Geography of Fear: Understanding Students' Sense of Place

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Introduction

As a student at the College of Charleston I began to notice that students' perception of safe or dangerous places did not correspond to available information about crime locations. While most students will confess a fear of crime they didn't seem to fear the places where crimes were occurring. I wanted to explore this potential spatial disconnect between the places crimes occurred and students' geographies of fear. For the purpose of this research, I have defined the term "geography of fear" as the area or places people (in this case students) indicate and understand as fearful or dangerous. Most authors attributed fear directly and solely to crime. I find this causal relationship troubling because authors did not take any other mediating factors into account. In order to gain a more holistic understanding of individuals' geography of fear one must consider the many and diverse factors that can affect a person's perception of fear or danger. Equipped with a basic understanding of crime statistics in Charleston, I began to realize that in some cases students' geographies of fear were not informed by actual occurrences of crime.

In this paper I seek to demonstrate that crime is not the only cause of fear and that students often fear unfamiliar areas characterized by the visual presence of disorder, in the form of dilapidated property and people that they feel do not "belong." For the purpose of this research, fear is defined as the range of emotional and practical responses from pain to uneasiness caused by the sense of a perceived threat or danger, often concerning one's own safety. (This definition

draws from Bannister and Fye [2001] and Rachel Pain [2001].) Fear may vary in nature, intensity, and duration depending on the situation. I found that incorporating an understanding of the assumptions of "Broken Windows" policing strategies helped to explain students' geographies of fear. The term "Broken Windows" was coined in the 1980s by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. The idea is that crime and disorder are intrinsically related to one another. The name comes from the analogy that if one window in a building is broken, residents should fix it as quickly as possible or else others will assume no one cares for the building and begin to throw more stones, breaking more windows. Orderliness, in the authors' opinion, is a sign of a prosperous neighborhood. The absence of visual signs of orderliness will lead to higher crime rates. In this way visual signs of disorder and neglect are inexorably linked to higher rates of crime (Wilson and Kelling 1982). The argument has been widely adopted and lavishly praised since it was first introduced. Its ideas have seeped into the sub-consciousness of society and because of the commonsensical nature of the assumptions that underpin the theory, it is rarely challenged. Yet, scholarly research has demonstrated that Broken Windows policing strategies have no real empirical support (Taylor 2000; Harcourt 2004; and Harcourt and Ludwig 2006). Research has demonstrated, in fact, that the underlying assumptions about the intrinsic relationship between "visible disorder" and crime are untrue. Through an analysis of students' fears which incorporates a critique of the near universal assumptions which inform the Broken Windows policing strategies, I argue that students geographies of fear are constructed from perceptions of unfamiliarity coupled with visual signs of disorder. This relationship is problematic because students' fears are being based on something that does not accurately reflect the true dangers of an area. Rather, their fears reflect the problematic nature of the influence of the assumptions that inform Broken Windows ideology.

The Evolution of Geography-of-Fear Literature

The geographic study of fear reveals the spatial manifestation of institutions of power which operate within a specific setting: that is, who has power, how it is expressed, its material ramifications and

everyday manifestations. Research on the geography of fear builds upon itself as authors seek to expand the discipline by evaluating previously held assumptions. Fear-of-crime surveys seek to understand peoples' fears through the lens of crime. These surveys, however, often do not take into account the identity politics that surround fear.

Fear-of-crime surveys were designed to evaluate peoples' reaction to crime rates and crime location over a defined geographic area. Caroline Moser (2004) focuses on the costs, consequences, and proffered solutions of urban violence and insecurity. She began to see that violence had a spatial manifestation. As a result of the spatial manifestation of violence in the urban environment, particular social groups, especially the wealthy, began to separate themselves geographically from the urban environment through the creation of gated communities. Her observations, while illuminating, do not attempt to explore the influential nature of subjectivity on the creation and experience of personal fears. Rather, her study aims to identify methods of reducing insecurity (fear) by reducing violence. Mosely overlooks many other factors that could mediate personal experiences with crime.

Rachel Pain (2001) took this fear-of-crime discourse a step further by reviewing and exploring the differences in people's experience of fear through the lens of social identities Pain (2001) came to the conclusion that differences in age, gender, and race can lead to differential experiences of fear in the same social and geographic setting. Further, she discusses the ambiguity concerning the term fear-of-crime. She defines fear-of-crime as "the wide range of emotional and practical responses to crime and disorder individuals and communities may make" (367). This definition takes into account more aspects than simply knowledge of crime locations, yet it is still heavily dependent on crime as an agent of fear. Some more recent studies show an interest in examining the social, economic, and built environments for evidence that fear is not solely influenced by crime. Many of these studies attribute a place-based quality to personal fears. It is in these studies that the interest in examining the influence of mediating factors affecting perceptions and feeling of fear really emerges as a dominant area of interest within the geographic study of fear.

According to Whitzman (2007), economic and social powerlessness and exclusion are some factors that may cause or define fear. A closer examination of how an individual's experience of, understanding of, and interaction with the urban environment is mediated by variable factors and processes is necessary in order to create a better understanding of the formulation of individual fears. Along these lines, interpersonal communication and news media have been found to influence people's perception of crime and fear (Smith 1984). Susan Smith found that media sources often distorted the objective picture of crime by not portraying all crimes, in all areas, in a similar fashion. These distortions inform public opinion about crime and thereby distort people fears. This information was interpreted to mean that distortions in crime reporting are the reason for distorted awareness about crime statistics among the public. This reveals that mediating processes heavily affect participants' perception of dangerous areas and crime statistics. This study builds on the geographic study of fear by incorporating a framework for analysis that involves a critical understanding of Broken Windows theory. The origin of this theory can be traced back to James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling's article, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety" (1982). This essay promotes the idea that crime and disorder are inextricably linked:

> The citizen who fears the ill-smelling drunk, the rowdy teenager, or the importuning beggar is not merely expressing his distaste for unseemly behavior; he is also giving voice to a bit of folk-wisdom that happens to be a correct generalization – namely, that serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked. (Wilson and Kelling 5)

The theory relies on the norm of orderliness. As Bernard Harcourt argues, order, to Wilson and Kelling, "means that the community has control of the neighborhood, that it will not tolerate criminality, and that it will enforce basic norms of civility. Order thus signifies security, safety, and control, which may help bring about behavior that discourages crime" (15). Visual orderliness thus leads to a reduction in criminality and the absence of such order leads to higher rates of crime. While this theory seems to have great commonsensical value,

there is little empirical evidence to support it. As Harcourt argues, "there is no good evidence to support the broken windows theory" (7). Still, it has been adopted in most American cities as the best possible method of policing and it is lauded as the most successful strategy for reducing crime (Harcourt 2004).

