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FEARS OF A MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract

In this paper, we propose that perceptions of individual and collective threats is often the result of imagination of our own making. We conducted our study in Slovenia to research the understanding of personal and collective risks of the people in a modern society. We investigated the threats with quantitative methodology. We analysed the data with descriptive and inferential statistical method like factor analysis and regression analysis. Results of the study show media often provoke the notion of fear, mistrust and intuition, which influence the feeling of powerlessness in the respondents in the study. The concerns of respondents are usually not the result of their direct experience. The helplessness consequently is a fertile background for the development of the culture of fear.

Keywords: intuition, threat, culture of fear, risk society

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Introduction

There have never been so many reasons for people to fear. Fear is manipulated perception of danger, not actual danger. It is normal that our imagination places us in frightening situations that become real threats in our minds. However, we can accept that modern man suffers no more than the amount of insecurity that is normal for human beings. Self-confident people experience less fear than people that do not have confidence in their ability to confront their fears. Nevertheless, modern man faces many threats, which trigger his or her feeling of helplessness. According to Beck (1990) fear is a social phenomenon with its emergent practices, processes and trends. We can relate it to uncertainty that becomes the part of peoples' life. It is the belief that connects with the government actions, crime, risk related to the future and other phenomena. We consider fear as the globalised phenomenon. It is disembodied and unemotional. It connects political processes and every day, emotional topographies. Modern society engages in polishing the cage of fear and keeps its citizen in some a fear prison. Chances of the people, to gain some influence over their life, are small, and the modern society becomes a risk society. Security and safety become one of the major concerns and utmost priorities in the life of the citizens. However, organizations and people invest a lot of effort, knowledge and money to feel safe and secure.

This article introduces the reader to the concept of culture of fear that is central to understanding the phenomenon of fear. The main objective of the article is to provide greater insights into the role of the culture of fear to become the practical framework for analysis of fears and threats in a modern society. We test a potential impact of the dimensions of culture of fear to the feeling of citizen powerlessness in dealing with potential security and safety threats.

Research background and hypotheses

The notion of fear

De Becker (2002: 41) links concern with the vision that often places people in terrifying situations and defines it as: "... A demonstration in the presence of uncertainty. Fear always rests upon something we perceive in our environment. It can also be the result of our imagination and attention to some phenomena and sometimes entirely unwarranted. Many people believe that fear is often a result of the perceived crime, corruption, fraudulent behaviour, terrorism, high jacking, war, and sexual abuse. It often a result of other extreme events in a society." According to De Becker (2002: 11), it is extremely difficult to be anxious all the time. Besides, it is extraordinarily frustrating, and it is common for

pressure to seek resolution. When people understand the roots and causes of violence, the nature of risk, and the causes of corruption and crime, they can feel more secure and safe (De Becker, 2002: 11). To elaborate fear, De Becker (2002: 26) proposes compartmentalization of risks that appear frequently in our imagination and only occasionally in our reality. He directs attention to the fact that risk when high enough and often imagined, can make its reality. Culture of fear is the construct full of different ambivalences. Glassner (2010: 153) is convinced that people often create individual fears themselves and become the victims of it.

Furedi (2002) agrees with the term culture of fear but is sceptical about the real contents of the social construct of the 'culture of fear'. Nevertheless, we can expect that discourses of risk derive from imagination and assumptions and on the quantitative rationality. To blame media for the spread of culture of fear, oversimplifies the complex role that journalists play as both proponents and doubters of modern fears. Mythen and Walkate (2006) research reveals that the concern is the signpost and a guide to the classes of phenomena within which we can constitute and negotiate anxiety.

Mistrust in a risk society

Beck (2002) speaks of living in 'terrorist world risk' society. He links it with political disorientation and perpetual uncertainty. Risk embedded in the fibre of corporation and manifests through cultural practices and experiences in contemporary society in all aspects of ordinary life. Giddens (1990) defines this ambiguous phenomenon as a society that increasingly preoccupies with the safety and the future. According to Giddens, the feelings of insecurity and the lack of security generates the haberdashery of risk. However, Giddens is somewhat more positive for the risk taking. He assures that active risk is a core element of a dynamic economic and innovation-oriented society. Opposing to Giddens (1990) and Pain (2009), who do not believe in the existence of a risk society, Beck (1992) relates it to a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities. Beck argues that individuals that produce risks will expose to them.

