"Explaining the Gender Gap in Fear of Crime:

Assessing the Relative Effects of Gender on Risk and Fear of Crime"*

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ABSTRACT: In the fear of crime literature there is a consensus that female gender is the strongest predictor of fear of crime and that, despite their lower objective risk of victimization, women consistently report higher levels of fear. In this paper, I aim to uncover what accounts for the gender disparity in fear of crime. I apply a risk assessment model (Ferraro 1995) to fear of crime and explore how gender influences assessments of risk for both men and women. Following from this perspective, to account for the gender disparity on reported fear of crime at neighborhood level, I assess if perceived risk – indicated by serious crime – operates differently for men and women. Relying on quantitative data this paper attempts to unravel the role of gender on fear of crime and perceived risk of victimization. The quantitative data is provided by a 1998 survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety" which interviews residents in twelve U.S. cities. This approach will provide a fuller understanding of the effects of gender on fear of crime.

Introduction

In research on fear of crime one of the most consistent findings is the greater level of fear reported by women as compared with men. Indeed one might point to a verifiable 'gender gap' in fear of crime. There is little doubt that gender does have a significant impact on reported levels of fear. Sex is the strongest predictor of fear of crime and that, despite their lower objective risk of victimization[1], women consistently report higher levels of fear (Bennet and Flavin 1994; Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Lebowitz 1975; Liska, Sanchirico and Reed 1988; Stafford and Galle 1984; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Warr 1984). However, the interesting question is not whether or not gender influences fear of crime, but rather *how* and *why*.

Seeking to fathom this gender gap, in this paper I am interested in uncovering the conditions under which gender shapes fear of crime. Given that women have higher levels of reported fear of crime, what accounts for these differences? In this paper I apply the same theoretical model to explore the determinants of fear of crime for men and women. With this

[1] In 2000 males have been victims of violent offenses at higher rates than females, 32.9 and 23.2 per 1,000 persons age twelve and older respectively. Rape and sexual assault are exceptions to this gender pattern.

approach I can document the influence of sex on fear of crime and assess if risk and other variables operate differently by gender. The model developed here reflects two complimentary theories, the social disorganization and "broken windows" (Skogan 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982) and risk assessment theories (Ferraro 1995). Given that people can be expected to use ecological conditions to inform calculations of risk, my study will explore the individual assessments of risk and their relationship to fear of crime.

It is not enough to merely state that there is a difference or correlation between gender and fear of crime, but rather, in order to understand the gender disparity one needs to approach this problem through mechanismic analysis. Causual mechanisms are the "nuts and bolts, cogs and wheels" of explanation (Elster 1989). Rather than be satisfied with the correlation between gender and reported fear of crime, I am trying to uncover the social mechanisms of this widely documented finding. Why do women report higher levels of fear of crime? Does the proximate social environment matter – do neighborhood level factors matter differently for women?

Fear of crime varies by ecological conditions and situational contexts. Risks are not randomly distributed but concentrated at particular times and spaces. Given that peopleinterpret ecological conditions as signals to inform risk (Ferraro 1995); fear of crime varies according to both individual vulnerability and situational variables. The risk assessment model developed here leads to the proposition that subjective evaluations of *vulnerability* are strong indicators of fear of crime. This means, for example, that it is not gender per se, that leads to fear of crime, but the interaction of these categorical identities with specific risk factors. These factors are *individual* (e.g., race, sex, age, prior victimization), *social* (e.g., social networks, social capital), *environmental* (e.g., disorder, crime) and *institutional* (e.g., police).

In this paper I attempt to explore the relationship between gender and fear of crime. The

goal of this paper is to provide a better account of the gender disparity in predicting fear of crime. To the extent that gender is more or less significant in one model and not the other, this research will be able to specify fear of crime for men and women. I predict that fear of crime will tend to be higher for women due to a greater sensitivity to perceived risk of victimization, particularly driven by sexual assaults, which will, in turn, influence women's decisions to employ risk reduction tactics meant to lower that risk. The analyses presented in this paper rely on a theoretically driven model of fear of crime which separates the process of fear of crime and the consequences in an attempt to gain better understanding of the ways in which fear of crime affects men and women differently.

Measuring Fear of Crime

The fear of crime is clearly a complex phenomenon. It constitutes a variety of subjective responses to crime including the assessment of risk to one's self, significant others, and property. In previous treatments, fear of crime includes a range of subjective states from irrational responses to vague threats, to media-driven anxiety, to gender specific anxiety, to personal evaluation of perceived threat or risk. Under the general rubric of fear of crime, researchers have sometimes conflated these diverse factors leading to concern over definition and conceptualization.