Steve Herbert and Elizabeth Brown (2006) critique the theory's flawed spatial logic. Through an analysis of its underlying assumptions they assert that it "help[s] to legitimate the deepening of social and spatial divisions" (755). Thus social divisions between rich and poor, black and white, educated and uneducated are being transposed on to the very geography of different places. Herbert and Brown demonstrate the ways in which the Broken Windows theory helps to reinforce and legitimize social and spatialized exclusion, which in turn support the hyper-punitive nature of Broken Windows policies.

The Broken Windows theory was broadly adopted throughout the early 1990s and has since become so embedded in the way people think of crime and urban spaces that it is impossible to discuss fear without considering the influence of this theory (Herbert and Brown 2006). Based on the age of participants in my study (18-28), it is reasonable to say that while they may not be familiar with the term or know of its systematic use in police departments, the ideas of the theory have become a part of their thinking process. In this manner I believe that visible disorder has been equated with criminal activity and thus made into something to be feared. It may be that because of the dominance of this way of thinking, areas of higher poverty and thus less disposable income to devote to environmental (built or natural) beautification are being associated with higher rates of crime than are actually present. Additionally, in some areas, specifically Charleston, race and poverty are so intertwined that fears about criminality may be racialized when really the basis for these beliefs is a fear of visible signs of disorder as characterized by dilapidated property and black persons in the landscape whom the observer does not view as legitimate users of space.

Some authors suggest that fear and crime are tenuously related and that there are many other factors to consider including the mental framework through which people think about crime and fear. According to Susan Smith (1984):

High levels of fear are frequently associated with environmental "incivility" – the presence of physical cues, such as abandoned, decaying buildings, or vandalism, which are suggestive to other residents of the activities of criminals… In sum, fear is frequently generated quite independently of either the mass media, or people's direct experiences of crime." (293)

Building on these conclusions, my research demonstrates that fear can be more accurately attributed to individuals' reaction to visible signs of disorder and not merely crime or knowledge of crime statistics.

Studying Fear

This study focuses on a very specific population in a very specific geographic location; the more diverse a population and the larger the study area, the harder it would be to understand all the factors that affect perceptions of fear. Study participants were college students over the age of 18 who lived on the Charleston Peninsula. I chose to focus only on college students because they are a growing demographic group on the Charleston peninsula. Increasingly, they move into off-campus houses all over the peninsula, and this diaspora puts them into contact with more of the urban environment. The study population included 30 people. I asked participants to describe themselves using their own terms for race and gender. The population included both men and women roughly equally, different races roughly reflecting the racial demographics of the school, and also a range of ages. Racially the sample was made up of 73% White/Caucasians, 16% Black/African Americans, 6% Asians, and 3% Hispanics. The sample was 40% male and 60% female. Participants categorized themselves in age ranges. The percentages of each are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Age Range of Participants

Age Range	18-20	21-23	24+	Total
Percentage	33%	63%	3%	100%
Total	10	19	1	30

Participants also stated their year of study, the percentages of which are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' Year in College

Grade	Fresh.	Soph.	Junior	Senior	Total
Percentage	6%	13%	20%	60%	100%
Total	2	4	6	18	30

The first phase of this research project involved personal interviews and a mapping exercise. (For interview materials, see Appendices A and B). The personal interview began with an exercise designed to have participants highlight on a street map of the peninsula areas in which they often hang out, particularly like, and feel especially safe. This was followed by a similar mapping exercise in which study-participants highlighted on a map of the peninsula those places they feared. I discussed the maps with participants through a series of questions designed to elicit study-participant's feelings toward specific areas of downtown Charleston as well as cull an understanding of how they use these spaces in their daily life.

From this point I moved into the second phase of the research, the self-directed photography and in-depth interviews. Self directed photography is a data collection tool in which the researcher gives cameras to participants along with directions on what to photograph (Larsen et al. 2007; Aitken and Wingate 1993; and Barnes and Duncan 1992). Each participant was given one disposable camera and asked to take about 20 pictures of places which they especially liked and in which they felt particularly safe. I took the initiative to photograph those places and things that study-participants indicated as inspiring fear, discomfort or unease. Participants were given two weeks to return the cameras. I developed the film and then scheduled a time to meet with each participant and discuss themes that emerged from the initial interviews and both sets of pictures.

After the conversations and photo analysis were over, I compared the data from the interviews with other spatial data such as rates of

poverty, racial demographics, and crime statistics. I did this by using the mapping software ArcGIS to compile three maps that depicted the racial demographics, incidences of crime, and poverty statistics on the peninsula. I also created digital maps from the initial map drawing exercises and compared these with the maps I made. These map comparisons help to validate my hypothesis that student fears reflect the influence of numerous factors other than crime statistics.

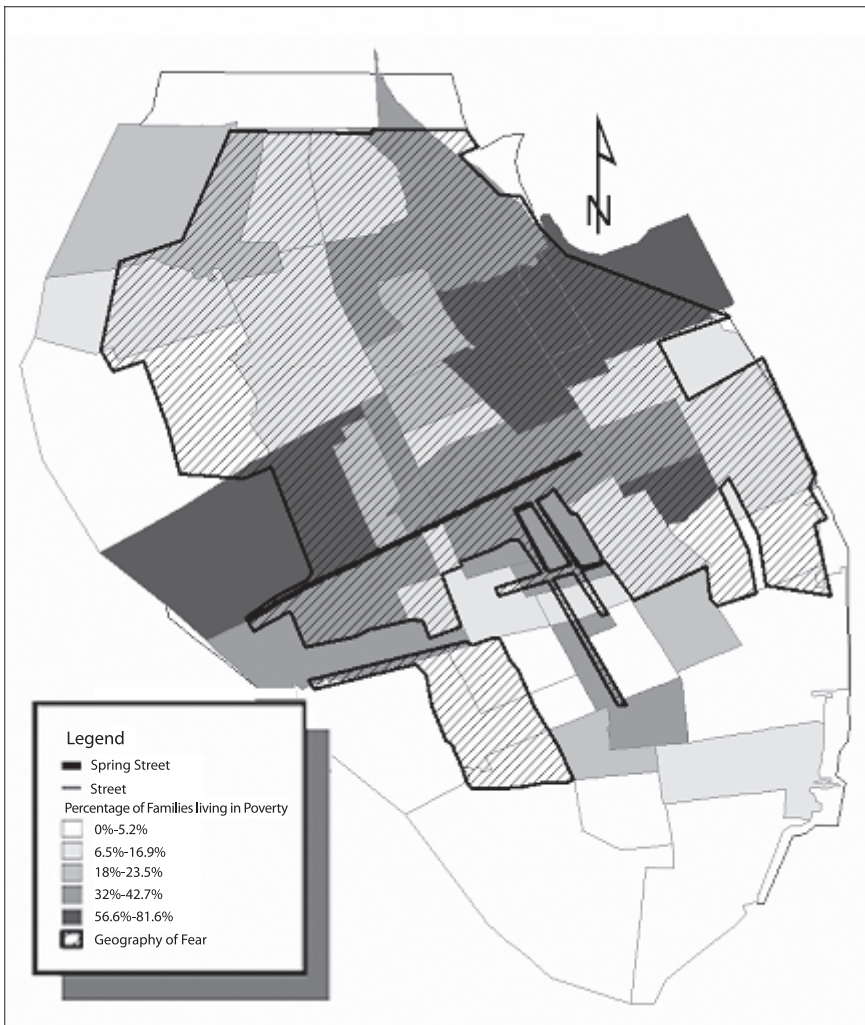**Fear, Crime, Race, Poverty, and Broken Windows in Charleston**

