

The Influence of Rapid Social Change on Civic Community and Perceptions of Crime and Disorder

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of rapid social change brought on by industrial restructuring to nine small town/rural communities located in Southern Louisiana. Social change is often found to have negative impacts on traditional community organization. In particular, communities experiencing rapid social change often demonstrate heightened perceptions of crime problems and social disorder. Other sociological literature finds that communities that are civically organized show various positive social outcomes. Utilizing qualitative methodology, this study aimed to examine the nuances of the relationship between rapid social change, civic community, and perceptions of crime and disorder. This study proposed that civic and social organizations may work as intervening institutions against the negative effects of social change, such as increasing fear of crime. The study found a twofold effect of social capital on this relationship. First, when incoming workers are brought into civic and social organizations then the civic community does have a dampening effect on perceptions of crime. However, the integration of migrating workers into these organizations was dependent upon the workers level of trust or future reciprocity perceived by the local community. Furthermore, when workers were not integrated into civic and social organizations they were seen as potential criminals, which heightened the community's fear and distrust of new-comers.

Keywords: Social Change, Perceptions of Crime, Industrial Restructuring, Civic Community

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Introduction

This study investigates the influence of the intrusion of large scale industry on locals' perceptions of crime and disorder. The research setting was a largely small/town rural area of South Louisiana that has experienced growth and economic transformation over several decades due to the expansion of the offshore oil and gas industry in the Gulf of Mexico. Sociology has a long tradition of investigating the causes and consequences of social change on the quality of community life (Parsons & Shils 1951; Tönnies 1963). Whether these consequences are positive or negative has been investigated by sociologists since the inception of the discipline. Classic theorists, such as Toennies and Durkheim, suggested that rapid change may result in substantial disruption for community members (Freudenburg 1984). However, neither classical theorists nor modern scholars are in consensus on the implications of community growth. Some research suggests there are some positive outcomes of social growth (Forsyth, Luthra, & Bankston 2007; White 1983). Such studies find that community and industrial growth often lead to increasing employment, higher wages, and other favorable social outcomes. However, alternative research utilizing the social disorganization thesis posits that rapid community growth will often lead to a wide array of social problems (Greider, Krannich, & Berry 1991).

One often cited social problem related to community growth is increasing crime and fear of crime. Once again this literature is not in consensus on whether community growth is consistently and positively related to crime rates. While some research has found significant increases in crime rates within these communities, other studies have found none (Luthra, Bankston, Forsyth, & Kalich 2007).

Even though official statistics do not show a clear trend between growth and crime, research has found fairly consistent findings when evaluating community residents' perceptions of crime. These findings indicate that communities experiencing rapid growth often have heightened levels of fear of crime even when there has been no apparent increase in criminal activity or victimization. Heightened levels of fear of crime by community residents are found to be a reaction to the population increases of newcomers. This type of increase in population is often found to be related to lowered levels of trust, social deterioration, and a sense of loss of control among community inhabitants (Hunter, Krannich, & Smith 2002). In other words rising levels of fear of crime in communities is often linked to fear of the stranger (Kennedy & Krahn 1984).

Another line of sociological research has found that the presence of civic and social groups has a positive effect on civic engagement and interaction between community members (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995). Through communal interaction

it is posited that ties and relationships are formed and strengthened between community members. This reinforces group solidarity and buffers against such social problems as lowered levels of trust, social deterioration, and social disorganization.

This study's aim was to integrate these two lines of research in further explicating the effects of change on community members' perceptions of social problems. This research was guided by the proposition that civic and social institutions may insulate communities experiencing rapid population transition from increases in fear of crime.

Literature Review

Perception of crime has become an area of interest for criminologists. It is often found that an individuals' perception of crime does not match objective reality (Warr 1980; Warr & Stafford 1983). Rural locality and social change have been posited as possible variables in perception of crime. This review of the literature will first cover rural localities effect on fear of crime. It will then cover rapid social change and its positive effect on fear of crime. Last, this section will cover literature on the positive community effects of high level of civic engagement.