A variety of approaches have been used to study of fear of crime, including a single item question(from either the National Crime and Victimization Survey (NCVS)[2] or the General Social Survey (GSS)[3]) which tried to capture a generalized neighborhood fear of crime on the part of the respondents. Several researchers noted that there are significant problems with this

[2]The NCVS asks respondents "How safe do you feel or would you feel being alone in your neighborhood at night? During the day?"

[3] The GSS asks respondents AIs there any area right around here-that is, within a mile or so-where you would be afraid to walk at night?@

measure of fear of crime (Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Belyea and Zingraff 1988; Ferraro and LaGrange 1987; Garofalo and Laub 1978; LaGrange and Ferraro 1989; Stafford and Galle 1984) and responded by investigating specific fears (Bankston et al. 1987; Warr and Stafford 1983) including fear of personal violence (Reiss, 1998; Zimring and Hawkins, 1997). Other studies differentiated fear from perceived risk (Ferraro 1996; Warr and Stafford 1983) and identified trust as an underlying factor (Walklate, 1998). Qualitative researchers have found local variations in neighborhood histories and conditions (Merry 1981; Suttles1968).

In this study I rely on a measure of fear of crime that tries to focus on a specific context in which an individual may fear crime. Predictors of neighborhood fear - experienced in the immediate local context – may operate differently for men and women. Proximate social conditions may provide different signals of risk for male and female neighborhood residents Given that individuals reside in their neighborhood and are probably more familiar with their own neighborhoods and its risks than other areas of the city, assessing gender differences in neighborhood fear of crime may uncover the source of the gender gap.

Theorizing Fear of Crime: Expanding the Risk Assessment Model

Many researchers find that people living in neighborhoods plagued by high crime rates experience higher levels of fear than those in low crime areas (Skogan 1990; Wilson and Kelling 1982). According to Skogan (1990), two categories of disorder physical[4] and social are associated with fear of crime. Both types of disorder are considered visible Asigns of crime @(LaGrange, Ferraro and Supancic 1992; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Stinchcombe et al. 1980) indicating that social control mechanisms within the neighborhood have broken down (Lewis

[4] Symptoms of physical disorder include abandoned cars/buildings, rundown buildings, poor lighting, overgrown shrubs/trees, trash, and empty lots. Symptoms of social disorder include public drinking, public drug use, public drug sales, vandalism or graffiti, prostitution, pan-handling/begging, loitering, truancy, and transients/homeless sleeping on the street.

and Salem 1986; Skogan 1990). Weakening social controls can also increase vulnerability to crime (Bennett and Flavin, 1994; Taylor and Covington, 1993). According to Wilson and Kelling (1982) Abroken windows" and other incivilities signal disorder, elevating feelings of anxiety. Thus, fear of crime can be seen as a consequence of the >erosion of social control= in a community. Such incivilities have adverse effects on the individuals within the neighborhood, the community as a whole, as well as the entire city (Covington and Taylor 1991; Lewis and Salem 1986).

Another way to think of broken windows is in terms of signaling. Individuals both interpret and transmit social signals which inform responses to immediate concerns (Schelling 1978). Given that actors always have to reach decisions in situations of imperfect information, 'broken windows' may provide a clear, if misleading, signal of elevated risk. Perceptions about neighborhood conditions, including physical and social disorder, should be associated with higher risk of harassment or victimization. Hence, fear of crime would tend to be higher for residents in neighborhoods plagued with high levels of crime, neighborhood deterioration and disorganization. But with its emphasis on how physical and social disorder signal threats to perceptive individuals, the incivility hypothesis is better understood as a part of a broader risk assessment model.

The model proposed in this paperbuilds on the pioneering work of Ferraro. In his work he explored the effect of objective and perceived risk on fear of crime. Although fear of crime is not solely a function of perceived risk (Warr and Stafford 1983), it is considered a necessary and powerful variable in the equation (Ferraro 1996). His findings suggest that the fear of crime is mostly mediated throughsubjective risk,which he measures as the perceived like lihood of victimization. Accordingly, those who perceive their likely victimhood to be high will have

higher fear of crime. What this perspective does not uncover however is the process whereby individuals perceive themselves at risk. How do individuals come to decisions about probable victimization? I argue that actors tend to assess their risks in light of the environmental conditions that signal risk, such as serious crime in the neighborhood and perceived personal vulnerability. This perspective would tend to predict that fear of crime will be high if perceived risk of victimization is also high.