The findings reported here support the claim that fear is experienced spatially (Sparks 2001). I also argue that the spatial manifestation of fear contributes to the entrenchment and reproduction of institutions of power which privilege one class of citizens over another. Throughout this project one thing became very apparent: incidences of crime bear very little on study-participants' construction of geographies of fear, as evidenced by the major themes that emerged from the interviews and photography exercise. While the majority of study-participants expressed a fear of being victims of crime, the way they experienced these fears geographically often did not reflect a consideration of crime statistics or crime locations

Rather, study-participants seemed to create their geographies of fear based on an urban folklorish understanding of unfamiliar places characterized by visible factors in the urban landscape. Study-participants frequently used boundaries to delineate space as either safe or dangerous. Their understanding of unfamiliar places was very clearly not based on any experiential knowledge of an area but rather on second-hand stories. When discussing unfamiliar spaces, study-participants most frequently cited dilapidated property and "loitering" individuals (people with whom and whose activities they could not identify with) as visual elements of the urban environment that inspired fear. For some students the presence of black men simply hanging out on streets during the day was something that inspired fear. Scholars have demonstrated before that factors such as race and location are frequently used to attribute criminality to individuals and their activities (Ford 1992).

I argue that the assumptions about space and crime that inform broken windows policies also legitimize the fears students have. Yet
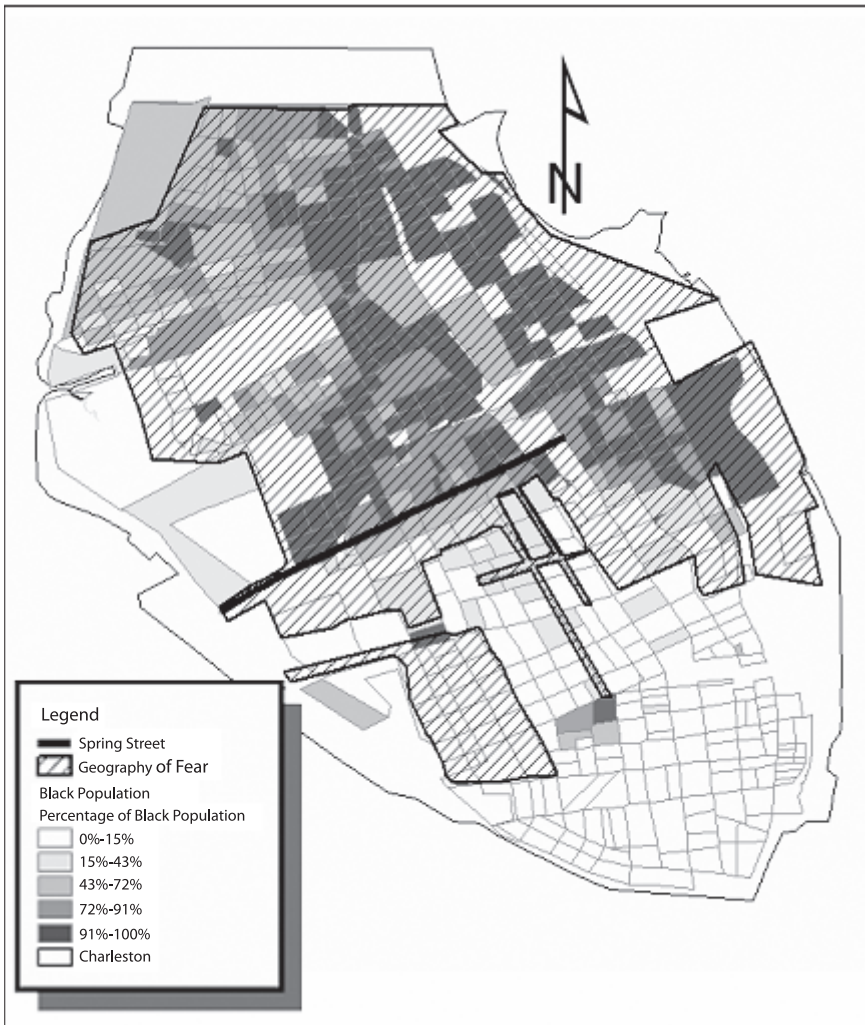
this legitimacy is baseless; little to no empirical evidence exists to support claims made by the theory. The Broken Windows fallacy persists, criminalizing visible disorder in the form of loitering, pan-handling, dilapidated buildings, and dirty sidewalks. This, and the folklorish method of knowledge transference, enables fear of such factors to persist, especially in unfamiliar places.

Figure 1: Comparison of Areas with Higher Levels of Poverty to Study-Participants' Geography of Fear

In Charleston, the assumptions that legitimize both Broken Windows and study-participants' fears conceal a far more problematic issue. The creation of boundaries between safe and unsafe areas is inherently problematic because of the exclusionary practices which it fosters (Ford 1992). The boundaries cited by study-participants create a spatial "otherness" and, concurrently, a racial/economic "Other." Just as in

Figure 2: Comparison of Areas of Higher Black Population to Study-Participants' Geography of Fear

the past, racial segregation isolated blacks in particular areas of a city, spatial exclusion operates to create a spatial and human "Other" which is considered unfamiliar and therefore dangerous (Low 2001). The construction of boundaries thus "legitimizes and rationalizes class-based exclusion strategies and residential segregation" (Low 45). In Charleston the location of study-participants' boundaries and the areas they expressed fear of are areas with higher rates of poverty and a higher black population. A comparison of students' areas of fear to racial demographics and poverty rates in Charleston reveals that areas students fear line up almost perfectly with areas of increased black populations and higher rates of poverty. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

These figures demonstrate that study-participants experience their fears of crime as fear of areas marked by the presence of dilapidated property and people whom they consider to be out of the norm of visual orderliness. Study-participants' geography of fear overlaps with areas of higher poverty and greater black populations. The assumptions which inform Broken Windows theories sanctified property as a private commodity to be cherished; lacking it and neglecting it have been criminalized. Thus, in Charleston, the poor urban black has been criminalized for the neglect of private property or the lack of private property and use of public space to do the very same things wealthy white citizens of Charleston are able to do in their own homes; i.e. hang out, have a drink, or talk with friends. Most study-participants did not identify with black persons doing these things on the street because the use of public space for these activities is not seen as legitimate; participants' understanding of urban space is based on the same assumptions about use of space (both public and private) that inform Broken Windows strategies. This means that the manifestation of students' fear of crime is actually a fear of unfamiliar places based on the fear of different class- and race-based use of property and space. This relationship and how it is reproduced needs to be deconstructed in order for students to have a better understanding of where they are actually more vulnerable to crime. It also needs to be deconstructed in order to understand the ways in which these fears reproduce local institutions of power and continue to concentrate and criminalize poor blackness in the urban landscape.