Rural Areas Effect on Fear of Crime

Residential location has been theorized as a possible predictor of fear of crime. However, empirical findings for residential location's effect on fear of crime have been fairly inconsistent. Earlier studies have found a linear relationship between fear of crime and residential location. That is to say that, fear of crime varies depending on whether the individual lives in rural or urban dwellings. Much of this research assumes an ecological approach, which dictates that people within urban communities will portray heightened fear of crime due to their heterogeneous surroundings (Skogan & Maxfield 1980). Thus this model theorizes that the more likely individuals are to witness those around them as different in terms of age, race, class, and other sociodemographic characteristics, the more fearful and less trusting of others they will be.

While some research does find that rural residents have significantly lower levels of fear of crime than their urban counterparts, this is finding is debatable (Lee 1982; Boggs 1971). Belyea and Zingraff (1988) do conclude that rural residents have a significantly lower fear of crime than urban dwellers. However, they find that when other known correlates are controlled (i.e. gender, race, age, education, and income), there is not a simple linear relationship between population density and fear of crime. They argue that fear of crime is not strictly due to population density, but rather

differences in behavior and attitudes determined by resident's positions and interactional patterns with local social structures. They conclude that future research needs to focus less on the administratively defined categories of urban and rural areas and examine residential location in a more sociological sense.

Other research examines the variation in rural location and fear of crime. Research finds that residents of extremely isolated rural areas report higher levels of fear of crime than others (Bankston, Jenkins., Thayer-Doyle., & Thompson 1987; Belyea & Zingraff 1988). It is proposed that individuals living in these areas are so separated from formal social control mechanisms that they may be more apt to find themselves at risk to crime due to their heightened sensitivity to crime and lessened ability to rely on law enforcement (Bankston et al. 1987).

Effect of Social Change on Fear of Crime

Further studies have found that areas experiencing dramatic population increases will also show increases in fear of crime. The explanations for this increase often mirror the literature. They find that communities experiencing rapid growth demonstrate such fear of crime producing phenomenon as lowered or strained personal relationships, lowered community trust, and lowered social cohesion (Hartnagel 1979; Freudenburg 1984; Krannich, Berry, et. al 1989; Greider et al. 1991; Markowitz & Bellair et. al 2001; Hunter et al. 2002).

One explanation for increase in fear of crime in rapidly growing communities deals with social ties between community residents. This explanation posits that small rural communities which experience rapid growth will exhibit increases in fear of crime due to declines in the density of acquaintanceship between residents (Freudenburg 1984). While it may seem straight forward that as communities grow larger, residents should have more access to a variety of social networks and should see increases in the density of their own network, research shows that what often happens is the opposite. As these communities grow the potential for acquaintanceship grows but the actual probability does not. Community social networks become smaller and more homogenized, often based on length of residence. This loss of density contributes to decreased perceptions of security, reduced effectiveness of informal social control mechanisms, alterations in established social structures, and lastly subjective responses to a larger and more diverse population of strangers leading to heightened awareness of actual or perceived crime (Krannich, Berry et. al 1989).

The relationship between fear of crime in rapidly growing communities and the

fear of the stranger has often been cited in the literature (Kennedy & Krahn 1984; Krannich & Berry 1989; Hunter et al. 2002). This literature illustrates that as community social networks become more insulated and divided among long time residents and newcomers, that one response of long term residents will be suspicion of newcomers. With this suspicion will come heightened beliefs of criminality of newcomers who are not seen to be part of the community.

Another possible negative effect of rapid growth on fear of crime deals with levels of trust among community residents. Research implicates that these communities show lowered levels of trust felt by community residents (Hartnagel 1979). However, other research shows no connection (Greider et al. 1991). Heightened levels of community trust have been found to have many positive aspects for communities (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995; Portes 1998). Likewise, lowered levels of trust have been theorized to have negative communal effects. For instance, loss of trust hinders community members from forming or maintaining social ties. This in turn leads community members to shy away from social and civic interaction. Finally, this loss of trust limits communal favors initiated by residents due to lack of faith in future reciprocity.

Finally, some research points to a vicious cycle forming where negative consequences brought on by fear of crime go on to reduce neighborhood cohesion. More importantly this mitigates the positive effects on cohesion reducing disorder. In other words Markowitz, Bellair, Liska, and Liu (2001) find a 'feed-back loop' in which decreases in neighborhood cohesion increase crime and disorder, which increases fear of crime, in turn, further decreasing cohesion.

