

FEAR OF CRIME IN A SMALL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT:

The paper engages with the “commonsense” notion, and that of Ezioni (1993), that fear of crime might be lower in a small relatively close-knit community. To that end it sets out to investigate people’s concerns about crime and to relate them to notions of community in The Cathedral Close in Lichfield (UK), where the researcher, serendipitously, was resident at the time of writing. The paper places fear of crime within a criminological paradigm and engages with the necessary limitations of that paradigm. It suggests that new extra-paradigmatic perspectives may be more illuminating of the concerns expressed by people about crime, and in this vein examines the perceived relationship between the concerns of the residents of The Close about crime and their perception of their place within that small community.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The fear of crime has become of significant importance in recent years both in the political arena and in the discourses of the social sciences. It has become a touchstone for victimologists and a focus of significant concern for social and criminological theorists and especially for those theorising methodological issues. It has become a cynosure for theoretical disputes, a cause of disagreement for practitioners and has ‘assumed a heavy polemical charge’ (Sparks 1992: 119) in political circles. The fear of crime has become an issue in these terms, it is argued, as a result of the privileging of the victim, which has arisen out of the development of “realist” criminology in the 1970s. However, whilst the issue of the fear of crime is perforce an important one for those who experience it, and of considerable interest to sociologists and policy makers, significant concerns have been raised over the conceptualisation of the frames of reference, not least in the debate about the real or rational nature of the problem. The result is that many studies fail in their attempts at explaining or interpreting the fear of crime as either an individual or collective experience or as a fact of contemporary social life.

In this paper, I intend to explore the notion of the fear of crime and its relationship to concepts of community and neighbourhood in the small community resident in The Close at Lichfield Cathedral, colloquially known as “The Cathedral Close”. I shall explore through engagement with extant research and by my own empirical study, the relationship between the residents’ conceptualisations of fear of crime and their feelings about living within the community of The Close. I shall further explore what this might mean for the explanation or interpretation of the fear of crime as a personal or as a social experience.

I will begin with a critique of quantitative research into fear of crime. This I intend to do by analysing the 120 questions from forty six different studies used by Ferraro and Lagrange (1987) in their overview of the literature. It is necessary to point out that I use these questions simply for the convenience of having a readily collated body of research questions, it does not assume any comment on Ferraro and Lagrange's own study although I do criticise this as a part of the literature as a whole. I shall continue by examining work in the field post 1987 and then progress to a short discussion of three recent works and their influence on the design of this study. Following this, I shall outline the methods used in my study and the methodological problems. I shall continue with the transcription and analysis of selected portions of the recorded text and I will briefly conclude. Hannah Arendt has pointed out in her letters concerning her writing of 'Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil' (1977) that any piece of research is a journey of discovery and that it is impossible to know what it is about until it is finished. It is so with this piece. It began with the commonsense notion that people who were more embedded in a discrete community would experience less fear of crime; it became a piece, in part, about the death of a paradigm.

2. QUANTIFYING AND QUALIFYING THE FEAR OF CRIME

2.1.1. EARLY STUDIES

It is commonplace when outlining the course of any research, to “operationalize the concepts”. However, failure adequately to define the concepts of fear or of crime has proved one of the most significant obstacles in attempts to understand the phenomenon of the fear of crime. As DuBow et al. point out “[F]ear of crime” refers to a wide variety of subjective and emotional assessments and behavioural reports. There is a serious lack of both consistence and specificity in these reports’ (1979:1). Indeed, even a cursory view of the literature reveals that the concept “fear of crime” has gained so many and contradictory meanings that it’s utility has become virtually negligible (Ferraro & Lagrange 1986). It has been assumed by many researchers into the fear of crime that we all carry the same conceptualisations of terms such as “fear” and “crime” and that what fear means to the researcher is the same as what fear means to the research subject. Furthermore, it has been assumed that if the same words are used in the same context, those unified meanings so communicated and responses so recorded will offer good grounds for assuming reliability, replicability, validity and thus by inference, comparability and through extrapolation, the ability to generalise. Indeed, it is one of the contentions of this paper that the expectation that research will provide adequate generalisations at all in this field has proved a major obstacle to providing meaningful analyses.

Research methodology is a diverse field situated within debates about quantification or otherwise of data, about induction and deduction or identifying cultural patterns and seeking scientific laws (Madil et al. 2000). It poses the methodological dichotomy between the scientific, the hermeneutic, and the theoretical dichotomy between the paradigmatic and the narrative. For the researcher working within a “realist” framework, crime is a real event

which happens to real people and as such is seen as a relatively unproblematic homogenous whole which can be represented by figures showing significant and rising levels of particular kinds of crime in specific locations at limited times of day and amongst particular groups of the population. It is assumed that the “real” nature of crime, the experience of victimisation or the fear of criminal activity can reliably be measured and instruments of prediction generated from the figures thus derived. However, measurement of the experiences and codifying of the data requires, for the purpose of statistical analysis, that categories and divisions be created such that comparisons between those divisions can be shown. Groups may be defined in terms of gender, age, race, location, socio-economic level, status or any number of other categories that have little or no meaning to the individual’s personal experience of victimisation or fear, or indeed any other contact that they may have with the real world experience of crime. In other words, such compartmentalisation robs the subjects’ experience of any meaning, or as Mishler puts it:

The problem raised by such radical decontextualisation ... is that respondent’s answers are disconnected from essential socio-cultural grounds of meaning. Each answer is a fragment removed both from its setting in the organized discourse of the interview and from the life setting of the respondent. (1986: 23)

Such fragmented responses are of course reassembled, as Mishler goes on to say, into ‘artificial aggregates that have no direct representation in the real world’ (Mishler 1986: 26) and which, in consequence can have little or no relationship to the meanings attached to those concepts by the respondents. ‘When we aggregate people, treating diversity as error variance, in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular’. (Josselson 1995: 32) Hence, one might argue, attempts to generalise in this field are doomed to failure by the polysemic nature of the experience in the first place and by the polysemic nature of the means of communicating that experience.

Further unsubstantiated assumptions are made by researchers. It is assumed that there is an implicit relationship between fear and safety such that the two are at opposite ends of a continuum of feeling about safety. (see appendix.) The opposite of safety is not fear but danger; hence, a low score on the safety issue does not indicate fear at all but the perception of danger or risk. Danger does not equate to fear or to crime automatically, one may experience danger in the form of things falling from ladders or in the form of road traffic or of contracting some illness or any one of a myriad of ordinary life hazards and undeniably, a life free of danger of one sort or another would be a dull one indeed. Consequently, it may be argued, of the one hundred and twenty survey questions examined (from Ferraro and Lagrange 1985) the forty-eight which mention safety must be called into question – and by inference the results thus gained – on the grounds of inadequate conceptualisation of the relationship between safety and fear of crime.

Further criticism of much fear of crime research may be levelled at the conceptualisation of the word 'fear' itself. Many questions used in fear of crime surveys contain images of walking alone in the dark. Freud tells us that three images define human anxiety, solitude, darkness and the presence of a stranger, (Bowlby 1970/71: 83). Indeed it has been argued by Croake & Knox (1971) that concern about a threat from future or theoretical events, which are dissociated from the immediate experience, constitutes anxiety rather than fear. Of the one hundred and twenty questions quoted in Ferraro and Lagrange, thirty-eight contained references to solitude and or darkness. Most of these thirty-eight questions involve two of those elements, some of them all three. The consequence of this observation is that it calls into question the suitability of those questions on the grounds that it is not clear whether the questioner is measuring pre-existing fear, or an anxious response to future or theoretical events engendered by the question itself. In addition, these notions of solitude and darkness

connote different things to different people; they are likely to mean very different things to the adolescent male than they will mean to the elderly woman for example. Hence, as Croake and Hinkle (1976) point out, '[m]any studies that report fears may actually have investigated anxiety, and many reporting the results of anxiety studies may have been researching fears', a condition attested to in considerable depth by Hollway and Jefferson (2000). The situation is not simplified by the fact that fear and anxiety, whilst being different phenomena, are frequently related, however, the way in which they are related is complex and underdetermined and simple causal relationships, such that one may stand for the other for the purposes of research into fear are not evident. Croake and Knox also found that reporting of levels of fear was called into question by the fact that people respond differently to questions concerning their fearfulness when questioned in a group of their peers or when questioned individually, suggesting that respondents modify their responses according to their perception of their peer group norms.

The above calls into question the common assumption that the subject and the researcher share meanings with one another. Words are polysemic, as are the scenarios that the researcher intends to illicit in the imagination of the research subject by use of them. Furthermore, the assumption that the words and concepts and the scenarios real and imagined of the research subject can be meaningfully communicated to the researcher in an unambiguous way must be viewed with considerable scepticism.