Understanding Broken Windows assumptions will help to explain

further how they influence students' conception of space, danger, and fear. Herbert and Brown (2006) identify the idea that "landscapes emit messages" as the most important underlying assumption. In their words, "landscapes are said to communicate signals of neighborhood vulnerability to the criminally minded" (758). This idea relies upon a second assumption, that "there is a relationship between community health and territorial behavior." Safe and working neighborhoods make their health known "through geographic activity; residents fix broken windows. They act as 'place managers' to assert informal social control" (758). The logic behind these first two assumptions also informs the third: "the apparent social reality of a spatial division between insider and outsider . . . crime-fearing and the crime-enacting" (758). These assumptions serve to legitimize police actions that seek to curb criminal activity in largely spatial terms. The fourth assumption concerns the "overwhelming emphasis on the local scale" (758). Focus is on particular buildings in the landscape and social behavior on neighborhood sidewalks. The theory promises benefits through local landscape alteration. In addition to the assumptions Herbert and Brown explore, I identified an inherent assumption about the sanctity of private property within the Broken Windows theory. Together these assumptions attribute a criminality to visual disorder and legitimize the fears study participants project onto unfamiliar places.

Interpreting the Interviews
Employing Boundaries to Understand Space
     As mentioned above, study participants' areas of fear were often constructed through the use of boundary lines. The maps drawn of individuals' geographies of fear were based on the geographic limits of their comfort zone. Study participants draw their maps of fear using the logic that all space beyond where they are comfortable was to be feared. As Participant 6 observed, "These are boundary lines for me. They are as far as I will go in that direction. I don't know much about what is past them."   This participant's lack of knowledge concerning the space beyond his boundary line increased his fear of those places.
     Boundary lines help people operate on a daily basis and are an easy way to make decisions without having to have all of the information. I found that students use boundaries in order to

understand the entire Charleston peninsula. Boundaries create otherness through the delineation of spaces into two antithetical categories. This spatial otherness in turn creates a social/human "Other." Student boundaries reflect the presence and reproduction of a racial/economic "Other." The study-participants were predominantly white/Caucasian. They associated safety with areas that had low rates of poverty and had a majority white population. Participant 6 demonstrated these feelings when he explained why a picture of the Charleston Place Hotel was a place that made him feel safe. "I think that people there will be wealthy and not doing anything bad," he said; "They have a good social status." This association demonstrates the idea that for some, wealthy people are good people and therefore poor people are bad people. The social "Other" created by boundaries coincides with visual factors in the urban landscape which study-participants understand to indicate criminal activity and thus fear. Authors such as Richard Ford have identified boundary creation as a problem with respect to race. Ford (1992) argues that "the problem of race in late-twentieth-century America is the line: the line of demarcation, the boundary line, the undrawn but universally felt line between neighborhoods…the line that one must toe but never cross" (Ford 118).

Boundaries tell more about an abstract perception of fearful space than an actual understanding of an area, its population, and the crime that actually occurs there. Participant 19 was a member of a student organization, Peer Assistance Leaders (PALS) who patrolled areas around bars and student housing at night in order to aid anyone in a vulnerable situation. While discussing a picture of Spring Street, the respondent said, "It is not as nice visually which gives me the idea that it is not as nice socially. Even for PALS we stop at Cannon Street (the street immediately south of Spring Street) and that is even pushing it at night" (Participant 19). The fact that the respondent indicates a street as a boundary where she wouldn't go based on its visual appearance illustrates the idea that participants based their understanding of areas they considered fearful by their understanding of a conceptual boundary that exists between areas that look safe and areas that look like places to be feared. Through discussion many participants revealed that in many cases they had never even gone (on

foot) within the areas they marked as fearful or feared. Rather, their ideas of what went on there, what type of people lived there, and what the place looked like was based on second hand information or observations of the streets that served as their boundaries between the feared and the safe places.

In some instances, a picture I took from the middle of an area a participant considered fearful didn't contain any visual elements that increased his or her fears. In other words, the place in the picture didn't seem scary to participants even though they had identified the area on their geography of fear map. When shown a picture of a well manicured church, one respondent indicated that it did not inspire fear. Once informed that the image was taken from Nassau Street, an area the respondent indicated as inspiring a lot of fear, she revealed that "It looks familiar until you hear where it is. You see a clean church. The picture doesn't make me afraid, but the place does" (Participant 13). In other instances, the picture (and its location) wasn't even recognized by the study participant who claimed some form of knowledge about the location by indicating their fear of the place. This helps to demonstrate that students' understanding of feared areas weren't based on knowledge of the whole areas but rather the symbolic significance of boundary areas.