To summarize, communities experiencing growth have heightened fear of crime due to lowered interaction between community members. Furthermore, whatever interaction persists is often very exclusive and forms a dichotomy between the local population and the new residents to the area. From this a fear of the stranger or newcomer often develops among the local population. This leads to lowered levels of trust between newcomers and locals. The divide between these groups becomes mutually reinforcing and the divide between them gets larger.

Social/Civic Engagement

Certain community organizations such as Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, Knights of Columbus, Kiwanis, etc... are thought to provide forums which encourage social interaction between all community members. These civic and social organizations are thought to generate a form of capital for not only residents but also

the community at large. This capital, social capital, is often theorized as a resource, that if present, will lead communities to have many positive benefits (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993, 1995; Bobbio 2003). Many of these positive benefits are in direct relation to the negative effects thought to be brought about by community growth. These benefits range from increased trust and civic engagement (Putnam 2000; Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004) to lower crime and homicide rates (Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer 2001; Lee & Bartowski 2003).

Community studies suggest social capital and social trust is generated through avenues of civic engagement. Communities with high levels of civic engagement foster interaction between community members which in turn generates social capital. Social and civic clubs have often been found to be hotbeds for generating civic engagement. Research shows that local associations increase civic engagement, thereby rooting populations to place, increasing the quality of life (Tolbert, Lyson, & Irwin 1998). The social capital formed in these organizations is argued to foster sturdy norms of reciprocity and social trust which foster successful outcomes in such areas as education, urban poverty, unemployment, crime, etc... (Putnam 1995; Putnam 2000). Healy et al. (2004: 331) further argue the positive role of social capital generated through civic engagement contending that “the local connections offered by civic groups play a vital role in building civic trust and community capacities that are, in turned, linked to positive outcomes such as enhancing educational outcomes and improved community safety”.

Guiding Propositions

The overall proposition of this paper states that civic and social institutions insulate communities from the negative effects of growth. In particular, research has shown that communities experiencing social growth brought upon by economic restructuring exhibit heightened levels of fear of crime. However, this paper argues that the presence and utilization of social and civic organizations will provide safeguards to reduce this impact. These organizations do this by providing avenues for increased integration between the local residential population and the incoming migrants. This in turn heightens the number of acquaintances among community members. The density of their social networks provide for increased social capital in the form of social trust. With increased social trust there is a lowering of the fear of the stranger which will prevent large escalations of fear of crime.

Methodology

The research for this study was conducted within Southern Louisiana Communities located on the gulf coast. Demographically these communities have seen drastic fluctuations in total population since the 1900's. This variance was heavily dictated by industrial changes occurring within the parish lines. The first off-shore oil drilling platform was established in 1946. In the following years the studied communities underwent dramatic economic fluctuations from reliance on shrimping and sugar industry to petroleum. In the 1970's this area experienced an 'oil boom' in which the area witnessed a population and economic explosion. It was this 'boom' that dramatically changed many of these rural communities. Some rural areas evolved to towns or cities almost overnight while others remained fairly rural.

The research data reported here was gathered as part of a broader study of the long-term effects of the oil and gas industry on communities in coastal Louisiana. The methodology for the research is qualitative in nature. The research was conducted in nine communities situated in a Southern Louisiana Parish. Face to face guided conversations were conducted to acquire individual level data. The sample size consisted of 156 respondents.

The sampling technique used for this current study was that of snow ball sampling. In this technique key members of the population are selected and then asked to recommend others for interviewing, and each of the subsequently interviewed participants are asked for further recommendations which develops an ever-increasing accumulation of subjects (Babbie 2004). In this case, the respondents were required to have some knowledge of the oil industry in the area. Subjects involved in civic, religious, educational, business, political, and fraternal organizations were sought out to appropriately answer what effects has the petroleum industry had on the social fabric and capital of the area. Since these groups tend to be dominated by upper middle-class families and individuals, we sought to attain greater class / occupational range in our sample by including working class individuals / families in the sample. I also attempted to utilize sampling methods to obtain informants from populations of specific interests, particularly minorities, to determine their perceptions of the long-term community impacts of the petroleum industry, and their involvement in it.

The interview guide used was an open ended questionnaire. Open ended focus interviews were conducted geared toward constructing social biographies of individuals and their families who lived with and through the range of effects the impact of oil has had. Data was explored through the use of "thick descriptions"

(Geertz 1973), letting the respondents speak for themselves, and summarizing their perceptions through analytic induction.