Further assumptions are made about the subject's ability accurately to quantify feelings – from "fairly safe" to "a bit unsafe" (Hollway and Jefferson 2000: 11), and to be able to remember those quantifications over long periods - Erskine (1974) for example has these questions (among others which require temporal judgements) 'Would you say that there is

more crime in this community now that there was five years ago, or less?’ or ‘Compared to a year ago do you feel more afraid and uneasy on the streets today, less uneasy or not much different from the way you felt a few years ago?’ It is worthy of note that in the second of these two questions Erskine expects the respondent to assess change – better or worse – over a period of one year, or stasis over ‘a few years’, that is, to make judgements of emotional states covering two different time scales simultaneously. This question most certainly – if not the other six of Erskine’s ten questions that require significant temporal judgements – must be regarded as being invalid on the grounds that it cannot possibly produce reliable replicable answers.

Respondents are assumed by some questioners to have reliable knowledge of crime, - Smith and Patterson (1984) for example ‘Respondents were asked how likely they thought it was that they would be the victims of a) robbery, b) burglary, c) vandalism, during the next year’. This question also expects respondents to distinguish between “robbery” and “burglary”, a distinction that one suspects people commonly would be unable to make. Furthermore, the question required respondents to make predictions of the risk of being robbed or burgled spanning a year. Of Erskine’s twelve questions, seven required the respondent to evaluate his or her perception of crime over a period of a year and one question required an evaluation covering five years. In reality, Erskine’s study is less about any notion of ‘fear of crime’ and more about the respondent’s perception of changes in crime rates, despite her claim that the study is about ‘Fear of Violence and Crime’. Of the one hundred and twenty questions listed in Ferraro and LaGrange, sixteen required respondents to have accurate knowledge of victimisation rates. Wiltz (1982), for example asks ‘What is the possibility of being burglarised?’, ‘What is the possibility of having your purse snatched?’ and perhaps most extraordinarily, ‘What is the likelihood of your being victimized in the future?’

The unified meaning of concepts is further assumed when geographic variables are introduced into the study. Of the questions surveyed 51% contained references to geographic displacement. These include references to one's 'own home', 'out', 'on the streets', 'block', 'around here', 'this area', 'within a mile', 'community', 'city' or 'downtown', but by far the most common geographical concept, occurring in twenty six questions was that of 'neighbourhood'. This is of interest for two reasons. First, because it is indeterminate, as indeed are all the geographical terms used except "own home", "block" or "within a mile", but second, and perhaps more interesting following from notions of polysemy noted above, is that the word neighbourhood is not a particularly common word in (British) English usage. The word "neighbourhood" does not carry the same connotations on this side of the Atlantic as it does in the U.S.A. Similarly, the notion of community has different meanings either side of the Atlantic, whereas in American usage community has geographic connotations, in British usage the word refers more commonly to groups of individuals centred around common interests. For example, we refer to a "farming community", which has a geographical location, "the village", or we refer to "a steel making community", which has a geographical location "the city". In other words, we tend to refer to communities of practice. Thus, neither the concept of community nor of neighbourhood can be said to have precise geographical meanings, and this is particularly so in British usage. Furthermore, geographical notions may indicate surrogate fears, in that the respondent is expected to answer on behalf of the community or neighbourhood as in Clarke and Lewis (1982) 'Do you think that people in this neighbourhood are safe in their own homes at night?'. In this circumstance, it is not clear who has the fear if there is any, or if the response is reliable at all.

Further criticisms may be levelled against the design of the questions in much of the quantitative research undertaken on fear of crime not least that many of the questions are

leading. Perhaps the most startling example of such a “leading” question is this from Riger et al (1978) ‘The last time you worried about rape, how afraid or scared did you feel?’. It is difficult to grasp what reliable data could be derived from such a question or what understanding. In Lee’s (1982a) mixture of questions and statements we find the following, ‘If someone assaulted me I could protect myself.’ This surely is likely to elicit information about whether the respondent was in the habit of arming themselves (in the USA), whether they were big or small, fit or unfit, or perhaps had taken karate classes. Some of which may be related to fear of crime but the ability to protect oneself *per se* is not an indicator of fear or otherwise, indeed it is difficult to see whether the researcher intended it as an indicator of fear or confidence. Other questions mix hypothetical and actual assessments ‘do you feel – would you feel’ (Baumer 1985; Garofalo 1979; Liska et al. 1982; Maxfield 1984; Riger et al. 1978). In the light of such criticisms, many of the studies mentioned must be viewed with a degree of scepticism, in fact, of the forty six studies reviewed in this section, all but nine commit one or more of the above mentioned offences and as such must be regarded as ‘largely invalid’ (Ferraro & LaGrange).

2.1.2. LATER STUDIES

If the above studies may be called into question that is not to say that other later studies are not guilty similar or other failures. Ferraro and LaGrange, from whose 1986 study the above surveyed questions were taken embark upon an attempt to make more sophisticated the measurement of fear. They contend that earlier work tends to conflate various kinds of fear and in support of this illustrate that of the forty six studies mentioned above, forty percent rely on a ‘single-item indicator of fear of crime’ and a further twenty eight point three percent ‘employ more than one “fear” measure yet analyze (sic) them individually rather than as a multiple-item construct.’ (p: 74) The primary trend of the majority of the literature, they

contend, is to conflate fear of crime with judgements of the risk of victimisation as in Baker et al. (1983) 'How safe would you feel walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?'. This is to confuse general concerns with personal concerns. Further questions they argue represent values – 'Are you personally concerned about becoming a victim of crime?' (Jaehnig et al 1981) – and others emotions 'I worry a great deal about the safety of my loved ones from crime and criminals' (Lee 1982a). In consequence, Ferraro and LaGrange call for fear of crime to be divided into six separate categories in two main groups namely; general judgements, general values and general emotions, personal judgements personal values and personal emotions. However, to so divide the notion of fear of crime is to ignore the undoubted fact that fear and indeed crime has different meanings for each individual and serves to reduce the entire diversity of human and social experience of fear of crime into six measurable boxes. Farrall et al. (1997) in their comprehensive review of methodological problems that have beset fear of crime research have this to say.

From its very inception, this field has relied almost exclusively upon quantitative surveys ... However, doubts about the nature of the instruments used to investigate this phenomenon have cumulatively raised the possibility that the fear of crime has been significantly misrepresented. ... [O]ur understanding of the fear of crime is a product of the way it has been researched rather than the way that it is

Nonetheless, Farrall et al. go on to produce a recommendation for a research survey that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods, that is, both closed and open questions. However, some concern must be expressed about the quantitative portion of the survey, which consists of questions (see appendix) that fall into exactly the same traps as those outlined above.

During the period that research has been conducted into the fear of crime, the results of surveys have shown an inexorable rise in its quantity and severity. This is despite the now commonplace assertion that crime rates have been falling since the late nineteen eighties on

both sides of the Atlantic (Mauer [*inter alia*] 2001:7). Furthermore, surveys have shown that those at least risk of victimisation display the greatest fear of crime (Furstenburg 2000) (Hough 1995). This discrepancy has been put down *inter alia* to the fear of crime being irrational. This is obviously problematic in the situation where the notion of the fear of crime was introduced and initially privileged by the “realist” school of criminology, which clearly viewed the fear of crime as a very real criminological fact. The problem arises from the act of quantification. As we have seen, quantitative methods of research have displayed significant methodological flaws. The need to quantify fear arises not only out of the philosophical position that fear of crime is real and measurable but from the epistemological assertion that only quantitative research is reliable by virtue of being replicable. This replicates the epistemological hubris of the quantitative sciences, which contends not only that replicability in research is essential to knowledge production, but also that reliability and validity equate to one another, since no knowledge can be valid if its methods are not seen to be reliable, and methods are considered unreliable if their results are not replicable. However as we have seen, and as has been elegantly pointed out by Mishler (above), attempts to quantify fear, anxiety or crime for that matter, strike at the heart of the validity of research into the fear of crime by removing the meanings that give the fear of crime validity as a personal or social experience. Further to this, it must be noted that large quantitative surveys are costly and require support from research councils who are accountable to government. The political utility of “fear of crime” relies entirely on its being quantified (Farrall et al. 1997) indeed it seems to this writer that this is the only reason that fear of crime research persists in its quantitative forms.

2.2. A NEW PARADIGM

Kuhn tells us that a paradigm represents the arena of work of 'normal science' (Kuhn 1962); periods of everyday, non-revolutionary work where science practitioners are involved in 'routine puzzle solving'. During these periods a consensus exists across the scientific community about acceptable theoretical and methodological frameworks, about the problems that it is acceptable to investigate and the standards by which the knowledge so produced is to be judged true. Training in the discipline involves adoption of the paradigm by the student such that the paradigm becomes hegemonic in Gramsci's terms. Nonetheless, a paradigm must be seen to offer convincing resolutions to existing problems and to provide sufficient new problems for continuing work. Fear of crime has been seen until recently as just such a paradigm. Kuhn also tells us that the nature of scientific revolution is that the tenets of the existing paradigm become strained such that the truth of its findings is called into question and its capacity for generating new problems becomes exhausted. In this circumstance claims Kuhn the old paradigm is abandoned in favour of an insipient new paradigm, a process which he calls paradigm shift. In this process, many aspects of the old paradigm are abandoned as worthless. Fear of crime may have become just such a paradigm. As we have seen, significant doubts have arisen concerning its conceptualisations of its frames of reference and of its methods, furthermore, avenues of exploration within the paradigm have become ever more exhausted as has been shown by research critical of old work falling foul of the same errors. Fear of crime, it has become increasingly apparent, is a construct of the social sciences. To misappropriate a phrase Hulsman (1968: 71) fear of 'crime has no ontological reality, it is not the object but the product of criminological study'.