Throughout this analysis I rely on a model for fear of crime including relevant socio-demographic variables and perceptions about local conditions and risks. In the theoretical model used here I rely on socio-demographic characteristics and certain neighborhood conditions that have been identified as predictors of fear of crime from previous research as well as include additional variables, such as risk indicator, a measure of resident's satisfaction with the police and a whether or not a resident is well informed about crime investigated in my work (For a more detailed discussion of the theoretical model and included variables see Snedker, ms). In this paper I start with the assumption that understanding fear of crime for women is *not* fundamentally different from fear of crime for men. In fact I rely on the same theoretical framework to explore fear of crime regardless of sex. In this way I will be able to compare theoretically-driven models for women and men separately and try to identify differences in predictors for men and women. Relying on a risk assessment model of fear of crime I hypothesize that subjective risk is central to fear of crime and this may be even more important in explaining the differences for men and women. My model of fear of crime can be used to understand women *and* men's fear of crime and directly addresses the apparent gender disparity.

Data

In this paper I analyze data provided by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau

of Justice Statistics entitled "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities, 1998" (CVPCS). This dataset is the result of a partnership between the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to collect city-level information on criminal victimization, perceptions, and satisfaction with police. These types of questions were added to the preexisting questionnaire from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). This survey data includes three parts: household-level data, person-level data, and incident-level data. However, only individual-level dataare analyzed in this paper.

The twelve cities included in the CVPCS are Chicago, IL, Kansas City, MO, Knoxville, TN, Los Angeles, CA, Madison, WI, New York, NY, San Diego, CA, Savannah, GA, Spokane, WA, Springfield, MA, Tucson, AZ, and Washington, DC. (See Appendix 1, Table 1). In order to compile a dataset that represents varying stages of development of community policing, cities were partially selected based on the police department level of community policing. The target population was individuals residing within the city boundaries in each of the twelve cities. The population universe for this survey included individuals aged twelve and older. Approximately eight hundred households within each city were contacted through random-digit dialing procedures (RDD) and telephone interviews were conducted. The final sample used in this analysis is 12,569.[5] Once the data were restricted to those respondents who answered the fear of crime questions, few independent variables suffered from missing cases and a mean substitution

[5] The original CVPCS included 18,514 cases. A total of 5,945 cases were deleted from the dataset due to missing responses for the dependent variable. When comparing the sample of missing from non-missing there were slight differences some of which were significant in chisquare or t-tests. Overall the sample I am using is significantly older, includes more women and nonwhites and non-Hispanics than the original sample as the lower educated, men, nonwhites and Hispanics were more likely to give missing responses for the fear of crime questions. Not surprisingly many of the respondents who did not answer the fear of crime questions also did not answer a large number of other questions. Thus once the cases were excluded many of the other variables no longer had missing data. Those who answered the three behavioral outcome questions were not significantly different when comparing the missing verses non-missing for the fear of crime questions.

procedure was used to fill in the missing values.[6] In the statistical analysis a final sample weight was used and a small number of additional cases were deleted when sample weights were introduced.[7]

The advantage of the present dataset is that it allows for an analysis across U.S. cities. Existing fear of crime datasets are either national with broad geographical distinctions (e.g., South, West, Midwest, Northeast, urban and rural) or focus on only a single city or locale. Therefore the representativeness of this sample allows for some generalizations about fear of crime to be made. If these models are consistent across the two measures of the dependent variable, it suggests there may be common underlying factors or causal mechanisms producing fear of crime.

An ideal model would have measures or indicators at multiple levels of analysis. However, in the current analysis I can assess the impact of subjective measures such as perceived serious crime in the neighborhood, perceptions about the police and perceived knowledge about crime. It would be optimal to also include objective measures of neighborhood characteristics as many neighborhood-level variables are potentially crucial factors influencing attitudes and behaviors about crime (Sampson and Bartusch 1999). However, that information is not available at the neighborhood level.[8] Although the variables I include are ultimately at the level of the

[6] Any variable of interest with a large amount of missing was excluded from the analysis as any findings would be highly suspect. For the independent variables that had a few number of missing the average score was input for the missing values. A dummy variable was the created for all variables with any substitutions made. The dummy variables were included in the analysis and if any of the dummy variables were significant then the variable was removed from the analysis.

[7] The final weight was calculated from the following five components: base weight, multiple phone number factor, household noninterview adjustment factor, within household noninterview factor, and population ratio estimate factor. For more information on the weighting/estimation procedures refer to the report prepared by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services published by the U.S. Department of Justice.

[8] Other factors may be relevant such as the composition and integration of the neighborhood residents along class and racial/ethnic lines is of crucial concern. However these variables are not available at the neighborhood level.

individual, when considering the impact of neighborhood conditions on individual reported levels of fear it is the perceptions about neighborhood conditions and their risks that may be most relevant.