In the course of this research respondents were interviewed regarding how their own as well as the communities' perception of crime has changed over time. The effect of social change, due to the emergence of the off-shore development, on individual and community fear of crime was discussed. From interviews with respondents themes emerged which guided the researcher in the formation of the findings.

Findings

The locals' perceptions of the new-comers heavily influenced the newcomers' interactions and integration to the community. According to the locals there were two distinct types of newcomers that were based largely on occupation and class, though another factor shaping the perception of newcomers was based on future reciprocity. Newcomers who were seen to lay stakes in the community and have the ability to give something back were much more valued than migratory non-skilled labor. As the following quotes illustrate, the local's perceptions of newcomers to the area ranged from the good to the ugly. Respondent 80 [85 year old male business owner]: *“Many of these people [newcomers] were good honest hardworking men and women. But also included in this group were criminals, degenerates, sex offenders, and others who preyed on our local population”*. Respondent 54 [44 year old female business owner]: *“these people came from different walks of life. You got the good and the bad with it too. There was times when the law enforcement here had to change their uniforms three times a night because they got in so many fights. People would be going to bar rooms and getting intoxicated and causing big brawls.”*

The first group was the white collar professionals, often referred to as the engineers by respondents. These individuals were relocated to the area from adjoining states by their employers. These migrants were typically viewed very positively by the locals in the community. Respondent 44 [54 year old male school board member]: *“the people [white collar workers] had better educations and lived in big homes ... they were an upper class row of people.”*

This positive image did not come immediately. The overall impression was that even the white collar workforce was not accepted at first. It was only when the local community began to see that this group would benefit the community monetarily, civically, etc... that they accepted them. The following quote portrays this theme. Respondent 46 [57 year old male bank CEO]: *“Well, you're more high powered*

executives, like you say your engineers, they put money into the community. They raised their families here. They joined civic organizations, they went to church. They got involved, I guess you would say.”

One the other side of the spectrum, were the non-skilled, seasonal workers that made up the blue collar workforce that migrated to the area. These individuals were not viewed positively from the local population, and were even ostracized from the community. This next quote exemplifies the different perceptions of the two groups by the established population which was heavily reliant upon reciprocity. Respondent 14 [54 year old male newspaper owner]: *“[T]here is a big difference between the management level people [and the blue collar workers] that were here at one time. It’s that they were very vital in the community structure. They were coaching youth recreation league teams, they were leading members in the church community, they were holding office in the civic organizations. The other roughneck [blue collar worker] type person. It would have been an exception if one of those people belonged to a Kiwanis club, rotary club, or the KC’s or something like that.”*

The blue collar, non skilled labor migrants were never accepted by the locals. Their occupations and appearance were seen as untrustworthy by the local population. This lowered level of trust separated blue collar workers from white collar workers. Blue collar workers were seen as detached from the local community and often as just bad people. Respondent 107 [66 year old male service company CEO]: *“They had no moral values. Not all of them, you did have some great people come through here. But you also had rifraf...these people were not desirable.”*

Furthermore, the local population did not see a dedication to the community by these in migrants due to their seasonal labor and not putting down stakes in the community. In short, the present community saw no incentives to integrate this new population. Respondent 42 [42 year old female Military]: *“The roughnecks, they came over here to collect a paycheck.”* Respondent 56 [33 year old male police officer]: *“you had a lot of people that were not educated but could still get jobs on boats working off-shore. We had a much higher transient population. You had more people drifting in and out.”*

Due to this perception of the lack of future reciprocity, these workers were ostracized from the local population. Another key variable in the disjuncture between these groups was a general fear of the criminality of the blue collar workers. Respondent 76 [62 year old male oil service industry]: *“You used to see the rifraf walking the street. Probably in the 70’s, it was just, you know, the old saying? Scum of the Earth?”*

This criminality is further highlighted by the following quote from Respondent 54 [44 year old male business owner]: *“These guys are fly by night guys, they work here a couple of weeks, make some money, then go or commit a crime and hurry up and go somewhere else. Then you have people that commit a crime in other parts of the country and would come here to blend in ... they could be murderers, rapists, bank robbers and so on.”*