It is the contention of this essay that three recent studies constitute work within a nascent new paradigm, or at least make significant contributions outside the fear of crime paradigm. The

first, the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000), continues to use the phrase “fear of crime”. However, the authors make clear that such a notion is unique to each research subject, that it is a product of the assumed meanings – the intersubjectivities – generated between researcher and subject and of the subject’s unique ‘psycho-social’ attributes; that is those things ‘psychic and social’ which the subject has acquired as a part of his life history. It is the contention of this study that, following from Klein (1998 a & b), that throughout their lives and in response to their experiences, beginning with the inability to feed at the breast, people acquire anxieties and means of avoiding or negating those anxieties of which indulging in “fear of crime” discourse is just one. The feature of this study to my mind is its focus on the unique experience of the subject. Nonetheless, there is the continuing attempt to generalise fear of crime as an anxious response.

Perhaps more promising is the work of Sasson (1995) whose work ‘Crime talk’ abandons the notion of fear of crime altogether and allows his subjects to talk about crime in general and their reactions to it. The study is of interest in that it follows the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), which allows subjects to generate their own “sensitising concepts”. Subjects are allowed to generate their own ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1975). The focus of this study was: The reason that crime has such a prominent place in American Public life. Identifying five “frames” (Gamson 1988, 1992, Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 1987, Neuman et al. 1992 and Becket 1994) for analysis; ‘faulty system’, ‘blocked opportunities’, ‘social breakdown’, ‘media violence’ and ‘racist system’, Sasson analysed the discourses in his interviews identifying them with one or other of these frames. What is further of interest is that many of his respondents use discourse familiar to fear of crime researchers, nonetheless, Sasson does not classify it as such and in consequence it is allowed to give voice to the subject’s intended meaning. The methods chosen for my study follow closely from this work. The work of

Girling et al. similarly allows the subjects to express their own meanings, however, unlike Sasson; this study explores the problem in relation to space. They

propose that some of the more perplexing and seemingly anomalous discoveries of the 'fear of crime' literature (especially those that have given rise to the extended and in the main unhelpful debate on the rationality or otherwise of public responses to the perceived risks of crime) become substantially more intelligible in the light of thicker contextual understanding of place. (Girling *et al* 2000)

This then is the context, the departure point for my own study in Lichfield.

3. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY INTO FEAR OF CRIME IN LICHFIELD

The possibility of producing simultaneously reliable and valid knowledge of fear of crime by quantitative methods has been called into question above and by writers such as Danziger (1990), Harré & Secord (1972), Manicas (1987), Sherrard (1998). However, this is not to say that qualitative methods are without their problems. Where the problem for quantitative research is validity in the form of reproducing the hermeneutic, the problem for qualitative research is reliability and replicability. Replicability in qualitative research is, more or less, impossible – depending on the degree of accuracy of replication required – and reliability it is contended, may be seen to rely entirely upon the authority of the researcher (Madill et al. p:2). Nonetheless, it is to qualitative methods that this study will turn in an attempt to examine some of the meanings contained within the notion of the fear of crime and I shall outline those methods below.

3.1. SAMPLING

The research, the account of which follows was carried out within the community comprising the residents of “The Cathedral Close” in Lichfield. Opportunity to make use of this population arose out of my employment by the Dean and Chapter – the governing body of the Cathedral – as a Lay Vicar Choral and of my own residence in the portion of The Close historically allocated to the vicars choral for their residence since 1315, known as Vicars’ Close. The Cathedral Close is the remnant of the medieval walled city of Lichfield, built originally in 700 AD as fortification for the new Cathedral of St. Chad. All the properties are in the ownership of the Dean and Chapter and are rented to the residents of whom there are about eighty in all². Residents do not have to be members of the Cathedral (or any other) congregation though many are. Indeed one of the couples that were interviewed has no

² The database made available to me by the Dean and Chapter contained several errors, including two residents recently deceased and two residents who had moved to different flats within The Close.

association with the business of the Cathedral other than paying their rent. The population of The Close includes the Bishop, the Dean, and the Cathedral Canons, the local M.P. and a Judge. It includes the gardener and the school caretaker, it includes people who were simply in need of housing when there was a property vacant and who were unable to rent privately by virtue of being unemployed or of being pregnant for example. It includes a large number of retired or semi-retired people but it also houses a family with three young children and the junior adult members of the Choral Foundation, the Scholars Choral, who are typically aged eighteen to twenty one. It is home during the day to two hundred school children and at night to two dozen or so boarders. It will be seen therefore that whilst the urban poor are not represented and there are no people from ethnic minority groups, The Close is a moderately diverse community. On the other hand, whilst it is not possible for me to calculate the average age of the residents, I would estimate that a significant majority are over retirement age and of my sample, 65% are retired.

The particularly valuable attribute of The Close for the purposes of this research however is that it has clearly defined boundaries such that it is relatively easy to extract the meanings attached to neighbourhood and community. It is small and in consequence, outsiders are easily identified, as is their behaviour. The actual level of victimisation is very low but it abuts the City centre with its problems on the south and one of two ex-council estates to the north with its attendant crime problems. The Close is a *cul de sac* for the purposes of motorised traffic although there is a right of way on foot from the City centre to the main road north. Such attributes make the identification of both the geographical and the social concepts of community more easily identifiable, and so in consequence is the participant's sense of place.

The population for this survey was drawn from the residents of The Close. Permission was gained from the Chief Executive Officer to use the database of the residents names addresses and telephone numbers kept at the Chapter Offices. A letter of request to be interviewed was sent to each household in The Close except for those of The Bishop, the Cathedral Canons, other members of the Foundation and the local M.P.. These households were omitted for the following reasons. The Bishop was omitted as his status effectively sets him apart from the 'close community'. His house historically is provided as a courtesy by the Dean and Chapter, for his residence whilst performing Diocesan duties or duties within the Cathedral and as such may be considered to be non resident and in fact, he does not appear on the database as a resident of The Close despite living here almost continually. The second reason for excluding the Bishop is the same as that for excluding the Cathedral Canons and our M.P.. These people are held in awe by many and would in my view adversely affect the dynamics of any interview group in which they took part. The status of the Canons among the residents of The Close is not only as joint landlords but also as Pastors. As such they are unlikely to speak about their own experiences in the presence of their "charges" as this would adversely affect the dynamics of their daily relationship with them, the resulting "talk" in any interview group in which they took part would have a strong tendency toward being of a surrogate nature. It did cross my mind to have a separate "power" group consisting of the Canons, the Chief Executive Officer, the Head Verger (Constable of The Close), our M.P. and the resident Judge, however, talk in such a group would be likely to be about actuarial and stochastic perceptions of victimisation and risk and not of their personal experience or concerns. The further members of the Foundation (other Vicars Choral, Organists and Scholars Choral) and the Headmaster of the School were omitted on the grounds that I have a professional relationship with them that would adversely affect the dynamics of any interview group in which they took part and in which existing power relations were not replicated or were

replicated to the extent that responses were modified. In short, my professional seniors would be unlikely to speak freely and personally to me, as indeed would my juniors. The very large house on the north side of The Close was omitted on the grounds that its occupants spend very little time resident in The Close. Two very elderly and infirm residents were omitted on the grounds that the subject of the research itself might cause undue distress. Consequently, of the fifty-seven residential properties, letters were sent to forty-four households inviting the occupants to take part in the research. From this selected sample of forty-four households, eighteen replies were received of which thirteen were in the affirmative. It is worthy of note here that those who failed to respond were by and large (although not entirely), those who have little to do with “The Close community”. The respondents were divided into three groups for interview, a group of five, a group of six (which was reduced to three as three failed to turn up), and a group of four (boosted to five by one of the no shows from the previous group).

Clearly there are issues of the ability to generalise with such a small and socially homogenous group; however, such homogeneity is inevitable when conducting peer group interviews. Secondly it will be apparent from my earlier adumbration of the problems concerning the methods used in extant studies, that attempts to generalise serve to reflect the concepts and categories of the researcher (Reinharz 1984) and in consequence constitute a significant block to the extraction of the subject’s own meanings. Furthermore, there is the epistemological problem of the ability to generalise. The more we are able to generalise, the further we are from being able to show the truth of an individual situation. In other words, the more we seek to generalise the more we assume that the fear of crime means the same thing to each our research subjects and the further away we get from understanding their individual experience.