Study-participants created their boundaries in a number of ways, often on the basis of second-hand knowledge. As Participant 16 observed, "People talked about streets as boundaries even before you had seen them. I was terrified to go to Nassau Street because of what people have said about it." This remark demonstrates how urban folklore can shape boundaries students have of where they feel safe and where they don't. One participant explained how the boundary she indicated reflected the boundary between areas dominated by college students and areas where other demographics, namely poor blacks, were more represented. According to Participant 13, "my map shows the boundaries of where college students live. I hear a street name and it is in the 'bad' part of town, I am more consciously aware of my surroundings. By 'bad' part I mean outside of the college zone." This spatial division was frequently cited by study participants as influencing their conception of areas to be feared. These two quotations further demonstrate the fact that many study-participants
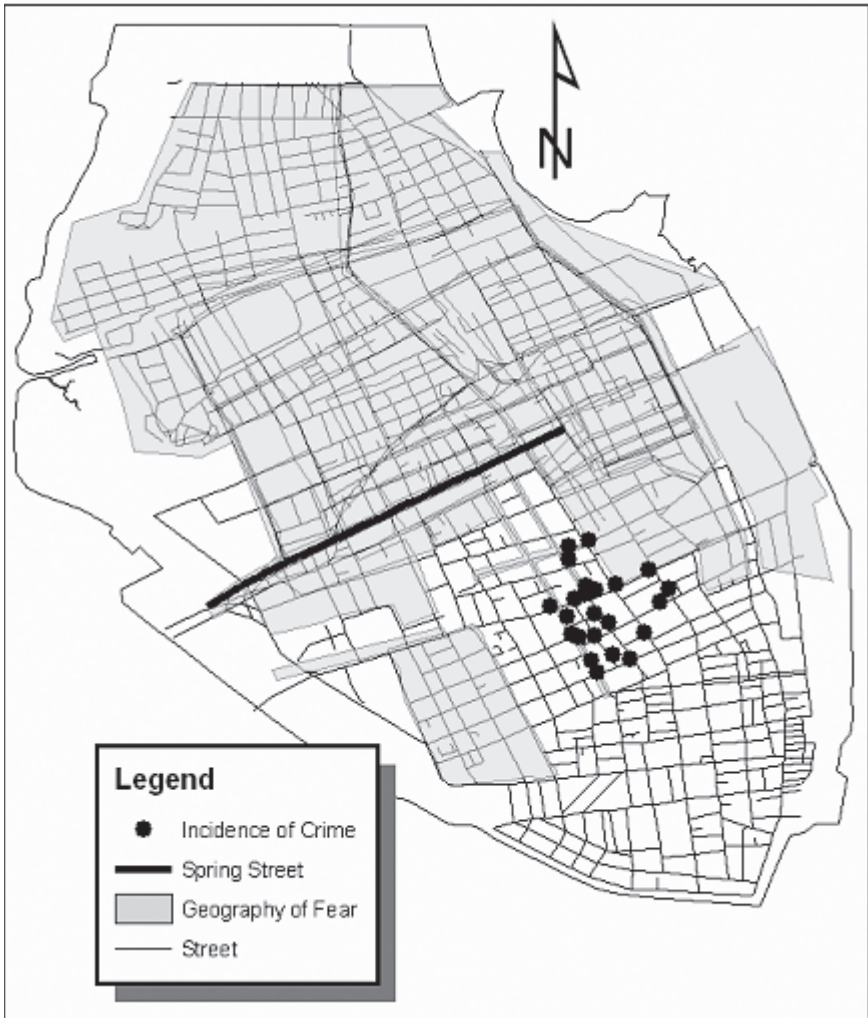
lack any real knowledge about what goes on in areas they consider "dangerous." This uncertainty itself increases fear. Participant 13 demonstrates this dynamic when she says, "you don't know what goes on there [Naussau Street] and that means, in my mind, that anything could go on there." Lacking real knowledge of a place beyond her boundary, this participant then based her understanding of the area on second-hand knowledge and rumors and jumped to the conclusion that "anything" (especially criminal activity) could go on there. Participant 1 similarly stated, "I've never walked there [intersection of Crosstown and Ashley Avenue]. I only drive. I don't recognize it which makes it scary which makes people not want to go there which makes it scary." While such geographic "knowledge" might not reflect an on-the-ground reality of the particular areas, the fear that it produces is very real.

Spring Street marked a boundary line for many participants. Some participants have parents who also attended the College of Charleston or who lived here 10 or 20 years ago. One participant's parents told her that it was considered dangerous to travel past Calhoun Street when they lived here (Participant 13). Today students still have this boundary mentality concerning the Charleston peninsula, but it seems that the boundary has shifted a couple of blocks north. As Participant 1 put it, "Spring [Street] is the new Calhoun [Street]. It is the new transitional line of where people feel safe and were they do not." Spring Street has an almost legendary status among college students as a place not to travel on or go beyond. It seems local urban folklore concerning Spring Street as a boundary is constantly being passed down to new students entering the College. "When I came [to College of Charleston] people always said don't go past Spring Street," Participant 19 recalled. Spring Street emerged not only as a strong theme for many students during discussion but it also emerged as a very clearly defined boundary on the geography of fear maps.

Understanding how boundary lines are formulated and why they are in a particular location reveals a great deal about what factors affect individuals' fear. While many students attribute the location of their own boundary lines to fear of crime or a fear of being a victim of violence, the actual location of their boundary lines and the locations of crime do not seem to correspond.

The map in Figure 3 compares students' geographies of fear to the location of crime incidences.[1] The crimes that are included in this map were crimes that study-participants all said they feared being victims of: assaults, sexual assaults, and personal robberies (mugging). These crimes occurred between January and June 2006 and were reported to the College of Charleston's Public Safety. This office is students'

Figure 3: Comparison of Study-Participants' Geography of Fear and Crime Locations

Legend

● Incidence of Crime
▬ Spring Street
▢ Geography of Fear
— Street

most direct link to knowledge about crime occurrences in the downtown area. These are the crimes that study-participants would most likely know about because public safety alerts all students about these crime occurrences via email (unlike crimes occurring beyond the campus and its immediate surroundings) and these crimes occurred near places all students inhabit (the campus area). Notably, nearly every crime occurred in a place no study participant indicated as inspiring fear during the daytime. The campus was the one place that nearly every participant expressed feeling extremely safe in. Respondents frequently took pictures of campus buildings to depict safe places.

Participant 6 explained his feeling of safety on campus by referring to his familiarity with campus and to the area's appearance. "It [campus] is home," he said; "I have classes there. It is nice looking and well lit." The disconnect between actual danger and imagined fear is a dangerous mentality for students to operate within. While study-participants fear being a victim of crime in a certain area, the evidence provided by a map comparison of crime locations and areas of topophobia indicate that other factors must have an influence on their fears. This supports the assertion that crime incidences bear little on students' geographies of fear.

The boundary mentality limits students' knowledge of diverse areas in Charleston and may artificially make them feel safe in areas within their boundaries of comfort and knowledge, areas that may actually be dangerous. Exploring how and why fears are misplaced by study-participants will allow us to gain a better understanding of how space is socially constructed to be safe or dangerous, how students participate in the production or reproduction of these boundaries, and why these ideas about danger and safety persist.

Fear of the Unfamiliar

Scholars have argued that unfamiliarity with an area increases an individual's fear. Gill Valentine (2008) notes that "People are uncomfortable with the unknown and so feel anxious about encounters with difference" (323-4). Students often admitted that their familiarity with a particular place on the peninsula increased their feelings of safety within that space. Some participants expressed strong feelings of safety within even those familiar areas where other students had

been victims of muggings or assaults in the past. Conversely, places students had never even been to before, and therefore had no familiarity with, were places greatly feared by the majority of study participants. As Participant 13 observed, "My unfamiliarity with a place increased my fear. It made me feel more like something could happen." This relationship between familiarity and safety and between unfamiliarity and fear is problematic in that students do not seem to take actual crime statistics into consideration.