Predicting Fear of Crime

Dependent Variable

Neighborhood fear of crime

The dependent variable I consider in this analysis is fear of crime at the neighborhood level. This measure of fear of crime refers to generalized assessment of likely victimhood in the neighborhood. The dependent variable is dichotomous where 36.6% of respondents reported fear of crime.[9]

Independent variables

Gender

Sex is the variable of primary interest in this analysis, although a variety of additional variables shall also be considered. When comparing the sample of men to women a few differences emerge, some of which are significant in chi-square or t-tests. Overall women represent a larger proportion of the total sample and are significantly more fearful than men. The women in the survey are slightly older and more likely to be nonwhite than men whereas men are slightly more educated, married and include more prior victims of both violent and property crimes. Men and women in the sample had insignificant differences on the other characteristic. Sex is measured dichotomously and the sample is 55% female and 45% male. Sex is expected to be significant. A complete list and description of the variables, their coding schemes and their means for men and women are provided in Table1.

[9]For the neighborhood level, the first category includes those who report being not at all fearful (24.2%) and not very fearful (39.1%) and the second category includes those who report being somewhat fearful (31.5%) and very fearful (5.2%).

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Age

Age is also identified as another significant predictor of fear of crime (Clemente and Kleiman 1976; Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garofalo 1978), although the direction is debated. Some researchers claim that the elderly are more fearful due to their greater physical and social vulnerability (Bachman 1992) reflecting an *evaluation of risk* given environmental surroundings or victimization experiences (Jaycox 1978). Moreover, a disproportionately high number of the elderly are women (Baumer 1978). Alternatively, other researchers assert that younger respondents are more fearful or that there is a curvilinear relationship (Ferraro 1995; Garofalo and Laub 1978; Moeller 1989; Ortega and Myles 1987). Younger respondents may be more fearful due to higher *objective risk*[10] and lifestyle choices and routine activities that place them in dangerous settings increasing their *perception of risk.* Age is a continuous variable where one unit increase is measured in terms of a year change. I included a quadratic term for age as is conventional in this type of analysis to capture possible curvilinearity. The average age of the sample is approximately 43 years old ranging from 16 to 90 years old.

Education

Education level is a powerful predictor in employment outcomes and subsequent income. Although my data do not permit a direct test of income[11] on fear of crime, including the education level variable serves as a rough proxy for life chances and possibly an influential

[10] In general, younger people are more likely to experience a violent crime than any other age group (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000). The rate of violent victimization for the age group twelve to fifteen was 60.1 per 1,000 persons, 64.4 for the age group sixteen to nineteen, 49.5 for twenty to twenty-four, 34.9 for twenty-five to thirty-four, thirty-four to forty-nine, 13.7 for fifty to sixty-four, and 3.7 for sixty-five and older.

[11] Income levels and fear of crime are found to be inversely correlated (Skogan and Maxfield 1981). That is to say, that lower-income individuals experience higher levels of fear of crime than higher income people. Researchers find that residents living in poverty are more fearful and express higher levels of vulnerability than better-off respondents (Pantazis 2000).

variable independently. One can partially ascribe the effect of income and possibly education on fear of crime to the fact that low-income, poorly educated individuals are more likely to be confronted with crime and disorder in their daily lives than higher income, highly educated people. Thus education should have a negative association with fear of crime. I have created four dummy variables reflecting four major categorical distinctions: less than high school (11.8%), high school (26.8%), some college (26.4%), and four or more years of college (35.0%).[12] The average number of years of education completed for the sample is 13.9.

Race and ethnicity

According to the literature on fear of crime, black respondents are said to express higher levels of fear than their white counterparts which appears to be in line with a higher *objective risk* of victimization (Clemente and Kleiman 1977; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Stinchcombe et al. 1980).[13] Prior research has not included Hispanic or other ethnic identities into statistical analyses of fear of crime, although ethnic membership may work in similar ways to race. Research suggests that both whites and blacks exhibit fear in response to crime-related concerns and that race and ethnicity are important in shaping the way danger is interpreted (Merry 1981). On the other hand, blacks and Latinos may be more "streetwise" (Anderson 1990) with local knowledge that lowers fear of crime. Race is measured dichotomously comparing whites to non-whites. Unfortunately I was unable to explore differences across racial categories due to limited number of certain races and reluctantly created a dichotomous variable comparing white to non-

[12] At first I considered education as a continuous variable measured years of education completed. However, there may not be a linear relationship between education and fear of crime. The effect of one additional year of education may not have the same effect at every point. Any potential nuances in this variable will be better captured by a set of binary variables as opposed to a continuous variable.

[13] Per every 1,000 persons 35 blacks, 25 whites and 21 persons of other races were victims of a violent crime. Blacks also experienced higher rates of property crime than whites and other race. The rate of victimization for Hispanics is 28 per 1,000 persons, falling from 63. Moreover, property rates were higher among Hispanics than non-Hispanic households (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000).

whites. The majority of the sample (73%) consists of whites.[14] Hispanics represent 10% of the sample and are compared to non-Hispanics.