It was critical for the locals to view the white collar workers as a benefit to the community for their acceptance. As stated earlier the social relations between actors that generate social capital are very reliant upon reciprocity. And this was very true in this community’s decision to either accept or ostracize the different workers than came in with the oil rush. This reciprocity was normally dictated according to if the workers brought in their families. By bringing in their families the community felt the workers planned on staying awhile and also they had an incentive, their children, for the community to prosper. Respondent 42 [42 year old female military]: *“The [white collar workers] brought their families here. They tried to make a better living for themselves and their family. The [blue collar workers] brought themselves and only themselves.”* Respondent 50 [69 year old male insurance agent]: *“The engineers, the upper echelon, made sure that their children were provided more education. These, they called them oil field trash, they just made room with what they had. All they wanted was a paycheck.”* Respondent 46 [57 year old male bank CEO]: *“they raised their families here. They got involved.”*

These perceptions played into how the locals interacted with the newcomers. Based on what social capital literature would predict, the white collar workers who were highly trusted by the local community and felt to be beneficial to the community, were brought into the community’s civic and social organizations. The next quotes illustrate how these individuals were included in civic and social organizations and integrated into the community. Respondent 34 [61 year old male reality agent]: *“The city would call on them a lot of times for help.”* Respondent 12 [60 year old female homemaker]: *“They joined the different organizations ... all of us made very good friends both ways. Because they wanted to be involved in the community, we wanted them to be involved in the community. We invited them to join our clubs, to come to lunch with us, to do anything.”* Their stake in the community is emphasized by the following quote. Respondent 34 [61 year old male reality agent]: *“They did everything here they would have done in their home town”*

In summary there was high trust shown towards the skilled and professional labor brought in due to a belief in future reciprocity that will benefit the community. This

trust encouraged the interaction between residents and forged weak ties and bridging capital. These weak ties were formed and built upon through interaction in civic and social groups.

It was very different with the blue collar or non-skilled labor force. These individuals were excluded from the community. They were not trusted or seen as beneficial to the future of the community. This assumption was based on their lack of stakes in the community. Due to these reasons they were shunned from the community. Respondent 11 [53 year old female homemaker]: *"There were two areas of town. The bars and the pool halls where the [blue collar] workers where and the other parts of town where those people would not go. The locals knew where to go and where not to go."*

So this group had low amounts of trust and reciprocation which dictate high probability for being accepted into social networks. Due to this they were not integrated into the community. Respondent 65 [42 year old male police officer]: *"With all the transient workers, the community really kind of shut down and closed themselves in."*

These low deficits of social capital and inability to build on their social capital in integrating with the community through civic and social groups lead this group to be exploited. Respondent 76 [62 year old male oil service industry]: *"Some businesses would take advantage of [non-skilled labor] ... they would sell them food, clothes, places to sleep. They would work them all day. By the time it was all said and done they worked basically just for room and board in these bunkhouses."* Respondent 3 [90 year old male retired]: *"They would take advantage of the off-shore workers. The companies would give the workers drugs and alcohol on the ride back and then put them in a drug rehab center when they got back. The drug rehab center would overcharge them for items such as clothing and cigarettes . By the time they came back in they owed them their whole check."*

This lack of acceptance of the blue collar workers led to their increasing levels of fear of crime. Respondents often claimed that crime drastically rose during these time periods. The overwhelming perpetrator of this crime according to respondents was the non-skilled labor that was brought in during the boom periods. Respondent 1 [79 year old male retired]: *"The city became an unsafe place as far as the old timers were concerned."* Respondent 30 [60 year old female church]: *"When I was a little girl we did not lock our doors. When the oil people came in people started locking their doors."*

This lack of trust and integration allowed for rumors to spread throughout the community regarding the new workers coming to the area. Many of these rumors posited that the majority of blue collar workers coming to the area were criminals evading the law. It was felt that the unique schedule of off-shore drilling was enticing to evading criminals because when they were offshore they were out of reach from authorities. Respondent 21 [79 year old male retired]: *“Then all of a sudden bunk houses started taking anybody and not asking them any questions. That brought in a lot of felons from out of state ... the law enforcement had problems and problems during this time.”* Interviewer: *“What happened with crime during this time?”* Respondent 21: *“Crime went up.”* Interviewer: *“What about fear of crime?”* Respondent 21: *“It went up plenty because we always had fights. Front street was all bars. But then when that first murder happened, that really brought it up.”*