As a result of the high demand for affordable and student-friendly rental housing near the College of Charleston campus, students are being forced to look for apartments further north on the peninsula than they have tended to live. While students are occupying larger areas of Charleston for housing, their daily activities keep the geographic range of their movement somewhat restricted to the center of the peninsula, the streets and blocks in and around the College of Charleston campus. Most daily activities included going to class, working at businesses on the lower part of the peninsula (below Spring Street), and going to friends' houses. Most study-participants lived on or below Spring Street. Discussion of students' unfamiliarity with areas above the "Spring Street boundary line" led me to believe that in most instances study-participants' unfamiliarity with an area is a sure indicator that they will fear it. Related to this idea are the folklorish warnings that are passed down from one class to the next concerning the dangers of going beyond Spring Street. Without any experiential knowledge of the area beyond Spring Street, any stories participants hear about this region are easily assumed to be true and incorporated into their understanding of the space as dangerous. Participant 13 indicated that Spring Street is "the first street you're told not to go near—it has a stigma from stories."

One type of area in particular that many participants expressed personal unfamiliarity with yet also strong opinions about was government housing units. One participant specifically indicated places with government housing as areas she feared. "I am afraid on Logan Street because the projects are right there," said Participant 3. This was an interesting idea to explore further through the photography analysis. Before students were told exactly what type of housing they were viewing, many of them identified the short, town-house style

brick buildings as Charleston's government housing. One participant was very candid about her initial response to the picture of a government housing unit. She explained her fear of the area as a result of the association of projects with the poor urban black population and the association of poor urban black persons with crime. "Automatically I think projects," she said; "it has a 'don't go there' stigma. Yet, during the day it is ok. It makes me think lower income African-Americans. When you hear about crime that is who the perpetrators are, at least on the Campus Crime Alerts [Community Watch Alerts from Public Safety]" (Participant 13). As a result of attitudes like these which automatically attribute a degree of criminality to an unknown population based on a constructed understanding of government housing, the urban black poor become an object of fear. The idea that fear of the unfamiliar can become racialized in an urban environment is not new. Ford (1992) argued that "this (most often irrational) fear of the unknown has been projected onto the racialized Other in the context of the 'urban concrete jungle'" (130). Ford sees this racialized fear as a result of the spatial demarcation between white and black space. Yet race is not the only factor criminalized by participants' expressed fear of government housing. Poverty too, especially visible signs of poverty, are equally criminalized. The assumption that landscapes emit messages, which undergirds Broken Windows strategies, also explains why study-participants fear visible signs of poverty (Herbert and Brown 2006).

The association of familiarity with safety was also evident in discussions with study-participants. Study-participants felt safest in their own homes and on the college campus. Participant 1 linked her feelings of safety on campus to familiarity with the place when she remarked, "I have gone there [campus]. It is a familiar place to me because of school classes, my p.o. box is located here, etc." Many times this sense of safety was attributed to the fact that participants knew a lot of people in these places that were like them. In the pictures they took, study-participants identified with other white individuals engaged in activities they recognized and also engaged in; shopping King Street, sitting in Marion Square, and going to class. This demonstrates the ways in which the same assumptions that inform broken-windows theory concerning the unfamiliarity, disorderliness

and thus criminality of activities such as pan-handling, loitering, and drinking in public, affect study-participants' understanding of legitimate public activities (Wilson and Kelling 1982). Harcourt (2001), however, demonstrates the problematic nature of this understanding of public use of space and disorder: "The result is that these categories (the disorderly and the law-abider) mask the repressive nature of broken windows policing and overshadow significant costs, including increased complaints of police misconduct, racial bias in stop and frisks, and further stereotyping of black criminality" (Harcourt 7). Study-participants' feelings and self-identification with familiar social and spatial factors (white middle-class people in affluent-looking areas) is evident in the following discussion of a photograph a participant took of Marion Square as a part of the self-directed photography exercise. The picture showed the public square with predominantly (if not entirely) white people walking through it. Participant 6 stated, "There are always people here. I feel safer around people doing the same types of things I do." While the presence of public safety officers increased feelings of safety, the presence of cops in areas which have a higher black population and higher rates of poverty reinforce the criminalization of the urban black poor. Participant 29 reflected, "I feel safe knowing someone is there, but why is it [a cop car] there? If there are always cops, then can it [the street] be safe?" Yet police presence in and around the campus (an area with a demonstrably lower black population and much less poverty) does not intrinsically criminalize this largely white and middle-class population. Study-participants' unfamiliarity with a certain area allowed their opinions of such areas to be constructed from second-hand knowledge, rumors, or stories. In order to explore this particular assertion, I showed participants pictures of street signs from areas they indicated as fearful and asked them to tell me the feelings the image inspired. I chose to do this exercise with streets that were deep in the middle of areas that inspired fear for study-participants – rather than boundary regions – in order to test my hypothesis that a lack of knowledge increases fear by relying on second-hand (often exaggerated) information.

   Discussion of the Nassau Street sign in particular was illuminating because all or some part of Nassau Street was on most participants' geography of fear maps. The responses below demonstrate how the

street itself has become associated with fear through stories and secondhand information that are reinforced through unfamiliarity and an unwillingness to go there.

> "I mean I didn't even know some of the street names [you were saying]. Yet, when you hear where it is, near Nassau, you think it is dangerous." (Participant 13)

> "There are stereotyped streets. From observations and stories it is run down, disordered, the slums, lots of drugs, criminal activity, and meth labs." (Participants 6)

Even without knowledge of crimes or their geographic locations, students form opinions about the types of things that occur there from other sources. My research indicates that students at the College of Charleston construct their fears based on a cultural understanding of the peninsula built from second-hand knowledge of particular areas. Often this knowledge strongly resembled a folklorish understanding of the "bad" parts of town that is handed down from one generation of students to the next. With respect to accurate knowledge of reported crime incidences, many study-participants confessed to either not read or not be affected by the Community Watch Alerts, which the College of Charleston's Public Safety sends to students to make them aware of crimes that could affect students. These alerts are the most universal and direct manner for students to become aware of crimes that occur on the peninsula. Yet, many participants noted that their fear of black men in the landscape was due in part to the fact that the Community Watch Alerts almost always described the perpetrator as black. This discrepancy is troubling, yet may be explained by the folklorish retelling of crime watch report information that focuses on race rather than location. It may be easier for students to fear an unfamiliar demographic than to have to understand a place they consider safe to be dangerous. Thus first-hand knowledge of crime statistics doesn't seem to be the dominant source of student fears.