Marital Status

Married individuals, especially women may be more fearful of crime as they may conflate their own concerns with those of their families.[15] However single individuals may be more vulnerable as they tend to be younger, may have fewer resources and live in riskier circumstances, thus elevating fears. If marital status turns out to have a negative association with fear of crime and single individuals have higher levels of fear then this variable might be an indicator of living alone. Given the possibility for multiple explanations I include this variable in the analysis. Marital status is measured dichotomously comparing those who are presently married (47%) to those who are not married (53%).[16]

Direct Victimization

Many researchers state that higher levels of fear persist among people in relation to recent history of personal victimization (Bankston et al. 1987; Belyea and Zingraff 1988; Lee 1982; Moeller 1989; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Stafford and Galle 1984; Wilcox, Rountree, and Land 1996). Since people recall experiences, prior victimization should influence fear of crime. I include a dichotomous measure for being a victim of a property crime or attempted property crime which includes any of the following four crimes: theft, burglary, robbery auto theft and vandalism. I include a dichotomous measure for being a victim of a violent crime or attempted violent crime which includes any of the following three crimes: robbery, assault or sexual

[14] The racial breakdown of the 26.9% of the sample that is non-white is as follows: 17.7% black, 3.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, .7% American Indian, and 5.2% other.

[15] In this analysis I am unable to estimate separate analyses for fear of crime for oneself and for others. I suspect that parents, particularly mothers, would have high fear of crime for their children and spouses, particularly husbands, would have high fear of crime level over concern about their wives.

[16] I considered only those who definitely presently married in the married category. The not presently married category includes widowed (6.2%), divorced (11.8%), separated (2.7%) and never married (32.2%).

assault. In the sample 39% were victims of at least one property crime or attempted property crime while 7% were victims of a violent crime or attempted violent crime. I also consider the effect of these crimes separately.

Informed about crime

Indirect victimization or vicarious victimization can also be a powerful predictor in fear of crime (Lee 1982; Ferraro 1995).[17] In this analysis I cannot include any measures of indirect victimization per se[18]; however, I include a social capital indicator. There are different forms of social capital (Coleman 1990) many of which are relevant to fear of crime research, primarily increasing involvement in neighborhood and community associations or organizations and personal networks. How embedded an individual is in local networks will effect their access to local knowledge and information and their assessments about risks. Individuals who talk with their neighbors learn more about crime and local conditions and can better evaluate their risks than those who are isolated. Accordingly, the more well-informed an individual considers oneself the less likelythey should be to fear crime. This variable is a binary measure and 72% of the respondents considered themselves to be well informed about crime.

Physical and social disorder

Perceptions about neighborhood disorder are scale variables with one unit representing an additional disorder item reported. The variable physical disorder reflects a cumulative scale ranging from 0 to 5 including the following items: rundown or neglected buildings, poor lighting,

[17] Indirect victimization is measured through whether a family member, close friend or neighbor was victimized recently. Exposure to the mass media and news reports may also inform these perceptions. Studies report that the effect of media coverage and fear of crime depends on the type of media source, the focus of news report, neighborhood area crime rate, socio-demographic characteristics, vulnerability, personal victimization experiences and resonance, and affinity with media victims (Chiricos, Eschholz and Gertz 1997).

[18] Two variables of interest were included in the dataset, those who said they relied on the media to inform them about crime and those that got their information about crime from knowing a victim. There were too many missing cases in these variables to rely on these measures to produce accurate and reliable findings.

overgrown shrubs/trees, trash and empty lots. The variable social disorder reflects a cumulative scale ranging from 0 to 7 including the following items: public drug sales, vandalism or graffiti, prostitution, panhandling/begging, loitering/hanging out, truancy and transients/homeless. In the sample the mean is 1.06 and 1.47 for physical disorder and social disorder respectively.

Police

As representatives of the state, the police are the primary agents of formal social control and a defense against crime. Many urban and criminological studies have claimed that perceptions about the police and interactions between the police and community residents are different according to certain demographic variables and neighborhood location.[19] The level of satisfaction with local police is expected to alter assessments of perceived risk and thus affect the level of fear. The police satisfaction variable is measured either affirmatively or negatively where 87% of the sample reported satisfaction with the police.