Fear theorists acknowledge that fear and risk closely relate. Many theorists like Beck (2000) even talk about 'risk society'. Žižek (2007) defines risk society as a: "moderate probability high consequences risk: no one knows how high the risks are, the probability of global catastrophe is small". The problem with this interpretation lies in the possibility to assess the extent and the consequences of risk. We live in a society where uncertainty and insecurity prevail. As a result, people

are more anxious and predisposed towards fearing risks (Furedi, 2002: 8). The sense of risk is more a social construct pursuant to prevailing subjective consciousness of society. It is less likely the by-product of increased threats to real life. Furedi (2002: 8) talks about risk aversion that rests on a precautionary principle, which emerged in the field of ecology and recently moves to the other areas of social experience. According to a precautionary principle, Furedi suggests, "it is best to take a new risk, unless we understand its outcome in advance."

Such a stance could prevent people from experimentation, social or scientific. A precaution offers some security, but in exchange, lowers the expectations. A precaution often generates mistrust, because governments sometimes communicate risk to the public. It is also true that the variety, substance and the relevance of information disposed to public opinion relate to the national security issues. Mythen and Walcate (2006) blame a lack of clarity and precision about the veracity of media reports for resulting in confusion and undue public concern.

We commonly understand culture as a network of communications through established behavior patterns (Capra, 2002: 71). Societal cultures reside in an unconscious asset of value and beliefs. Hofstede (1984) one of the first founders of the concept of organizational culture, defines it as: "Culture is collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others." He points out that culture is the always-collective phenomenon, but it differentiates through different masses. According to Hofstede (2001: 15) are cultural behavior patterns broad tendencies to prefer certain things to others. They manifest in values and beliefs that can realize as a distinct behavior patterns. We can observe these patterns and recognize them in risky situations or the cases loaded with change and uncertainty. When it comes to such situation people, behave according to their risk avoiding or accepting risk behavior pattern. Hofstede (2001) argues that uncertainty avoidance is a part of a cultural behavior pattern in all societies. The uncertainty avoidance is somewhat the extent to which a society feels threatened by unsure and ambiguous situations and consequently, searches for statutory structures.

In real life, people usually avoid risk in the uncertainty situations. When they cannot avoid it, their feelings of a threat become stronger. Because of a threat, they reject novel situations trying to stick to the well-tested behavior patterns that were successful in the past and gave them a sense of safety and security. Hofstede (1990) differentiates high and low-risk uncertain avoidance cultures. People, who live in high avoidance cultures, react more emotionally to threat and prefer to follow explicit procedures and formal rules to avoid risk. For them the different

situations are dangerous and to be avoided (Hofstede, 2001). De Becker (2002: 26) has an explanation of this avoidance. For him risk denial can be seductive, but it has an insidious effect. It is a kind of a save-now-pay-later scheme. Besides, it is like a contract written entirely in small print. In the end, the denying person knows the truth. This reality causes a constant low-grade anxiety. When the people who repress the fear face the new and threatening situations, they feel very vulnerable.

Culture has two main tasks: integrating individuals into an effective whole and adapting and efficiently to the external environment. It is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that social group learned in the process of survival. "Today's free-floating fear persists because of a culture that is anxious about change and uncertainty, and continually anticipates the worst possible outcome," argues Furedi (2005). A burgeoning 'culture of fear' has taken root in Western cultures. It operates as a future system through free exchange and flow of information about possible threats. Additionally, it fosters commitment to learning how to manage risks and how to develop effective means to cope with uncertainty.

Intuition and fear

De Becker (2002) proposes that the departure from the imaginative cage leads through the natural world. We can realize natural world through intuition, which is the key to the understanding of the origin of fear. Intuition means 'to guard or to protect'. Additionally, Intuition is receiving input and ideas without knowing exactly how and where you got them. Intuitive inspiration often happens when someone virtually «fuses» in an activity. Kahneman and Klein (2009) argue that the term intuition describes "thoughts and preferences that come to mind quickly and without much reflection." The intuitive system works best when free of the distractions of worry and anxiety (de Becker, 2002: 37). We sometimes disregard and treat intuition with contempt. It is the opponent of logic, which is grounded, explainable, and unemotional, and sparks a process in the natural order. Because the phenomenon of safety and security based on all kinds of fear is so complex and complicated, Intuition becomes increasingly valuable (Naisbitt, 2001). Intuition has many messengers, but the clearest of them is fear. Nothing in our life gets more attention than fear, because it is in our system. When we are in the presence of danger, fear stimulates adrenaline, heats up the lactic acid in our muscles and even gives us cortisol that affects our blood circulation (de Becker, 2002: 39).