3.2. DATA GATHERING

We have signalled above some of the shortcomings of extant studies into the fear of crime. At the centre of these shortcomings is a misconception of the research subject as one who carries pre-formed a fixed set of attitudes and concepts and that these correspond to the attitudes and concepts of the researcher. But in the real world, attitudes and concepts form part of an identity which is forever changing in response to differing social contexts, each rife with symbolic meaning, in response to which previously held attitudes and concepts change. In short, what people think depends *inter alia* upon who is listening and who is asking. Traditional survey methods are incapable of coming to terms with this complexity. In response to this, it was decided to make use of the Peer Group Interview (Sasson 1995) for gathering data. Like the focus group interview (Morgan 1988), peer group interview allows the researcher to listen in on the subjects conversations and allows the subjects to develop their own categories and vocabularies to generate corporate meaning or to express their own. However, unlike conventional focus group research, the peer group interview makes use of subjects who are acquainted with one another outside the interview setting. This has two main advantages. First, peer group interview participants typically interact with greater fervour and less reserve than subjects who are not acquainted (Sasson 1995: 21). This permits the interviewer to withdraw from the discussion to a greater degree resulting in richer discourse. Second, because the subjects are acquainted outside the setting of the interview, a setting that is purely of the researchers contrivance, their discourse may be regarded as being more representative of the attitudes extant in the particular community from which they are drawn. Finally, it is worthy of note that the peer group interview eliminates a bias commonly found in conventional qualitative research, namely that the presence of individuals with idiosyncratic views can badly skew the research (Sasson 1995: 23). As Gamson (1992) points out, meaningful interaction between research subjects can only take place within a framework

of commonly held or taken-for-granted assumptions about the world – what Schutz (1967) has called intersubjectivities. The dynamics of interaction within the group tend to discourage expression of views outside these intersubjectivities regardless of the precise composition of the group. One negative attribute of this method is the possibility of discourse within the group wandering from the researchers core areas of interest. Whereas the method tends to prevent skewing of the conversation by an individual, it cannot do the same should the whole group insist upon wandering off base. This was particularly noticeable in the second interview group in this study, who, largely, were keen to be involved in a discourse about law and order and social control. In this circumstance, it will be apparent that large quantities of redundant text can be produced.

The interviews were semi-structured in form. Direct questions were avoided although several questions were at the heart of the directions given to the interview groups. Following from the views of Etzioni (1993) the main thrust of the research was to question whether intimate involvement in a small community reduced the fear of crime in its members. Consequently, the interviews were structured around three main areas; the subject's own fear of crime, the subject's perception of the nature of the community in The Close and their involvement in it, and the subject's perceptions of crime in the wider community and its impact on their behaviour and state of mind. The subjects were encouraged to use their own concepts of crime and of fear and were allowed to stray into associated areas such as nuisance for example in the case of crime, or worry or apprehension for example in the case of fear. My own involvement was kept to a minimum, speaking only to initiate the discussion and to guide it into the above-mentioned areas or to stimulate the discussion should it begin to flag. However, the discussion flagging was generally taken to indicate that the particular topic was close to exhaustion and the discussion was moved on. In consequence, the group was allowed

to develop its own dynamic. As I have said, direct questions were not used but requests were put to the groups such as ‘I would like you to talk a little about crime beyond The Close – in town or on The Dimbles (ex council estate) for example.’ This was done to avoid bending the subjects responses to fit to the specific meanings inherent in a direct question and to facilitate the expression of the subjects own categories, vocabulary and meanings.

3.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The names of all those interviewed have been changed in this text except for that of Chris Craddock, the head verger as he is so easily identifiable by reference to his office. Clearly any one who knows the people represented in the transcripts will be able to work out who is who, but they should remain anonymous to outsiders. The issue of informed consent proved a thorny one in that I was concerned not to pre-sensitise the respondents to what is already an emotive subject. Furthermore as Eisner (1991) has pointed out the concept of informed consent implies that the researcher knows before the event to be observed, what the event will be and its possible effects. This negates one of the valued freedoms of semi-structured interviews, namely the ability to change tack mid interview in response to unanticipated leads. Ultimately it was decided to introduce the area of inquiry as being the “Perception of Crime within The Close” at the stage of the invitation to be interviewed and it was further decided, as has been mentioned in the section on sampling, to exclude from the population two particularly elderly and infirm residents whom it was felt might be unduly anxious about the topic. During the interview itself, participants were told that the study was about ‘fear of crime’ and only at the end were they told the full research question concerning involvement in the community and fear of crime. This was done to prevent skewing the conversations to conform to any expectations the participants may have had of the researches overall direction. Nonetheless, once the full research question had been revealed, after the tape was turned off

and consequently off the record, a feedback and discussion session was conducted (in one case lasting longer than the interview itself) not only for the information of the participants but to prevent them from feeling cheated and to allow the interviewees to feel that the process had not been one sided with them giving all the time and getting nothing in return. All participants were offered a copy of the finished study.

3.4. TRANSCRIPTS AND ANALYSIS

The interviews produced nearly four hours of more or less continuous conversation. For the purpose of analysis, it was decided to divide the conversations into two separate dialectics; the dialectic of fear and the dialectic of community. Each in turn may be divided into two opposing discourses; the discourses of what might be called vulnerability and of security and the discourses of community and of strangers. It is not possible to put each contribution into one or other of these discourses without it being apparent that at least in part it belongs in another. Indeed, these crossovers will be the focus of the concluding arguments of this study. A fifth discourse arose from time to time and in fact proved the major discourse of the second group, namely that of law and order and social control. For reasons of relevance to my initial subject and of space, I shall not be dealing with this discourse.

3.4.1. THE DIALECTIC OF FEAR

3.4.1.1. THE DISCOURSE OF VULNERABILITY

The first thing that the interviewees spoke about was the level of crime within The Close as they saw it. Members of the first group said that they had no experience of crime within The Close except for Margaret who said that someone had attempted to break into her house on the south side of The Close. Margaret is 55 and has lived in The Close for twenty-six years. She has worked in the Chapter Office and was responsible for starting The Friends of

Lichfield Cathedral. She has been actively involved in various fundraising appeals for the Cathedral and feels ‘very much part of The Close’. Jill is the Cathedral Librarian; she lives alone— her daughter who is in her thirties having recently left home – in a flat, with other tenants above and below. She describes herself as being ‘over twenty one’. George lives in Newton’s College. He is retired. He is a Cathedral Steward and a “holy duster” (volunteer cleaner). Jane is seventy-five and lives in a first floor flat. She has lived in The Close for fourteen years; she helps as a volunteer in the bookshop office, and on the Diocesan Digest for the blind and is a “holy duster”. Esther describes herself as being over sixty. A retired teacher, she has lived in The Close for four years, currently in the flat above Jane, and finds it a very friendly and welcoming place. She works in the Bookshop, is a lay administrant, reader, and a “holy duster”.

Despite their initial assertions that there was almost no crime in The Close, lead by Margaret, it appeared that they did in fact perceive that there was a considerable level of crime in The Close.

Margaret: Well there is quite a lot in The Close ... I mean ... The Deanery has been done twice, the Mainwairings were done really, really properly I mean they had a proper burglary which is the only major burglary, the coffee shop windows were done all at the same time, that we, we, we had this problem last summer. There was a lot at one stage, I think they get weeks when they’re either bored on the school holidays in the summer and then of course Jenny was mugged wasn’t she outside the ...

Jill: ... handbag and somebody else had their handbag taken and cars ...

Jane: ... I was going to say cars ...

Margaret: ... lots of cars over the years ...

Jane: ... quite a lot of cars have been damaged and taken.

George: ... but it's been better since they've moved most of the local people, residents up at this end ... it's been better. When they was all ...

Jane: ...down the other end ...

George: Mm ... well then there's also gone in the Cathedral 'avn't they and that, they've even got so far as getting up on the roof.

Jill: Yes.

Jane: Yes.

Jill: ... and they've gone for the collection box.

George: That's right.

Jill: ... taking it outside on odd occasions.

Margaret: ... I mean that is ... a lot of the Cathedral crime is when it's a bank holiday and the DHSS offices and things are closed aren't they and they just come ... I mean, as Mark the groundsman said to me not so long ago he said we're just so slow because it happens every time, but we're always one step behind them because we always forget oh it's bank holiday we ought to be taking an extra ... you know, guard

Jane: ... yes ...

Margaret: ... alert. I think there's a lot of ... opportunistic crime around The Close you know. We are very, very careful with keeping the door locked I mean Andy had someone in his hall and he said to me never ever ... I don't reckon that was I think that was probably more, erm, more of a visitor, somebody taking a look around thinking oh there's an interesting house we'll go in I don't know that it was necessarily somebody going for a crime but we are very aware and especially where we live down that passage...