Serious crime in the neighborhood

I can not include a perceived risk variable as Ferraro did, because the CVPCS did not specifically ask how likely is it that you will be a victim of crime. However, whether or not a respondent perceived there to be any serious crime in their neighborhood can serve as a reasonable proxy for subjective risk. The risk indicator included in this analysis is whether or not a respondent perceived there to be any serious crime in the neighborhood.[20] Approximately a third of the sample (35%) reported serious crime in the neighborhood. I also included an

[19]For instance, blacks, Latinos and people with low socioeconomic status are much less satisfied with the police and the law according to a recent attitudinal survey (Sampson and Bartusch 1999). In the aftermath of the Amadou Diallo incident the Harris Poll (2000) reports that African Americans had less favorable ratings of the police in terms of treating all races fairly, police brutality and were afraid of the police.

[20] There was another question, "Do conditions make you feel less safe?" that I wanted to include as another indicator of perceived risk but there were too many missing responses to warrant its inclusion in the final model. However when this variable was included in this analysis using a mean substitution procedure to deal with the missing cases, the effects of this variable were strong and positive in the expected direction. Because the variable for missing responses was also significant it was removed from the model. This evidence is only suggestive but is consistent with the theoretical model employed in this paper.

interaction term between sex and serious crime in order to test for a gender effect.

Methods

In this dataset the dependent variable, fear of crime, is ordered ranging from not at all fearful to very fearful. Given the ordered nature of my dependent variable I considered employing ordinal logistic regression. However, Long argues that "simply because the values of a variable *can* be ordered does not imply that the variable *should* be analyzed as ordinal" (1997: 15).[21] In this case ordinal logistics regression would be appropriate as the categories are clearly ranked from low to high. Yet, my data violated the parallel regression assumption making ordinal logistics regression inappropriate for this analysis. I relied on the Wald test to formally test the assumption of parallel regressions which tests that the coefficients for all variables are simultaneously equal (Long and Freese 2001). Although Long and Freese (2001) suggest other alternatives such as multinomial logistic regression, for the purposes of clarity and concision I employ logistic regression[22] for the analysis in this paper.[23]

I collapse the four categories into two categories: one category includes those who are not at all fearful and not very fearful and the other includes those who are somewhat or very fearful. Although gradations between the different categories are lost, this approach captures the crucial distinction between those who are the side of fearing crime and those that do not.

The strategy I employ to estimate the model is straightforward. I run an analysis on the dependent variable, fear of crime in the neighborhood. The first approach relies on a logistic regression model including sex. I then compare this model to one including an interaction term

[21] For an exposition of ordinal regression see Long 1997.

[22] According to Winship and Ware (1984) binary logistic regression yields consistent estimates of Betas.

[23] Given concerns with model misspecification, I ran multiple models with different assumptions and operationalizations of the dependent variable: including linear regression, ordinal logistic regression and multinomial logistic regression. The results across different regression analyses were consistent; thus I am confident in the findings presented below. Results from different procedures are available form author upon request.

for the relationship between sex and serious crime. Does accounting for how perceived risks may differentially influence men and women get us any closer at understanding the gender gap?

The second approach involves running two separate analyses of the same model, one for women and the other for men. In this way I can compare the significance of particular variables across men and women. Is there a difference in the overall fitness of the model by gender? Is there a difference in the magnitude or direction of any of the independent variables? Do the previous findings persist in models for men and women separately? It may be the case that certain factors are only significant for men or women but its strengths drives the significance in the overall model with sex included.

Given that this is a nested model[24] and individual observations are not independent as they are clustered in cities I have controlled for cities in the statistical analysis.[25] In this way all aspects of the city are controlled for so that the effect of living in one city is the same for all respondents. This approach does not specify what about each city matters but recognizes the need to control for city level differences. Future work will explore such a multi-level analysis.

Results

The first stage of the analysis explores the significance of the sex variable in a risk assessment model of fear of crime. Secondly, I look at how well the additional interaction term predicts fear of crime compared to a model including the full model of documented socio-demographic variables and neighborhood disorder indicators. I report the results in terms of odds ratios which provide some indication about the effect of an independent variable on an outcome variable. In this way we can say that for a unit change in the independent variable the odds are expected to change by a factor of the exp(B), holding all other variables constant.

[24] Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on city.

[25] I included eleven dummy variables in all of the logistic regression models although I do not report the city specific coefficients.