The Inherent Disorderliness of "People without a Purpose"
Study-participants tended to express fear of unfamiliar places in

which they see people who do not seem to belong in the landscape. In almost every case, students referred to this as "loitering." This relationship is problematic because the term "loitering" indicates that a person's activity is criminal. People who used this term did not seem to understand how the activities of people standing on streets during the day can be legitimate. This misunderstanding stems from a lack of knowledge about how public space is used by different classes of citizens. Often students indicated that when they came across people on the street and they couldn't easily discern their purpose or considered them not to have one, they felt more cautious or fearful. This relationship is particularly important to deconstruct because it reflects a bias based on class and race. It seems that only a particular range of activities in certain places and times had a "valid" purpose to students. That these "people without a purpose" were often black males also added a racial dynamic to the situation which in many cases made participants hesitant to discuss the reasons for or the rationale behind their fears. However, I began to unpack the fear of "people without a purpose" through the picture analysis.

In many cases study-participants considered the presence of people to be a factor that decreased their anxiety of a street or block – as long, that is, as they could identify with the people. Referring to a picture of the Charleston Place Hotel, a posh hotel in the southern half of the peninsula, Participant 16 said, "I feel safe here because, near Charleston Place Hotel on Market Street, there are always lots of people and it's really nice looking." Yet when study-participants saw people not like them socio-economically in places they considered dangerous, they registered an increase of fear. One participant explained that race still played a part in how she experienced fear around groups of people in Charleston. She revealed this through our discussion of a photograph of a couple of black men hanging out on the sidewalk in the middle of the afternoon. Participant 19 stated, "The picture is from near Nassau Street, which has a bad connotation. I didn't recognize the street name. I don't like walking past groups of black men. I don't know what they are doing. In Charleston race does still matter to people." Statements such as these were not uncommon. Study-participants' fear of "people without a purpose" seems to boil down to a lack of knowledge concerning the activities of a different

class of citizens and how they occupy space. Study-participants often described fearful people as "loitering," a term that criminalizes the use of public space.

Often the assumption was that individuals "loitering" or standing around with friends on sidewalks didn't have a job and could be a threat. This inability to identify with a person's activity in a public space made many participants feel as if the observed people were "up to no good." These are the very ways Harcourt (2006) sees the influence of Broken Windows theory on peoples' understanding of space and crime. During a discussion of a picture depicting an empty Spring Street lot next to a small building that has been spray painted to advertise for a barbershop, Participant 1 explained how she experienced her fear of loitering. "Usually there is a lot of 'loitering' that is disturbing to me," she said; "I think, 'what are they doing? Probably waiting around to sell drugs'" (Participant 1). This fear of "people without a purpose" has a lot to do with the fact that students identify the "loitering" individuals as outside of the norm of orderliness and not a natural part of the Charleston urban landscape. This perspective mirrors the manner in which crimes like loitering are considered dangerous by Broken Windows theorists. Wilson and Kelling (1982) write that "serious street crime flourishes in areas in which disorderly behavior goes unchecked" (5). "Disorderly" people are considered intruders, occupying a space that isn't necessarily theirs. Yet, their activity could be understood as entirely legitimate by granting their lack of private space and their right to occupy public space. Participant 7 acknowledges that his fear of "loitering" individuals reflects a fear of unknown individuals. He stated, "The CofC reports (Public Safety Crime Watch Alerts) incite a fear of people you don't know, especially of people out on their own. If I don't know you, I don't trust you." On the other hand, study-participants did not fear people like themselves (i.e., white people living in affluent areas of Charleston).

"Dilapidated equals Dangerous"

Study-participants' fear in unfamiliar places was experienced most directly as a fear of dilapidated property. During the preliminary interviews, many participants indicated that they were more afraid of

areas that looked "run-down," "unkempt," or "abandoned" (Participant 3). Conversely, places that were (or seemed) "cleaned up," "well kept," "high end," "cared for," and "very clean – no trash or graffiti" were places that participants felt safe in (Participant 1). By far this was the most prevalent and distinct theme that emerged from the interviews and photography exercise. It reveals much about the assumptions students have concerning space, people, and fear. The two main reactions participants had to "dilapidated" places were that (1) they embodied disorder and that (2) they reflected the inhabitants' disrespect for space. Both reactions in turn fueled the sense that a dilapidated space should be feared.

The association of dilapidated and run down property with disrespect and disorder reflect study-participants wholesale participation in the sanctification of private property. The idea that property is privately owned and therefore respected and maintained is so entrenched in study-participants' understanding of the urban environment that not having it or not maintaining it is criminalized and feared. By the same assumption, a healthy neighborhood is one in which inhabitants exert social control through their maintenance of visible disorder (Herbert and Brown 2006). Crucially, the cult of aesthetics that the Broken Windows theory creates does not properly reflect the true safety or dangerousness of a neighborhood. Rather, it creates a mindset that privileges environmental beautification and thus the disposable income required for it (Harcourt 2004). As the map of poverty demonstrates, the areas in which study-participants experience their fear of dilapidated property are areas with higher levels of poverty, and correspondingly less disposable income with which to maintain or beautify property. Additionally, as the area is not in a tourist district, the city has very little interest in beautifying public space.

Some study participants indicated that the reasons for their fear centered on the idea that disorder is dangerous. Numerous respondents made comments to this effect in response to an image of a yard on Bogard Street with signs that say "No Parking" and trash and discarded building debris scattered about the yard. The part of the house that is visible has flaking paint and tarps over parts of the siding. Particpant 13 reflected, "I think that people who don't care for yards probably won't care for society or people either. I am a control freak, but where

there is a lack of control in an area that scares me." This response indicates that broken windows assumptions actively influence people's understanding of space. These assumptions are so embedded in the way people think of crime and urban spaces that it is impossible to discuss fear and its spatial manifestation without considering the influence of this theory. Other study-participants expressed similar responses, reinforcing the idea that order is a sign of safety and the lack of it is a sure sign an area is dangerous. Looking at a picture of a messy yard, Participant 5 remarked, "It looks overgrown and the building is run-down. There is graffiti. It appears disheveled. That makes me think there is no order and I believe in order." Such responses illustrate the manner in which students are willing to judge the relative safety or dangerousness of an area purely by visual signs of disorder, without necessarily knowing anything about it.

Conversely, students viewed places that were clean, well groomed, and landscaped to be signs of a safe environment. In response to an image of a manicured park on the southern tip of the peninsula, an area that is very wealthy and almost entirely white, Participant 6 said, "I feel very safe here. It [Battery Park] is very natural but cared for and groomed. There is no trash around." The orderliness of a street led study-participants to feel safe, in some cases despite their own personal experiences on the street. Considering a picture of the Corner of Pitt and Calhoun Streets, Participant 16 observed, "I feel safe here because it is my friend's house. There is a church and the school on the street." Significantly, he went on to say, "Yet I heard of an attack happening near here recently and I was in a bike-taxi accident here only weeks ago." In the picture lawns are well kept, the houses are not falling apart and it is close to the College campus. Visual appearance seems to influence the participant's sense of safety more so than his knowledge of crimes that have occurred nearby.