... I think we're very vulnerable, I think we're very, very vulnerable, in our house, very.

DC: Do you think that's the same in Newton's College which is also slightly isolated?

George: We have one problem that's, that's where we live is the middle door, the only door which comes onto The Close and we have thought about locking it. 'Specially Friday and Saturday it would mean they'd have to go right round ...

Margaret: ... round ...

George: ... but that's better 'cause there are lights at the back as well. But we have had people that it try it on and er but I we haven't by right we haven't been frightened or scared.

Esther: I suppose I'm very lucky because I live in the top flat and I'm not aware of very much of this.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that the notion of fear is not expressed at all except in its absence by George at the very end. Margaret has expressed feeling 'very, very vulnerable' but she does not mention fear, neither is it clear what she feels she is vulnerable to. Margaret, and the others involved in this exchange, by implication are talking about anxiety as Croake and Knox (1971) have argued, in that their object of concern is not in focus. What is clear is that three of the other four members of the group are prepared to follow Margaret's lead in describing this "considerable" amount of crime within The Close. This is illustrative of the point made by Croake and Hinkle (1976) that the group dynamic of an interview affects the discourse in that it matters who is asking and who is listening. It will be noticed however that she is on her own in this group at this stage in the interview in her view that bored school children and unemployed people are to blame for "mini crime waves" within The Close. I t

will be apparent that this portion of her contribution also lies firmly within the discourse of Strangers.

Initially it may seem that we are approaching a more conventional concept of fear in this contribution from Ruth who joined in the third group and who describes herself ‘with grief’ as being fifty-one years old. She has lived in The Close for ten years where she runs a bed and breakfast establishment from her house. She is a supply teacher at Swinfen Hall Young Offenders Institution and teaches from home ‘a school-phobic, two pregnant girlies, a broken leg and that sort of thing’. She is also responsible for organising the largest single event in the Cathedral year, the mediaeval market that opens the Lichfield International Festival of the Arts each year – which she does voluntarily.

Ruth: I sleep on the top floor and I lie awake at night and I imagine the door handle turning and you know, someone coming up the stairs and you know you’re so scared that you can’t cry out. I can feel it being completely unable to make a sound ’cause you’re that scared ...

This, however acute, this may still be seen as a representation of anxiety as the object of concern is not in focus – however, we learn that a Bed and Breakfast guest did once venture up to her bedroom in the night and we might argue consequently that this constitutes genuine fear. What this does point out is the very great difficulty that persists in defining fear. It is certainly the most “fear like” response to the interview guidance that was encountered in all the sessions. Margaret and Ruth constitute the two subjects most intimately involved in the community of The Close and amongst the longest standing residents, yet they exhibit the greatest degree of fear and anxiety. One of the most common causes of concern it appears is the quantity of lighting within The Close, indeed many passages of the text are

untranscribable by virtue of the number of interviewees trying to speak in agreement about the poor state of the lighting within The Close. This from Margaret: ‘of course it’s so dark down that passage way by our house’ and from the third group,

Ruth: ... some areas can be very dark ...

Chris: ... The Deanery ...

Ruth: ... I was quite nervous walking the dog to the vet, [one hundred yards or so outside The Close to the south east down Dam Street] it was five o’ clock in the winter ... erm ... just walking down the south side of The Close because it was pitch black. I actually walked in the middle of the road, I didn’t walk on the pavement because I remember Jenny being mugged and that was a few years ago but it always sticks in your mind doesn’ it.

3.4.1.2. THE DISCOURSE OF SAFETY.

I chose to use the term safety here for two reasons, first that it is the term that the interviewees use. Secondly, despite the above assertion that safety and fear are not conceptual opposites, the groups tended to express notions of vulnerability rather than fear. Once again, it will be evident that individual contributions could be placed in more than one discourse; nonetheless, it is those areas where the discourses intersect that are of particular interest. The two least fearful members of my interview groups were Esther from the first group and Anne from the third group. Anne describes herself as being forty-eight or nine and has lived in The Close for nine years. She currently cares for her partner’s sister who has MS, she has no involvement in the workings of The Close and its community other than ‘passing the time of day with neighbours’. Beth who also speaks here is thirty nine (and looking forward to being forty), she is a projects manager involved with care schemes designed to keep elderly people in their own homes as long as possible. She is a Server in the Cathedral and helps in the bookshop.

Anne: ... and I don't know a lot about what goes on in The Close but I feel extremely ...
erm ... safe. Very safe I think we're very, very lucky in fact the time I go out I
don't even put the latch down on the door – I suppose it's very stupid of me but I do
feel ...

Ruth: I do the same.

Anne: ... Simon's away an awful lot and as long as I can hear some one next door, as long
as I can here Jonathan [undecipherable] or Brian next door I'm not I don't feel
threatened in the slightest. [overlaid conversation from several participants]

Beth: ... certainly if I'm in the house and I've got the dogs with me I'm not in the
slightest bit worried.

Anne: I think it's because we all over-look each other [the houses in Vicars Close where
Ann lives all face in on each other, it is almost possible to see from one house into
all the others] I miss it now that Julie's gone and Mark not that I had much to do
with them but it's the ... you know she used to keep her light on and now you can
tell she's not there.

This and the assertion from Esther that she was unaware of the crimes within The Close
perceived by others in the first group (transcribed in the first segment of conversation) was all
that people had to say about safety. The notion of safety was not mentioned by me in my
guidance of the conversations and indeed that may account for the small quantity of talk about
safety. Furthermore the topic of conversation largely was about fear and associated emotions
and as we have discussed earlier, safety is neither closely related to fear nor is it its opposite.
The aspect of these small interjections that is of particular interest is who it is that expresses
these views, particularly Anne who is the least involved in the concrete aspects of the
community and whose contribution does not readily fall into the discourse of community as

represented here. Esther's contribution to the discourse of safety is augmented by her comments reported in the record of the discourse of community below, where she states that she feels safe because of the nature of the community. This correlation is what I expected to find throughout the study, that is, that close involvement with the community would reduce the fear of crime, however as will become apparent, associations that are far more powerful become evident in the dialectic of community.

3.4.2. THE DIALECTIC OF COMMUNITY

3.4.2.1. THE DISCOURSE OF COMMUNITY

DC: I'd like you to talk a little bit about the way you perceive The Close community and particularly in relation to what we've just been talking about (vulnerability).

Margaret: ... one is daily and I mean that, daily thankful that we live here because it is such a wonderful community although over the twenty-six years that I've known it obviously a lot of people have changed ...

Jane: ... they have since I've been here ... [overlaid conversation]

Margaret: ... yes tremendous change round I mean there are one or two people around that are still the same people but it hasn't changed the ethos of The Close at all, not at all and I just love living in a community I just love it. When we first came here it was the fourth place we'd lived in since we'd been married ... and I immediately just felt at home and just loved it and found it much easier than parish life and that the Cathedral is ... it's a much wider community than a parish and I actually much prefer that to parish life ... and ... I actually find it difficult to lead my life without having the Cathedral there and I find the daily worship – not that we've had much of it during the last six weeks – but the daily worship just hugely, hugely important and I find it extremely moving that we do

all do the same thing together as a community I find it hugely moving and I love that prayer at the end of the Eucharist where it says to 'to live and work to Your praise and glory' because most of us actually do work together and live together and play together and I think that is fantastic even though as I say the characters have changed it is still just as good.

Esther: This is why I'm feeling so safe. I've lived around in much more open communities than here and I ... this is why I feel so safe here, I don't feel at all threatened and as you know I'm a bit of a night person I do go out at night and I do walk home ... erm ... I walked home the other night from Lynne and Steve's and they live just behind the Little Barrow [*a quarter of a mile along Beacon St*] you know I'm not ... and it didn't worry me in the slightest.

DC: Would it worry other people to do that?

Margaret: Yes! And down past the George pub, horrible!

DC: Would it worry you Jane?

Jane: It wouldn't worry me in that my father was a policeman and I was brought up to be quite strong and I'm not a nervous person. I'm not saying that if I was walking I might feel a little ... I might look over my shoulder ...

Jill: ... you'd be careful ...

Jane: I would be careful but I wouldn't be ... I wouldn't be desperately frightened or anything like that.

In the face of the initial "common sense" belief, motivating this study, that those most embedded in the community would have a lower fear of crime, the above contributions are of particular interest as they continue to show quite powerfully that this is not the case. Margaret is the longest standing of all the residents interviewed and arguably – although the time scale involved will have something to do with this – has had the most significant input into the life

of the community. She speaks of the nominally Christian nature of the community as being of great importance to her and indeed sees it as a governing 'ethos'. She speaks of 'we' very freely and appears to ignore the fact that the community of The Close is only nominally Christian. Not all the members of The Close community are Christians indeed some are strong atheists and a significant minority are not active worshipers either at the Cathedral or elsewhere. This suggests that there is, for Margaret a notional Christian community within The Close to which not all Close residents belong and that those who do not belong may be seen more or less as outsiders. Margaret did not make any specific references to this and in consequence, it must be viewed at least in part as speculation. Nonetheless, for Margaret, the defining feature of the community, that is its boundary, is set not by geographical isolation but by the possession of common beliefs. For Esther, however, the community appears to be bounded by the extent of her acquaintance. The difference is marked. For Margaret, it is easy to identify strangers, for Esther it is less so. It is to the discourse of strangers that we come next.