Not surprisingly, in the logistic regression analysis of the risk assessment model (Model 1, Table 2) sex is an extremely powerful variable for both dimensions of fear of crime. The odds of fearing crime are 1.66 times as great for women compared to men In general, individual-level socio-demographic variables and perceptions about neighborhood conditions perform consistently with previous research apart from *age* and *race*.[26]

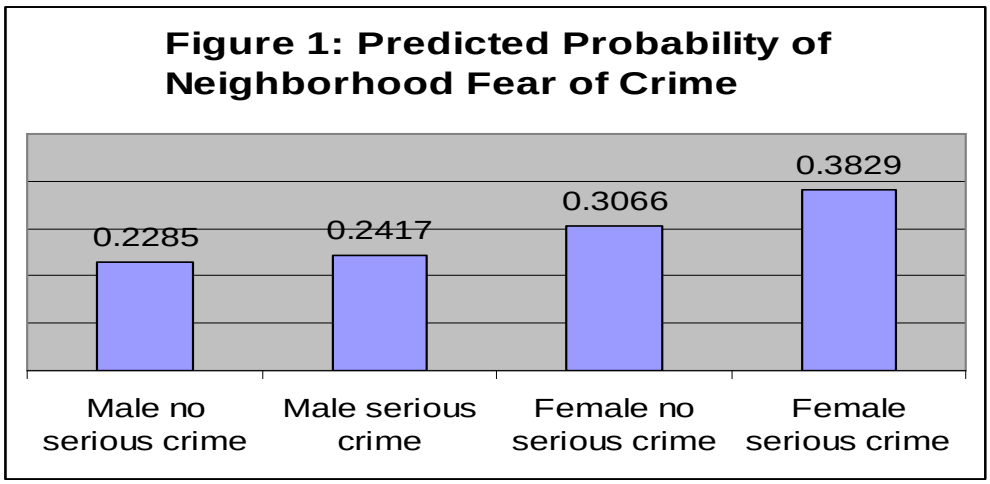
(Insert Table 2)

In Model 2 (Table 2) an interaction term, the product of *serious crime* and *sex*, is included. This assesses if the effects of fear of crime on serious crime – an indicator of perceived risk – are the same for men and for women. In the neighborhood fear of crime model the relative effects of serious crime on fear of crime operate differently for men and for women. The coefficient for the interaction term is significant indicating that the effects of serious crime on fear of crime differ by gender. According to this finding, serious crime has a greater impact on fear of crime for women compared to men, but only for the models predicting neighborhood fear of crime. Hence the inclusion of the interaction term provides an improvement in the level of model fitness.

In order to better assess the impact of serious crime on gender, I generated predicted probabilities for the following four categories: men who reported no serious crime, men who reported serious crime, women who reported no serious crime and women who reported serious crime (See Figure 1). I used all the coefficients from Model 1 keeping all other variables constant with mean values. The general finding is that females who perceive their to be serious

[26] Despite some debate in the literature about the specifics of certain categories, *age* is not positively associated with higher levels of fear. This probably reflects that the effect of age is captured by other variables in the model. Nonwhites are not significantly different from whites in terms of neighborhood-level fear of crime in a model that controls for city. However, in the model that did not control for city, race was significant. This suggests that previous findings on race probably reflected neighborhood or city conditions.

crime in the neighborhood are more likely to fear crime at the neighborhood-level and men who do not perceive serious crime in the neighborhood are least likely to fear crime at the neighborhood-level. Women who perceive serious crime compared to women who do not have significantly greater probabilities of fearing crime. Regardless of perceiving serious crime or not, women are still have a higher predicted probability of fearing crime in the neighborhood. However, the differential impact that serious crime has on neighborhood fear of crime does help to explain part of the gender gap in fear of crime.



To explore the difference between men's and women's fear of crime in greater detail I disaggregated the regression equations of fear of crime by sex (see Table 3). Table 3 is the same as Model 1 on Table 2 except that the regressions are presented separately for men and for women. This procedure is useful in order to compare the full model for men and women and see if they yield similar results.

Overall the risk assessment model explains a comparable amount of the odds of fearing crime to not fearing crime for men and women. However, several interesting findings emerge from the logistic regression analysis in which men and women are analyzed separately. First, *age* is positively associated with higher odds for neighborhood fear of crime for men but not for

women. This suggest that women of varying ages fear crime and thus fearing crime is not specific to older women as some scholars suggest.

Second, *race* and *ethnicity* work differently for men and women in predicting neighborhood fear; non-white men have greater odds of fearing crime and Hispanic women have greater odds of fearing crime. Consistent with previous research (Merry 1981) this finding suggests that the effect of race or ethnicity may shape interpretation of risks at the local level. Given that nonwhites typically live in neighborhoods with higher crime rates than whites they might accurately assess their risks to be higher in their own neighborhoods. Non-whites often live in segregated neighborhoods and black men may assess their risks to be greater in line with their greater likelihood of victimization, given the prevalence of black-on-black crime. Furthermore, black men may be more likely than black women to be engage in routine activities or maneuver in social spaces or areas where they are more likely to be confronted with risks. Alternatively, Hispanic women have significantly higher odds of fearing crime than non-Hispanic women. It may be that Hispanic women living in mixed neighborhoods consider themselves at greater risks for victimization, particularly sexual crimes. Furthermore, if in fact Hispanics, due to language barriers and cultural differences, feel less secure then heightened fear may reflect higher perceived risks.

