A bit unsafe
    4. Very unsafe
8. How safe do you feel walking alone within 15 minutes from your home during the day?
    0. Very safe
    1. Fairly safe
    2. Neutral
    3. A bit unsafe
    4. Very unsafe
9. How safe do you feel when you are alone in your own home at night?
    0. Very safe
    1. Fairly safe
    2. Neutral
    3. A bit unsafe
    4. Very unsafe

Worries About Crime

10. How worried are you about having your home broken into and something stolen?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried
11. How worried are you about being mugged and robbed?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried

2. Neutral
3. Not very worried
4. Not at all worried

12. How worried are you about having your car stolen?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried
13. How worried are you about being raped?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried
14. How worried are you about being physically attacked by strangers?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried
15. How worried are you about being insulted or pestered by anybody while in the street or any other public place?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried
16. How worried are you about being subject to a physical attack because of your skin color, ethnic origin, or religion?
    0. Very worried
    1. Fairly worried
    2. Neutral
    3. Not very worried
    4. Not at all worried

Crime Rate in Area

17. How much would you say crime rates have changed since two years ago? In this area, would you say there is more crime or less crime?
    0. A lot more crime
    1. A little more crime
    2. About the same

3. A little less crime
4. A lot less crime

Problems in Area

18. How much of a problem are noisy neighbors or loud parties?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
19. How much of a problem are teenagers hanging around on the streets?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
20. How much of a problem are people sleeping on the streets or in other public places?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
21. How much of a problem is rubbish or litter lying around?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
22. How much of a problem are vandalism, graffiti, and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
23. How much of a problem is it for people being attacked or harassed because of their skin color, ethnic origin, or religion?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem

4. Not a problem at all

24. How much of a problem are people using or dealing drugs?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all
25. How much of a problem are people being drunk or rowdy in public spaces?
    0. Very big problem
    1. Fairly big problem
    2. Neutral
    3. Not a very big problem
    4. Not a problem at all

Appendix J: The Social Interaction Anxiety Scale

R. P. Mattick and J. C. Clarke. (1998). Social interaction anxiety scale. *Behavior Research and Therapy, 36,* 455-470.

Instructions: For each item, please circle the number indicating your response to the specific question. There are 20 questions, which should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

Social Interaction Anxiety Scale

26. I get nervous if I have to speak with someone in authority (teacher, boss, etc.).
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
27. I have difficulty making eye contact with others.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
28. I become tense if I have to talk about myself or my feelings.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
29. I find it difficult to mix comfortably with the people I work with.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
30. I find it easy to make friends my own age.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
31. I tense up if I meet an acquaintance in the street.
    0. Not at all

1. Slightly
2. Moderately
3. Very
4. Extremely

32. When mixing socially, I am uncomfortable.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
33. I feel tense if I am alone with just one other person.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
34. I am at ease meeting people at parties, etc.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
35. I have difficulty talking with other people.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
36. I find it easy to think of things to talk about.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
37. I worry about expressing myself in case I appear awkward.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely

38. I find it difficult to disagree with another's point of view.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
39. I have difficulty talking to attractive persons of the opposite sex.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
40. I find myself worrying that I won't know what to say in social situations.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
41. I am nervous mixing with people I don't know well.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
42. I feel I'll say something embarrassing when talking.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
43. When mixing in a group, I find myself worrying I will be ignored.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely
44. I am tense mixing in a group.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely

45. I am unsure whether to greet someone I know only slightly.
    0. Not at all
    1. Slightly
    2. Moderately
    3. Very
    4. Extremely

Appendix K: Respondents Screening Questions

1. Are you a resident of Los Angeles County?

- Yes
- No

2. Have you watched crime stories on TV or the Internet within two weeks prior to today?

- Yes
- No