3.4.2.2. THE DISCOURSE OF STRANGERS

Later in the interviews I returned to the respondent's feelings of vulnerability, asking them to talk about where the people came from, from whom they felt vulnerable. This initiated the discourse of strangers. This segment of conversation came from group one with Margaret, George, Jill, Jane and Esther, familiar from above, following on from their conversation about their own fear and experience, part of which is documented above. This from the first group.

DC: I'd like to get your thoughts about the kind of people committing these crimes.

Jill: Young men ...

George: ... to them this is an old, old olde worlde quaint religious, and if you're not that way inclined of a sixteen or a seventeen year old nature ... well ...

Jill: ... it's fair game ...

George: ... yes it really is, yes ...

Jill: ... because the people who live here are obviously well off, idle or comfortable
[laughter] at least that's the impression.

Jane: We get them sometimes on a Friday and Saturday nights out on the green here
you ... you can usually tell they're ... sort of been drinking or I don't know
whether it would be drugs or not but drinking and one night, the one night that
we had the snow they were in the garden there 'till half past three playing
snowballs and shouting and yelling – it's no good saying anything to them 'cause
you'd get a ...

Margaret: ... oh absolutely. This is the trouble, this is the thing, we're all too scared to
actually do anything because then they just get back at you with a knife that they
happen to have in their hand or what ever.

Jill: One thing I did see, 'cause I don't always sleep. This was some time ago, at
about three in the morning and I saw a young man, obviously practising the
ballet ... he was appropriately dressed in black and he was definitely doing
ballet. [laughter]. [overlaid conversation from several participants]

Margaret: ...and as far as the Cathedral's concerned it's a sitting target. [overlaid
conversation from several participants] ... I think the frightening ... to me the
frightening thing these days is that because one assumes that so many people
take drugs therefore one does not know what their reactions are. [pause] Whether
one was naïve twenty years or so ago or whether there really was not the drug
taking that there is now I don't think there was the drug taking that there is now
it has changed ones opinion of people I think ...

Esther: I wonder if fear of crime isn't one of the most dangerous things. I think we have

so much information fed to us these days that we become very afraid, I think, twenty years ago you said you didn't know if there was [drug taking ...] [drowned out by Margaret] because it wasn't headline news.

Margaret: ... no it wasn't, so whether people were taking them or not ...

Esther: ... we don't know ...

Margaret: ... I really don't know. I, if somebody was walking behind me ... I used to do a lot of classes in the town I mean at night ... and I just used to trot back down into town and back in the dark on my own never used to think anything about it but now I would not do that now and I if somebody was walking behind me I would be very frightened because I would think are they on drugs what are their reactions going to be ... and then there's people sleeping rough in the doorway at the west end [front] of the Cathedral and you don't know whether they're on drugs or what they're going to do I think it's very frightening ...

DC: What I'd like to get from you is something of the relationship of the clearly defined Close to the areas that are around it – we assume, shall we say that the people who bother us don't actually come from The Close, we know them, there might be some but I don't think that kind of bother is what we're talking about [laughter] ...erm ... so what I'd like to get from you, the kind of people that you feel threat from ... erm ... either in the real people who you encounter or in the notional situation where there's someone who you don't see.

Margaret: We have the Cathedral which attracts them. If we lived here but it wasn't a Cathedral ... there wouldn't be so much because they would not be attracted by the fact that the Cathedral has something that they want.

DC: So do you think that the people that we're talking about here come from the immediate vicinity outside The Close?

Esther: There was a time when I was told ...

Margaret: When we first came here twenty six years ago we were I mean obviously like everywhere Lichfield was very much smaller but we were told that sadly the Birmingham overspill had now come to Lichfield and there was an awful lot of talk about that twenty six years ago and that it had changed the face of Lichfield which up until then had been they used to say crime free and a sleepy little Cathedral City ... and that was always the Windings end and the Stowe Pool end that was always the dicey bit they lived over there ...

Later on in the session, this from George.

George: I think we're looking ... The Close is like, you think the moat is still relevant because on the nights – it's only certain nights really, you can forget really the Tuesdays and the Wednesdays and Thursdays you can say the Fridays – now I when I used to live at 19b [at the east end of the Cathedral and close to the pedestrian access from the town centre] they used to come up Dam street turn off and go to the housing estate at the back of the college and on a Saturday ... and on the others at this end, cause I come to this end its completely different, it's as though The Close is a no go area and if somebody wants to do some crime then they will enter, but the rowdies and I complained in the beginning because of the noise that goes on, but they're not going past, they shout so loud it doesn't matter where they are they wake you.

The striking thing about these contributions is that George clearly sees strangers as those who invade his geographical space, people who cause nuisance and wake him at night, whereas Margaret sees them as being other. She contrasts the 'sleepy Cathedral City' with the residents of Birmingham and its 'overspill'. She speaks freely of "them" and of where they live 'the Windings and Stowe Pool' and she speaks freely of difference;

Margaret: ... I do agree with that because we had a lot of that when we lived at Longton [a notoriously poor area of Stoke on Trent where her husband was a priest] and we had a lot of crime at Longton ... and ... er and at The Presbytery aimed at us because we were just off the planet, they'd never seen people like us before there was an awful lot aimed at us and the police, if it was children they used to take the children home and the parents just . did . not . want . to . know.

4. CONCLUSIONS

My study began in the old paradigm; my common sense premise was that those most embedded in the community of The Close here in Lichfield, would exhibit lower levels of fear of crime. This was not found to be so. Indeed, it is difficult to say whether any participants showed any fear of crime. Furthermore, those who were the most concerned were the ones whom one might argue were the ones most embedded in the community and certainly the respondent least embedded in The Close community might be said to have the least fear or anxiety, concern or feeling of vulnerability to crime. The reason for this can be seen when the notion of fear of crime is removed from the analysis of this study. We are aware from Said (1978) that the 'other' is no less a construct than notions of society itself. The 'orient' for example is only seen as oriental by an occident that sees its own occidentality in terms of being other than oriental. Hence, it is clear that a significant portion of identity and belonging comes from a sense of 'other'. Margaret's sense of belonging is enhanced by her identification of strangers and she expresses this, as can be seen from the transcripts, by defining those strangers as those who commit crimes. It is further apparent that when Margaret speaks of the actions of these strangers, she does not speak of crime but of them being unpredictable, as representing the unknown. This has been seen in the past as constituting an irrational fear of crime, a notion that is as insulting to the research subject as it is an academic conceit. Anne on the other hand does not define her identity in terms of The Close community. If she identifies strangers, as she does on two occasions in the text, they are not defined by their opposition to members of The Close community. Bauman has illustrated this mechanism so succinctly.

“All Societies produce strangers; but each society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way. If strangers are the people who do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the world – one of these maps, two or all

three; if they, therefore, by their sheer presence, make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action, and/or prevent the satisfaction from being fully satisfying, pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit more alluring; if in other words, they befog and eclipse boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen; if, having done all of this, they gestate uncertainty, which in its turn breeds discomfort of feeling lost – then each society produces such strangers, while drawing its borders and charting its cognitive, aesthetic and moral map. It cannot but gestate people who conceal borderlines deemed crucial to its orderly and/or meaningful life and are thus charged with causing discomfort experienced as the most painful and least desirable.” (Bauman 1995: 200)

Lichfield Cathedral Close is just such a community.

My earlier adumbration of the nature of attempts to quantify fear of crime suggested, as I think has become commonplace, that considerable errors had been made in attempts to operationalize the concepts and frames of reference. Nonetheless, more recent studies, even those like Ferraro and Lagrange, which set out to criticise the conceptualisation of the problem, have fallen into the same traps. The primary trap is that of assuming that fear of crime has any ontological reality. To make fear of crime a discrete theorisable area of study is to make the assumption that fear of crime has the same meaning for everyone. It ignores the truth that fear of crime means something different to each individual. More startlingly, it persists with the falsehood that many people have a fear of crime. Indeed, one might assert that most people have no fear of crime, that many who have been described as having a fear of crime are anxious – the thrust of Hollway and Jefferson’s work – and that many people do not have fear of or anxiety about crime at all, and that some are concerned only about national crime rate trends. All these and more have been grouped together under the heading ‘fear of

crime' and the ensuing aggregation used to fuel opportunist political responses. Furthermore there are people who, when asked, profess a fear of crime, who fall into none of the above categories. Fear of crime is a hugely underdetermined and complex epistemological construct. It is constructed as an homogenous, theorisable body of knowledge by further complex mechanisms involving the relationship between politics and social science and of the complex assumptions about knowledge production within the social sciences. A new body of work, including that of Girling, Loader and Sparks, (2000) and of Sasson (1995) for example, has begun to situate people's concerns about crime and their discourses about those concerns in the broader context of all their talk about crime and social change. As such, these studies may be seen to be working within a new paradigmatic framework. Fear of crime has become a paradigm ripe, in Kuhn's (1962) terms, for shift.