Whenever we perceive anything unusual, our defence system reacts, and we automatically think about danger. We discard irrelevant information and value the meaningful that includes signals to our survival. With the fear, we listen, gaze, and address the risk. Our imaginations are very fertile soil for worries and anxiety. Something, what we imagine, cannot be happening in our presence at the very moment. Therefore, we cannot perceive it. The same thing is with fear. If we fear something, we have the reliable evidence that it is not happening in our presence right now (de Becker, 2002: 40). Fear summons predictions and tells us what comes next. When we honour intuitive signals and evaluate them without denial, we can relax, even in troubled times. As soon as we accept the intuition as a survival signal, we can quickly evaluate the situation, and fear stops.

Thus, trusting intuition is the exact opposite of living in fear. Society has trained us to believe that we cannot protect ourselves. It also teaches us that officials and professionals know what is the best is for us. That is why we come to believe that we will find the certainty outside ourselves. De Becker (2002: 39) summarizes this notion: 'What we can find is the illusion of certainty, particularly if that's what we're willing to settle for'. If something is not certain, it is risky. Risk produces feelings of fear, anxiety and uncertainty (de Becker, 2002: 17; Lupton, 1999). Risk has been for decades associated with the class, but in post-industrial, fragmented risk-societies risk has become the concern of every individual (Mythen and Walkate, 2006). Individual's notion of risk becomes paramount, and we have to explore it more thoroughly. De Becker (2002: 25) states: "As individuals we always keep space in our collective mind reserved for things that frighten us, and that area must be kept occupying." We always perceive some danger and fear resulting from it. From all the dangers, nowadays the terrorism and economic crises have the highest priority.

Powerlessness

The way the modern society operates, diminishes the influence a human being has on his or her life. On the other hand, modern society is extremely permissive, except in important matters where the system regulates behaviour. Strict regulations often provoke fear that connects political processes and everyday emotional topographies. The question is if the feeling fearful adequately reflects the contemporary condition in a modern society. Glassner (1999) established the construct "culture of fear". He argues that people and organizations manipulate the perceptions of people and profit from the emerging anxiety. His research implies that people today feel more fearful than three decades ago, and this is the fertile ground for the development of social panics. Glassner

(1990) reference to Alfred Hitchcock, who said “There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it.”, shows the way how culture of fear emerges.

Glassner (1990: 260) examined the pathology of fear that affects all segments of the modern society. According to his research, people often overburden themselves with overblown fears and serve the interests of various individuals and groups. That happens, because people and organizations often manipulate our anxieties and our views of and responses to life, as it really is not. These groups are political groups, which have an interest in crime, and advocacy groups that raise money from inflating the prevalence of concrete and phantom-diseases. Myths and the hazards as the result of a fear demand the enormous amount of time and money each year.

Glassner research findings (1990: 10) reveal that journalists play the complex role as proponents and doubters of widespread fears. Further, he conducted a comprehensive quantitative research on why the Americans fear the wrong things. He found out that many fears are unfounded. For example, people spend about a third of their lifetime driving a car. They are all afraid of a killer - drivers who supposedly threaten them every day. Citing Philadelphia Daily news (1995), Glassner (1999: 9) reveals, that the majority of severely injured or killed in everyday car accidents are the result of the driving of stressed-out drivers. Such drivers have abandoned civil roadway behavior. Another example is the “metaphoric illnesses”. People believe in metaphoric illnesses because they help them justify fears, prejudices, and political ideologies they hold (Glassner, 1999: 153).

Based on the discussion about the notion of fear we outline the hypotheses. They describe the relationship between the concept of fear, the mistrust and the intuition, and the feeling of powerlessness for people who perceive threats in a modern society:

H1: People who perceive a threat from media reporting criminal deeds develop the feeling of powerlessness.

H2: When people do not trust each other in a society, they develop their powerlessness.

H3: People who use thoughts and preferences that come to their mind quickly and without much reflection have a feeling of powerlessness.

These hypotheses base on the assumption that when an individual feel fear, he or she will develop stronger feelings of powerlessness.

Methodology

Sample and instrument

Our research took place in January 2012. We picked the respondents randomly in all regions of Slovenia. We used quantitative method design to address the research question based on the current state of the literature on the topic. Thus, to address the research question, we created the survey instrument with close-ended and unstandardized questions. By interviewing the respondents, we gained some understanding as to how they perceive everyday threats and what are the factors that affect their feelings of powerlessness.