Another common reaction to pictures of "dilapidated" houses or streets was that the inhabitants clearly had no respect for the space or the building. The common logic behind this idea was that such "disrespectful" people probably didn't have any respect for other individuals in the area which, many participants believed, would lead inhabitants to be more apt to commit crimes or allow others to commit crimes there. This logic recalls the thinking of Wilson and Kelling

(1982), who argue that "'untended' behavior also leads to the breakdown of community controls. A stable neighborhood of families who care for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown on unwanted intruders can change, in a few years or even a few months, to an inhospitable and frightening jungle. A piece of property is abandoned, weeds grow up, a window is smashed" (3).

One student reflected on why trash and dirty yards inspired her fear and pointed out that the message this sent to her was that the inhabitants were disrespectful. Referencing an image taken at 77 Nassau Street which depicts a narrow alley between two houses filled with discarded bottles and assorted trash, Participant 1 stated, "There are a lot of cobra bottles and beer cans in this alley. Inhabitants have no respect for the place because they leave their trash and if they have no respect then what does that say about it?" This was a widely held assumption about "dilapidated" places and why they are dangerous. Participant 4 felt that unmaintained property was a sign of disrespect and took this a step further, attributing to the property owner an attitude of social disrespect as well. "If there is a lack of maintenance and respect of property," he said, "I assume that the people lack maintenance and respect for themselves and their interactions. I also feel that they have a distrust of outsiders, like college students." This statement demonstrates the extent to which private property ownership is taken for granted and sanctified, to the point that "disrespect" of property indicates a social disrespect as well.

Study-participants equated dilapidated places very clearly with disrespect for property. Yet, a few went so far as to take this relationship further by attributing the "dilapidated" yards and dilapidated homes to a lack of money which they then associated rather directly with higher crime rates. Referring to a picture of a building with boarded up doors and windows and a leaning fence covered with graffiti, Participant 16 said, "The building looks run-down. There are scary signs, 'No Trespassing,' 'Beware of Dog,' etc. It is overgrown. There is no money. Upkeep takes money. Where there is no money there is more crime. That is the link I see between the picture and my fear." While this relationship cuts out the middle-man, disrespect, it still demonstrates a link in peoples' minds between visible signs of poverty and higher crime rates and thus a greater risk of victimization.

Conclusion

Student fear of the unfamiliar, of disorderliness and disrespect of property, and of "people without a purpose" reveals a problematic relationship between fear, race, and poverty. This relationship is complicated by reliance on folklorish rather than experiential knowledge. Factors as dilapidated buildings and "people without a purpose" clearly intensify study participants' fear, despite the fact that such factors may simply reflect a lack of disposable income and a different attitude toward public space. The correlation between areas students feared and areas with higher percentage of families living below the poverty line and areas with higher black populations is very strong. This association is troubling. Student fears are manifested as an unconscious fear of urban black poverty which they experience as a fear of disorder and disrespect of place. This is problematic because personal and situational vulnerability have more to do with actual incidence of crime than the visual orderliness of one's surroundings.

The persistence of the problematic relationship between student fear, race, and poverty in Charleston will reproduce institutions of power which privilege one class of citizens over another and will reproduce racial and class-based prejudice as well. This fear reveals that power is operationalized through geographies of exclusion that produce politics of racial and economic exclusion.

The geographic study of fear as a discipline is a large and diverse. This paper challenges some aspects of that discipline and moves the discourse on fear-of-crime into new territory. By incorporating a new analytical framework, the critical examination of the assumptions which inform Broken Windows policies, this research expands the fear-of-crime discourse and seeks to explain individuals' fears as a result of pervasive social norms that explain space, its inhabitants, and crime in very specific ways. These findings demonstrate that crime statistics are not the main factor that produces fear. In fact, many other factors seem to have a greater impact on students' understanding of "safe" and "dangerous" places. By demonstrating that there are in fact other factors that play a larger role in these students' construction of geographies of fear, this study begins to deconstruct the relationship between individuals, their fears, and the environment they inhabit in order to better understand how the three are related. This study

demonstrates the importance of understanding how individuals actually create and reproduce the geography of their fears in order to understand what they fear and why. While many scholars study fear of crime and its spatial manifestation, few have done in-depth studies on how these fears are reproduced socially and on the results (if any) of such social reproduction.

Appendix A

Sense of Place: Topophobia and Topophilia in Downtown Charleston, SC

Participant Survey

PARTICIPANT #:   DATE:

1. I am: _____ Male _____ Female
2. I am: _____ 18-20 years old
                      _____ 21-23 years old
                      _____ 24 or older
3. I identify as _____ (racial/ethnic group)
4. I am a: _____ freshman
                  _____ sophomore
                  _____ junior
                  _____ senior
5. I live in _____ (block/neighborhood)
6. I have lived downtown for _____ (number of years/months)
7. The thing I like most about downtown Charleston is:
8. The thing I like least about downtown Charleston is:
9. My favorite place in Charleston is:
10. The place I like the least in Charleston is:
11. The place I feel safest in Charleston is:
12. The place I feel most afraid in Charleston is:

Appendix B

Sense of Place Questionnaire: Phase I

Participant#:   Date:

1. Using the map, can you show me where you like to spend your time when you're not working or attending class?

2. Where do you usually hang out? Do you favor certain locations during the day and others at night?

3. What parts of town are you particularly drawn toward, where do you like to spend time? Why?

4. Where do you feel safe? And why?

5. What are things that you particularly like about downtown Charleston?

6. Using the map, can you show me where you are afraid to be at night and during the day?

7. Is there any particular reason you selected these places during either the night or day?

8. Have you ever been the victim of crime in downtown Charleston? Any where else? Have these events affected your perception of different areas in Charleston?

9. What are things that you are afraid of or for in downtown Charleston?

10. For you, what are some of the things that increase your fear of a given area, block, or street?

11. Do you regularly read the city watch reports sent out through the college? Do these affect where you feel safe?

12. What do you feel can be done to increase your feelings of safety in given areas of Charleston?

13. How do you get around downtown? Foot, bike, car…?

14. Does the manner in which you travel downtown affect where you go?

Notes

[1] The maps in figures 1-3 were made by Alex Modly. Data on geography of fear was collected and digitized by Alex Modly between October 2008 and February 2009 in accordance with all Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. Charleston street and crime location data were retrieved from the College of Charleston's GIS database (S:). Data on race and poverty in Charleston are from the 2000 Census. The data were retrieved from the US Census American Factfinder website (http://factfinder.census.gov). The Charleston peninsula background was created from a digital ortho quarter quadrangle (DOQQ file) retrieved from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources website (www.dnr.sc.gov). The Datum used is NAD 1983. The Projection System for Poverty, Street, and Charleston outline data is Geographic. The Projection System used for geography of fear and crime location data is SC State Plane. The maps were made on April 26, 2008 at the College of Charleston.

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