APPENDICES

Questions eliciting notions of safety.

1. 'How safe would you feel walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?' (Baker et al. 1983);
2. 'Think of the worst area within a mile of your house. How safe would you feel walking alone at night in this area?' (Baker et al. 1983);
3. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Balkin 1979) (Taylor et al. 1984)
4. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Baumer 1971) (Taylor et al. 1984)
5. 'Do you think that people in this neighbourhood are safe inside their homes at night?' (Clarke & Lewis 1982)
6. 'Do you feel safe to walk in the streets alone in your neighbourhood' (Erskine 1974)
7. 'Compared to a year ago, do you personally feel more worried, less worried, or not much different about your personal safety on the streets?' (Erskine 1974)
8. 'Compared to a year ago, are you personally more worried about violence and safety on the streets, less worried, or do you feel about the same as you did then?' (Erskine 1974)
9. 'What about walking alone (in your neighbourhood) when it is dark – how safe do (would) you feel?' (Erskine 1974)
10. 'Have there been any times recently when you might have wanted to go somewhere in town but stayed home instead because you thought it would be unsafe to go there?' (Erskine 1974)
11. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Garofalo 1979) (Liska et al. 1982) (Maxfield 1984)

12. Hartnagel (1979) graded 'The degree of personal safety the respondents felt in their own neighbourhoods.' and 'The safety of the city as a whole as respondents rated it.'
13. 'How safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood at night?' (Kennedy and Krahn 1984) & (Kennedy and Silverman 1985).
14. 'In terms of crime, do you think that your neighbourhood is a very safe place in which to live?' (Lee 1982 a & b)
15. 'When I am away from home I worry about the safety of my property.' (Lee 1982 a & b) (Miethe & Lee 1984)
16. 'I worry a great deal about my personal safety from crime and criminals.' (Lee 1982 a & b) (Miethe & Lee 1984)
17. 'I worry a great deal about the safety of my loved ones from crime and criminals.' (Lee 1982 a & b) (Miethe & Lee 1984)
18. 'I worry a great deal about the safety of my property from crime and criminals.' (Lee 1982 a & b) (Miethe & Lee 1984)
19. 'Even in my own house I'm not safe from people who want to take what I have.' (Lee 1982 a & b)
20. 'My neighbourhood is a very safe place in which to live.' (Lee 1982 a & b)
21. 'How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood at night?' (Lewis and Maxfield 1980)
22. Norton and Courlander (1982) asked about 'Safety in neighbourhood during the day.' and 'Safety in neighbourhood at night.'
23. 'All things considered, would you say that (your town) is safer from crime, about as safe, or not as safe, as it was a few years ago?' (Ollenburger 1981)
24. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Rigger et al. 1978)
25. 'How often do you think of your own safety?' (Rigger et al. 1978)

26. 'Do you fear for the safety of others who live in your home?' (Rigger et al. 1978)
 27. 'This city's downtown section just isn't safe at night anymore.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
 28. 'My family and I feel safe in the community.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
 29. 'Crime is such a problem that this city is not a safe place to raise children.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
 30. 'The threat of crime has become so great that nobody can feel safe in their own home anymore.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
 31. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Yin 1982)
 32. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Yin 1982)
- sample of 120 Questions 42 refer to safety.

Questions involving solitude and darkness. .

1. 'How safe would you feel walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?' (Baker et al. 1983);
2. 'Think of the worst area within a mile of your house. How safe would you feel walking alone at night in this area?' (Baker et al. 1983);
3. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Balkin 1979) (Taylor et al. 1984) (Riger et al. 1978)
4. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Baumer 1971) (Taylor et al. 1984)
5. 'How likely is it that a person walking around here at night might be held up or attacked?' (Block 1971) (Erskine 1974) (Mirande 1980)

6. 'Is there an area right around here – that is, within a mile – where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?' (Braungart 1980) (Clark & Lewis) (Clemente & Kleiman 1976) (Clemente & Kleiman 1977) (Cutler 1980) (DeFronzo 1979) (Erskine 1974) (Jeffords 1983 – missing 'right around here – that is') (Lebowitz 1975) (Lee 1982 a & b)
7. 'Do you feel safe to walk in the streets alone in your neighbourhood' (Erskine 1974)
8. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Garofalo 1979) (Liska et al. 1982) (Maxfield 1984)
9. 'How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood at night?' (Lewis and Maxfield 1980)
10. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Rigger et al. 1978)
11. 'What about walking alone (in your neighbourhood) when it is dark – how safe do (would) you feel?' (Erskine 1974)
12. 'Would you be afraid to walk alone within one block of your home at night?' (Jeffords 1983)
13. 'Are you afraid to be alone at night?' (Jeffords 1983)
14. 'How safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood at night?' (Kennedy and Krahn 1984) & (Kennedy and Silverman 1985).
15. 'Are you or any members of your family afraid to go out in your neighbourhood after dark?' (Ollenburger 1981)
16. 'Indicate the extent of your worry to the following activities; (twelve different activities given such as (1) being home alone after dark and (2) riding with male strangers alone after dark' (Rigger et al. 1978)
17. 'Are you afraid to go out into your neighbourhood after dark by yourself?' (Stafford & Galle 1984)

18. 'Crime has become such a problem in my neighbourhood that I'm afraid to go out at night.' (Thomas & Hyman 1977)
19. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Yin 1982)
20. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Yin 1982)

Of the 120 questions reviewed 38 contained references to dark or solitude or both.

Questions involving geographic variables

1. 'How safe would you feel walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?' (Baker et al. 1983);
2. 'Think of the worst area within a mile of your house. How safe would you feel walking alone at night in this area?' (Baker et al. 1983);
3. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Balkin 1979) (Taylor et al. 1984)
4. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Baumer 1971) (Taylor et al. 1984)
5. 'Do you think that people in this neighbourhood are safe inside their homes at night?' (Clarke & Lewis 1982)
6. 'Do you feel safe to walk in the streets alone in your neighbourhood' (Erskine 1974)
7. 'What about walking alone (in your neighbourhood) when it is dark – how safe do (would) you feel?' (Erskine 1974)
8. 'Have there been any times recently when you might have wanted to go somewhere in town but stayed home instead because you thought it would be unsafe to go there?' (Erskine 1974)

9. 'In the past year, do you feel the crime rate in your neighbourhood has been increasing, decreasing or has it remained about the same?' (Erskine 1974)
10. 'Would you say that there is more crime in this community now than there was five years ago, or less?' (Erskine 1974)
11. 'Is there more crime in this area than there was a year ago, or less?' (Erskine 1974)
12. 'Would you say there is more crime or less crime in this area than there was a year ago?' (Erskine 1974)
13. 'Compared to a year ago do you feel more afraid and uneasy on the streets today, less uneasy or not much different from the way you felt a few years ago?' (Erskine 1974)
14. 'How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Garofalo 1979) (Liska et al. 1982) (Maxfield 1984)
15. Hartnagel (1979) graded 'The degree of personal safety the respondents felt in their own neighbourhoods.' and 'The safety of the city as a whole as respondents rated it.'
16. 'Is living in a high crime neighbourhood a serious problem to you?' (Janson & Ryder 1983)
17. 'Does crime in the streets cause you any special difficulties in getting around?' (Janson & Ryder 1983)
18. 'How safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood at night?' (Kennedy and Krahn 1984) & (Kennedy and Silverman 1985).
19. 'There are times during the night when I'm afraid to go outside.' (Lee 1982a)
20. 'There is reason to be afraid of becoming a victim of crime in my community.' (Lee 1982b)
21. 'In terms of crime, do you think that your neighbourhood is a very safe place in which to live?' (Lee 1982 a & b)
22. 'My neighbourhood is a very safe place in which to live.' (Lee 1982 a & b)