Data collection

Two hundred and ninety-eight randomly sampled Slovenian citizens participated in the study. There were 178 women (59, 75 %) and 125 men (41, 25 %) in the sample. Their average age was 40 years, and they were from 14 to be 78 years old. Respondents in the sample are distributed by education, Doctorate (N = 1), master degree (N = 5) university degree (N = 238), higher school (N = 42), high school (N = 66), and primary school (N = 14).

Factor analysis

To obtain a small number of factors that account for most of the variability of the 15 variables we used Principal component factor analysis. In this case, our intention was to extract four factors. Together they account for 57, 5347% of the variability in the original data. Since we have selected the principal components method, the initial communality estimates have been set to assume that all of the variability in the data is due to common factors. Table 1 shows the equations, which estimate the common factors after the rotation of factors. We performed a rotation in order to simplify the explanation of the factors. The first rotated factor has the equation:

$$0,719273*67g + 0,795092*67h + 0,788988*67i + 0,737998*67j + 0,041699*82 - 0,0103478*83 + 0,0627126*84 - 0,0166103*85 + 0,00425789*78c + 0,137488*78h + 0,129191*78i + 0,0130532*o56 + 0,166357*o57 + 0,332442*69o + 0,0877752*70s$$

Table 1: Factor Loadings (Varimax normalized) Principal components

Variables	Notion of fear	Mistrust	intuition	Powerlessness
67g I feel threatened when I hear of corruption in our society.	0,719	-0,074	0,071	0,042
67h I feel threatened when I hear of sex abuse of somebody.	0,795	0,079	0,069	0,125
67i I feel threatened when I hear of terrorism act.	0,789	0,077	0,080	0,079
67j I feel threatened when I hear of hijacking somebody.	0,738	-0,002	0,097	0,209
82 Strangers are welcomed in our society when we have to decide impartially.	0,042	0,683	-0,067	0,016
83 We feel more closeness with strangers than with our neighbours and acquaintances.	-0,010	0,774	0,050	0,079
84 Strangers understand us better and empower our feeling of security.	0,063	0,815	0,165	0,067
85 We trust visiting strangers more in our country than our citizens we meet every day.	-0,017	0,693	0,214	0,214
78c When I listen and watch about different sources of threat to our society I get the feeling of cheerfulness.	0,004	0,177	0,590	0,287
78h When I listen and watch about different sources of threat to our society I get stomach sickness.	0,137	0,020	0,819	0,064

Variables	Notion of fear	Mistrust	intuition	Powerlessness
78i When I listen and watch about different sources of threat to our society I hesitate a lot.	0,129	0,090	0,755	0,107
o56. The first thing in the morning, when I woke up, is the thought about dangers that await me through the day.	0,013	0,130	0,155	0,737
o57. I have a feeling that there is no safe place for me.	0,166	-0,007	0,203	0,746
69o When I think about all threats in our society, the fear creeps in me and provokes the feelings that I am not safe.	0,332	0,223	-0,047	0,562
the 70s Our society undermines the individuals that are capable of taking care of themselves.	0,088	0,055	0,100	0,616
Expl.Var	2,504	2,337	1,773	2,017
Pp.Total	0,167	0,156	0,118	0,134

The values of the variables in the equation are standardized variables. We obtained them by subtracting their means and dividing them by their standard deviations. It also shows the estimated communities, which is the proportion of the variability in each variable attributable to the extracted factors. With the solution to retain four factors in the factor analysis, we produced the most interpretable results. We named the first factor "Notion of fear". Factor explains 25,360 % of the variance. The contents of the factor reveal that the media information about sex abuse, terrorism, hijacking and corruption develop the notion of fear in the respondents. The second factor that explains 14,616 % of the variance described the generation of mistrust in Slovene society and got the name: "Mistrust". According to the items, in the factor the consequence of the distrust between the citizens reflects the high trust to strangers. The items that describe the role of intuition in the forming of the perceptions of fear gathered in the third factor that explains 9,797 % of the variance. Items in the factor with the name: "Intuition" reveal that threats that media introduce provoke stomach sickness, hesitation and

cheerfulness of the respondents. The details that explain the feeling of powerlessness gathered in the fourth factor that explains 7,762 % of the variance. Powerlessness in the factor describes that there is no safe place.

Multiple regression and model building

The objective of our research was to examine how culture of fear influences the feeling of powerlessness in the respondents in our study. We regressed the dimensions of culture of fear on powerlessness. The model consists of three independent variables: Notion of fear, Mistrust and Intuition and the dependent variable named Powerlessness. To analyse this relationship, we used multiple regression.