Ironically then, social capital was found to play a factor in both lowering the general perception of crime in the community but in also raising it. This community had many civic and social groups and high levels of social capital. This aspect lead the community to be very selective of who it allowed to contribute. The blue collar workers due to their lack of stakes in the community were excluded from the many social capital generating groups and were exploited by this community. This isolation and exploitation began a process where rumors about the group could not be dispelled and an overwhelming negative stigma was placed on the group. This exclusion and lack of trust lead the native population to be ever increasingly fearful of this group. Respondent 42 [42 year old female military]: *“It was just we didn’t really trust the oil field people.”* Respondent 53 [43 year old male police officer]: *“Trust went down. I know growing up it went from a very open community to one where you always had to keep your doors locked. We were not allowed to play in the streets after it got dark.”*

These sentiments led to a lowered perception of neighborhood cohesion. Furthermore, these views lead the community to isolate themselves from the blue collar workers. This began a reciprocal process that even further strained ties between the groups and lead to more fear of these outsiders. Respondent 11[53 year old female homemaker]: *“The locals thought the city degraded.”* Respondent 31 [62 year old male oil service industry]: *“Front street was bar after bar.”*

Discussion

This study found that social capital played a dual role in both lowering fear of crime in an area while in some ways it also played an exacerbating role. Which role that was played was influenced by levels of trust and reciprocity. Individuals migrating to the area that were seen as highly trustworthy with a high chance of future reciprocal activities within the community were actively sought and integrated into the community. On the other hand, individuals who came that were seen as not trustworthy and to not have any significant stakes in the community were rejected. These assumptions were often made based on first impressions of social status and not through interaction.

When newcomers were accepted they were asked to join civic and social groups. This would lead to a reciprocal process of forming and strengthening weak ties. Over time these individuals became standing members and leaders of the community and were never seen as potential threats or feared by long standing residents. On the other side the opposite occurred, individuals were outcast due to their job titles and descriptions. This group never formed ties with the community. Furthermore, this allowed for rumors and speculation of the group's criminality to transmit among the long standing population. Over time this led to a downward spiral where blue collar workers became viewed more negatively leading to higher levels of fear of crime associated with their presence shown by the community.

Conclusion

This study integrated two lines of research, social capital and fear of crime. Research on fear of crime in small town/rural communities experiencing rapid population growth has often found that one large contributor to communal and individual fear of crime is that of fear of the stranger or migrating workers. Research on social capital has found that civic and social institutions provide avenues to form and strengthen social bonds between all community members. The findings here illustrate that civic community can mitigate the negative effects of population inflation on fear of crime. In particular, the findings suggest that civic and social institutions can help integrate communities experiencing rapid social growth. This integration allows for long standing community members to form ties with the incoming labor force. Furthermore, this leads to lowered levels of fear of crime within the community due to a lessened fear of the stranger.

However, all incoming workers were not integrated into community civic and social institutions equally. White collar professionals were much more likely to be

incorporated into the community. Their incorporation was reliant upon trust and reciprocity. The local population saw these workers as trustworthy individuals. Furthermore, since these workers were forming stakes in the community, locals believed they had intentions to stay and contribute to the community for the distant future. These factors lead to white collar professionals to be accepted by the local community and properly integrated.

Blue collar non-skilled workers were not treated in this same manner. One possible reason for this could be how the local community was organized before the emergence of the oil industry. Former sociological research has found that groups with high levels of social capital are often exclusionary to outsiders (Portes 1998). These groups have high levels of bonding capital and are very critical of newcomers. Many of this study's respondents described these coastal Louisiana communities this way. Therefore, these groups were very critical of all newcomers. This is illustrated by how the white collar professionals were also not accepted at first. However, unlike the white collar professionals, blue collar non-skilled laborers were never accepted by the community. Their low level of social capital in the form of trust and reciprocity did not allow them access or acceptance into the community. They were further isolated and separated from the community. This in turn led to lowered levels of trust of this group by the local population and increased fear of this groups' criminality.

The findings of this study assert the positive nature of community integration on perceptions of crime and disorder that is somewhat independent of objective levels of crime. The findings of this study show how civic and social groups can be utilized by communities experiencing rapid demographic change to buffer some of the negative impacts, in the case of this paper fear of crime. More importantly, the findings presented here show how the lack of integration can lead to various negative effects, such as over inflated perceptions of crime.

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