23. 'How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood at night?' (Lewis and Maxfield 1980)
24. Norton and Courlander (1982) asked about 'Safety in neighbourhood during the day.' and
'Safety in neighbourhood at night.'
25. 'All things considered, would you say that (your town) is safer from crime, about as safe,
or not as safe, as it was a few years ago?' (Ollenburger 1981)
26. 'How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Rigger et al.
1978)
27. 'This city's downtown section just isn't safe at night anymore.' (Thomas and Hyman
1977)
28. 'My family and I feel safe in the community.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
29. 'Crime is such a problem that this city is not a safe place to raise children.' (Thomas and
Hyman 1977)
30. 'The danger of becoming the victim of a criminal offense (sic) seems to be lower in this
city than in many parts of the country.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)
31. 'I avoid shopping in the downtown section of this city because of the crime problem.'
(Thomas and Hyman 1977)
32. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood during the day?' (Yin
1982)
33. 'How safe do you feel it is to be out alone in your neighbourhood at night?' (Yin 1982)
34. 'How likely is it that a person walking around here at night might be held up or attacked?'
(Block 1971) (Erskine 1974) (Mirande 1980)
35. 'Is there an area right around here – that is, within a mile – where you would be afraid to
walk alone at night?' (Braungart 1980) (Clark & Lewis) (Clemente & Kleiman 1976)
(Clemente & Kleiman 1977) (Cutler 1980) (DeFronzo 1979) (Erskine 1974) (Jeffords
1983 – missing 'right around here – that is') (Lebowitz 1975) (Lee 1982 a & b)

36. 'Would you be afraid to walk alone within one block of your home at night?' (Jeffords 1983)
37. 'Are you or any members of your family afraid to go out in your neighbourhood after dark?' (Ollenburger 1981)
38. 'Are you afraid to go out into your neighbourhood after dark by yourself?' (Stafford & Galle 1984)
39. 'Crime has become such a problem in my neighbourhood that I'm afraid to go out at night.' (Thomas & Hyman 1977)
40. 'Even in my own house I'm not safe from people who want to take what I have.' (Lee 1982 a & b)
41. 'When I am away from home I worry about the safety of my property.' (Lee 1982 a & b) (Miethe & Lee 1984)
42. 'Do you fear for the safety of others who live in your home?' (Rigger et al. 1978)
43. 'The threat of crime has become so great that nobody can feel safe in their own home anymore.' (Thomas and Hyman 1977)

Of the 120 questions reviewed 64 contain more or less distinct geographic variables.

Farrall's Questions

- “(1) On a scale of one to five ... how worried are you that somebody might:
- Break into your house (or try to break in) and steal things, or try to, or damage things?
 - Steal your vehicle, or things from it or off it, or do damage to it?
 - Vandalize your house or something outside it?
 - Rob you or assault you or threaten to do either?

(2) How many times have you been a victim of any of these crimes in the last five years?

(3) How likely ... is it, do you think that you will be a victim of any of these crimes in the next year?

(4) How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?

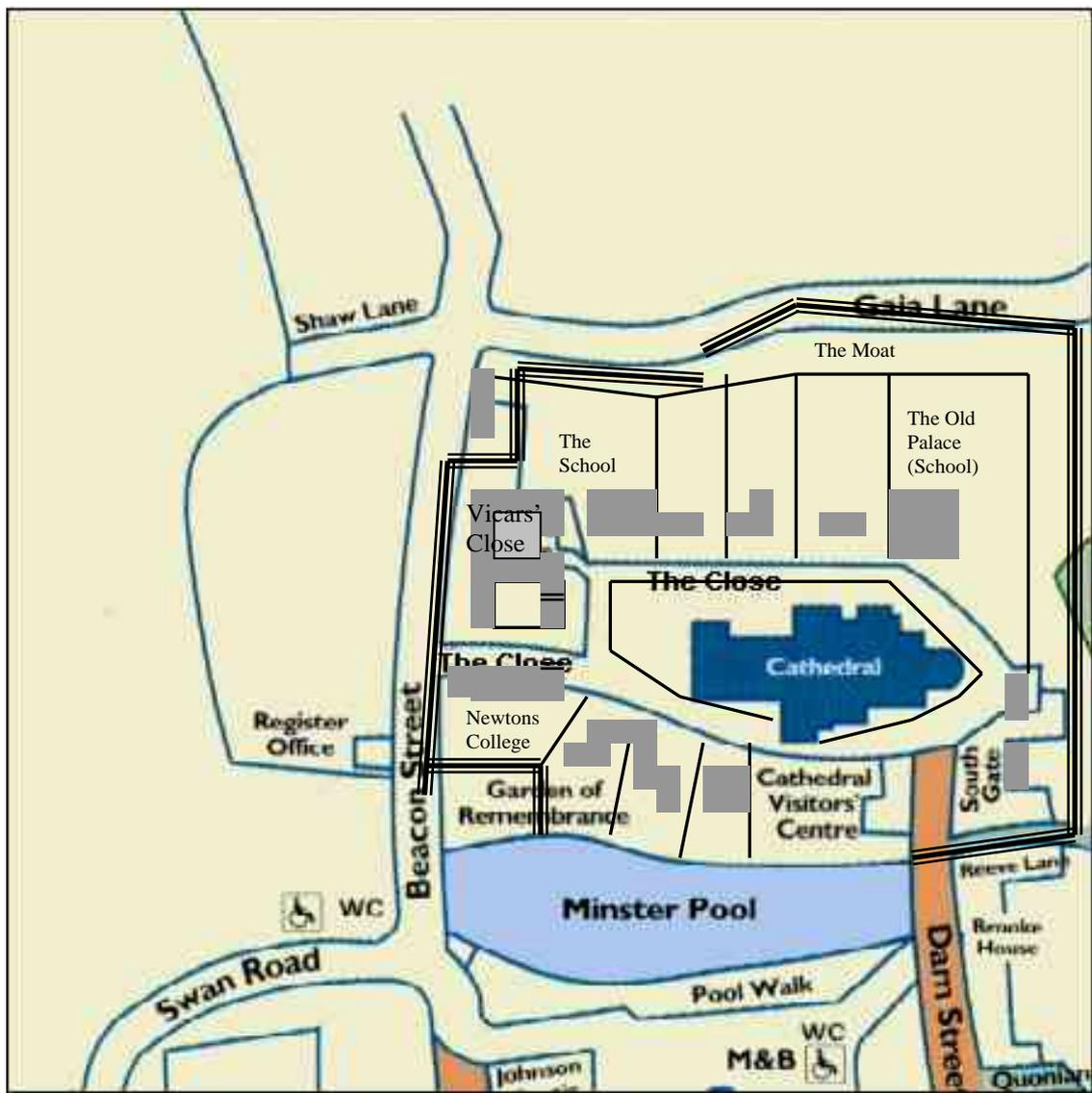
(5) How much do you worry about: Becoming seriously ill? Losing your job or being unable to find a job? Another member of your family losing their job? Becoming involved in a road accident? Your finances? Environmental pollution? Being a victim of any crime? Having a fire in your home? Noise from your neighbours?"

The first question in this set is one about worry not fear and as we have outlined earlier, there is frequent confusion about the difference between fear and anxiety. Worry is a form of anxiety, not of fear since the object of worry is not in focus. The second question is about victimisation not fear. A person may have been the victim of any of these acts any number of times and still have no fear. Question three is about risk assessment. Once again, knowledge or otherwise of risk if no guarantor of fear, indeed, one may be more afraid because one is not able to make this risk assessment than if one made an assessment of a high level of risk.

Question four commits most of the trespasses earlier discussed with regard to Ferraro and LaGrange's collection of questions. It confuses fear and safety, it runs the risk of assessing an emotional state which *it* has engendered in the respondent, and it makes use of an undefined geographical term, area. Question five is a virtual palimpsest of different fears, and anxieties about numerous different life-worries. It appears to be designed to assess the general fearfulness or fearlessness of the respondent in order that his concern about crime may be placed in the context of his concerns about life in general. However, this is to treat fear of crime as a real category in the same way as an overdraft is something real, or that losing one's job is something real. Furthermore, it assumes an unproblematic construct called crime to

which the respondent is expected to have access in forming his concept of future victimisation. It seems to be asking whether or not the respondent is generally 'laid back'. This is not as straight forward as it may seem. The respondent may feel different about each of these, in which case the answer will have little meaning, or (and this is not made clear) the survey is to ask for individual responses to each of these categories, in which case, one wonders what those other than concern about fear of crime are there for. It also raises the question of the rational versus the irrational nature of 'fear of crime'.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CLOSE



The current Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Chad begun c.1200 stands in the middle of The Close and is surrounded by a single road on the outside of which stand the houses of the clergy, the Cathedral School (including the old Bishops Palace), the Chapter Offices, one very large rented house and several rented flats. There is an access road from the main highway of about 150 yards on which stand five substantial rented houses originating from the fifteenth century and significantly expanded through to the nineteenth century and an early nineteenth century block known as Newton's College which contains a dozen or so small flats. In the north west corner, separated from the main body of The Close lies Vicars' Close which consists of two flats in a large eighteenth century house and nine other houses – one large, the others very small, dating from c.1346 and largely unaltered. To the immediate south of Vicars' Close and bounded on its south side by the access road and on its east by The Close proper, the lower close has to its western side and facing the main road, the very large eighteenth century house of Erasmus Darwin and two large flats occupying the eighteenth century alteration of the Vicars' Hall of Commons.

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