Table 2: Results of the regression analysis

R ² (adjusted for d. f.)	24,0401 percent
Standard Error of Est.	0,66628
Mean absolute error	0,523787
Durbin-Watson statistic	1,93487 (P=0,2858)
Lag 1 residual autocorrelation	0,0293634

The R-Squared statistic indicates that the model as fitted explains 24, 7947% of the variability in Powerlessness. The adjusted R-squared statistic, which is more suitable for comparing models with different numbers of independent variables, is 24, 0401%. The standard error of the estimate shows the standard deviation of the residuals to be 0, 66628.

Table 3: Analysis of variance

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Model	43,7618	3	14,5873	32,86	0,0000
Residual	132,735	299	0,443929		
Total (Corr.)	176,497	302			

The mean absolute error (MAE) of 0,523787 is the average value of the residuals. The Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic tests the residuals to determine if there is any significant correlation based on the order in which they occur in your data file. Since the P-value is greater than 0, 05, there is no indication of serial autocorrelation in the residuals of the 95, 0% confidence level. In determining whether we can simplify the model, we observed that the highest P - value on the independent variables is 0, 0003, belonging to Mistrust. Since the P-value is less than 0, 05, that term is statistically significant at the 95, 0% confidence level. Consequently, we have retained all variables in the model. The

output of a regression model shows the results of fitting a multiple linear regression model to describe the relationship between Powerlessness and three independent variables. The equation of the fitted model is:

$$\text{Powerlessness} = 0,719633 + 0,253919 * \text{Notion of fear} + 0,191858 * \text{Mistrust} + 0,236414 * \text{Intuition}$$

Since the P-value in the ANOVA table is less than 0,05, there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables at the 95,0% confidence level.

Table 4: Estimates of the regression model

		Standard	T	
Parameter	Estimate	Error	Statistic	P-Value
CONSTANT	0,719633	0,204613	3,51704	0,0005
Notion of fear	0,253919	0,0438353	5,79256	0,0000
Mistrust	0,191858	0,0524552	3,65757	0,0003
Intuition	0,236414	0,0519717	4,54891	0,0000

Independent variable “Notion of fear” has the highest correlation in the model (Beta = 0,253; P = 0,0005). Since the relationship between this variable and independent variable Powerlessness is statistically significant and positive, we can confirm the first hypothesis in the model: “H1: “People who perceive threat from media reporting criminal deeds develop the feeling of powerlessness.” Further, independent variable: »Intuition” has a little lower correlation in the model (Beta = 0,236; P = 0,0000). Since the relationship between this variable and independent variable Powerlessness is statistically significant and positive, we can confirm the first hypothesis in the model: “H2: When people do not trust each other in a society they develop their powerlessness.”

“Mistrust” has the lowest correlation in the model (Beta = 0,192; P = 0,0003). We can conclude that the relationship between this variable and independent variable Powerlessness is statistically significant and positive. Again, we can confirm the third hypothesis: “H3: People who use thoughts and preferences that come to their mind quickly and without much reflection have a feeling of powerlessness.”

Further, we wanted to detect the severe multicollinearity between the coefficients in the model.

Table 5 shows estimated correlations between the coefficients in the fitted model. We can use these correlations to detect the presence of severe multicollinearity, i.e., correlation amongst the predictor variables.

Table 5: Correlation matrix for coefficient estimates

	CONSTANT	Fear	Mistrust	intuition
CONSTANT	1,0000	-0,5612	-0,5366	-0,3007
Notion of fear	-0,5612	1,0000	-0,0271	-0,2123
Mistrust	-0,5366	-0,0271	1,0000	-0,2404
Intuition	-0,3007	-0,2123	-0,2404	1,0000

In this model case, there are no correlations with absolute values greater than 0, 5 (not including the constant term).

Table 6: Further ANOVA for Variables in the Order Fitted

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-Ratio	P-Value
Fear	23,9402	1	23,9402	53,93	0,0000
Mistrust	10,6355	1	10,6355	23,96	0,0000
intuition	9,18605	1	9,18605	20,69	0,0000
Model	43,7618	3			

Table 6 shows the statistical significance of each variable in the regression model.

Discussion

Results of our research confirm the first hypothesis that the people who are frightened from media information reporting criminal deeds develop the feelings of powerlessness. De Becker (2002: 10) supports these conclusions and argues that fear is often the result of imagination that place people in terrifying situations. He argues that it is extremely difficult to be anxious all the time. Nelson Mandela was remarkably comfortable with this notion, when he once said, “As we liberate from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” England and Simon (2010) on the contrary, believe that we must “begin from the understanding that fear is not recognizable, nor quite evident... (It) is different, dynamic and open to interpretation.” However, Furedi (2002) investigations show that fear has become an influential force that often dominates the popular imagination. For him the blaming of media for the making of “culture of fear” is unfounded. Given the increased threat of personal and social life for people all over the world, maintaining a positive feeling of safety and security is one crucial aspect of their active participation in all segments of social life.

Subjective norms often generate mistrust between the people in the modern society. We can confirm the second hypothesis that when people do not trust each other, they feel powerless.

One would expect perceived threats to influence the feelings of powerlessness, but only if the perceiver shares perceived threats. For instance, social network may act as the initiator of the perceived threats that may even not exist. Furedi (2005) points out the culture in a modern society that is anxious about change and uncertainty. According to him, such a culture continually anticipates the worst possible outcome. Our respondents have more trust in strangers than in their co-citizens. Such a state generates dangerous scenarios that aim to the adverse outcomes. Suspicion or mistrust has a negative connotation. People feel guilty about it. In our case, it is the core element of the conviction of the respondents that only the strangers in our society deserve trust. According to de Becker (2002: 62), suspicion is curiosity with the added intuitive instruction to keep watching. Hubbard (2003) talks about ambient fear towards life in general – people consider even everyday acts as risky.

The third hypothesis confirms that people who use thoughts and preferences that come to their mind quickly and without much reflection do not perceive control over their feelings of safety. Weak control leads to the powerless state of mind. Factors that may come into consideration include perceived ability of the individual that he or she differentiates between real and imagined threats. When people free themselves of anxiety and worry embedded in a culture of fear, they can use their intuition to examine and categorise risks. In addition, categorized threats can serve them as a framework to interpret and to select the variety of experiences with it.

A proper understanding of fear and threats is a product of the imagination of our making. The pathology of fear in contemporary national society and globally affects all segments of society. The crisis of causality shapes the fearful subject. However, to address simply the emotions of fear is not enough. According to Furedi (2005), fear plays an essential role in twenty-first-century consciousness. We cultivated specific fears in our study and found out that the respondents perceive them as real on the personal and the collective level. Mastering the anxiety is a prevailing dimension of culture of fear, when mutual threats are refined and cultivated.

Quiet fears of the everyday life mix with concerns about terrorism, war, corruption in a shape of the financial crisis, business fraud, genetic engineering, environmental pollution and more. It is evident that fear saturates personal and social spaces of everyday life and affects all segments of society. Respondents do not categorise fear because they do not feel competent enough to do it. It is the situation when imagined

fears become reality. People develop heedful behaviour and try to rely on the external help of government and professional organizations. Here we must point out the Furedi view of fear citing Elias (1982). According to Furedi, Elias made the most significant contribution to the notion of fear in society. Elias (1982) linked fear to the structures of society. Fear is for him a crucial mechanism that transmits structures of society to individual psychological functions. When people internalize the fear, it becomes part of their history and a part of their relations to other persons. On the other hand, we heavily influence intuition on the way, that different media present it. Individual fears are less and less the outcome of direct experience. Media made it abstract and alienated from real life.

Our study confirms the influence of media on perception of threats. Nevertheless, fear is always individual, fragmented, and experienced in an atomised form. However, risks are universal, spread through all societies in the global world. When we define fear today, something unspecific, like risk, adventure, stress, disorder, victimization, and trauma comes out. Besides, emotional and behavioural formulae of everyday life manage actual view of fear and threats. It is evident that there is not much room for personal categorizing of risks and efficient use of intuition. Getting to grip with fear in contemporary society will require assessment of the impact of these groups on fear. The influence of different threats to people is the consequences of the various social groups' activities. That elaborates Furedi's argument that fear is a social phenomenon, which is shaped by cultural norms in contemporary society. Today's vocabulary associated with defines and influences our notion of fear.

To avoid exaggeration about an influence of culture on the perception of fear, we must take into consideration the fact that every misfortune and every threat is not the problem. It relates to various events and phenomena that produce different meaning. Many fears are rather the consequences of change and novelty. Building on novelty seeking, fear can be positive and desired experience in personal and social development. Fear shapes and makes our identities, and develops them. Sociological understanding of fear is a complex phenomenon, which requires the research of cultural background and the emotions that link it to the culture and circumstances.

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