Third, *prior victimization* significantly increases the odds of fearing crime for men. Surprisingly, it seems that being a *victim of crime* does not increase the likelihood of fear of crime for women. Upon more careful examination of victimization experiences, I discover that men's violent victimization is driven by prior assaults or attempted assaults. For women, although the combined measure of prior violent victimization was not significant, robbery was significant and positively associated with fear of crime. The finding is consistent with Skogan

and Klecka's (1977) finding that robbery was the only victimization experience that had a clear attitudinal effect on fear of crime. Interestingly, for women being a victim of a prior assault significantly reduced the odds of fearing crime and being a victim of a sexual assault was insignificant. There are multiple possible explanations for these curious findings. Ultimately though, they cannot be completely resolved with the present data. Most likely the fluctuation in direction and the differences in crimes can be attributed to the small number of victims of violent crimes. Alternatively, these findings may be due to risk reductions strategies that victims may be more likely to employ to reduce the risk of future victimization. In general, the findings are still consistent with the risk assessment model that men and women with victimization experiences have greater odds of fearing crime.

Fourth, being *well informed about crime* has a more significant effect on women than men. According to the risk assessment model, although information is never complete, the more information a person has to evaluate the better they will be at assessing their risks. In this way those who are better informed would have lower odds of fearing crime. It may be that women are gathering information to protect children and spouses. Perhaps women have more social networks or access to local information from friends, neighbors or organizations.

Fifth, the effect of being *satisfied with the police* is in the expected direction for both sexes but the magnitude is stronger for women. This suggests that women feel more secure when they are satisfied with the police. It may be that women have more information and knowledge about the police in their local area than men and therefore police satisfaction has more of an influence on women's fear of crime.

Finally, and in line with the risk assessment model *serious crime in the neighborhood* increases the odds of fearing crime for women but not for men. This result verifies the effect of

the interaction term and the predicted probability figures mentioned earlier and a more detailed explanation will be provided in the discussion section below.

Discussion

Following the risk assessment, I attempt to explain the gap in reported fear of crime and the greater effect of serious crime on women's fear of crime than on men's fear of crime. Although women are overall less likely to be victimized they are almost exclusively the target of sexual crimes. Perhaps when women perceive serious crime they are concerned with violent crimes, particularly rape. The paradox of women's higher fear has been explained by researchers by fear of rape as a "master offense" which heightens fear of all crimes (Ferraro 1996; Riger, Gordon and Bailly 1978). One can reasonably argue that women may be more sensitive to serious crime, driven by fear of rape.[27] Although rape is a relatively rare event, when taking into account the physical, psychological, and emotional ramifications of rape and its aftermath women may have a reasonably higher risk and thus level of fear. Accordingly, women may, despite, their lower likelihood of rape, given the serious effects, have a heightened but reasonable fear of rape. This gender-specific fear reflects recognition of *higher risk* of a specific violent offense that underlines the vulnerability of women (Hindelang et al. 1978; Young 1992). The theme of increased vulnerability to a broader range of crime has also been noted, including a greater sensitivity to differences in physical strength (Stafford and Galle 1984; Warr 1984). Alternatively, with the gap between male and female violent victimization lessening, coupled with higher rates of sexual assault women's higher rates of fear of crime may be in line with their elevated vulnerability to victimization.

The risk assessment approach used in this analysis confirms the gender difference in

[27] Unfortunately, due to limitation in the survey, I can not directly test for the significance of fear of rape in predicting fear of crime or the likelihood of sexual assault as an indicator of risk.

reported fear of crime from previous research. I can positively identify that part of the gender gap in fear of crime is due to the different risk assessments – perceiving serious crime in the neighborhood. The interaction term illustrates that the impact of serious crime in the neighborhood impacts women's fear of crime translating into a gender difference in fear of crime. Clearly there is still a gender gap even when serious crime is taken into account but this raises the bigger question of why? Why is the perceived presence of serious crime in the neighborhood cause women to express fear at much higher levels than men? I can only offer inferences about the source of these differences.

Women may have higher levels of fear of crime, due to higher perceived risks through signals of neighborhood conditions and personal examinations of vulnerability. It is by recognizing the likelihood, severity and impact of particular risks that accounts for the higher reported fear of crime for women. Both men and women rely on environmental conditions to signal certain risks. However, it seems to be the case that women and men interpret those signals differently and certain factors – serious crime – have a greater impact on fear of crime for one gender or the other. Similar local conditions do not lead to the same reported level of fear of crime at the neighborhood level.

Women are generally the primary caregivers of children and thus have added concerns for the safety of their immediate dependents. Women's higher fear of crime may be a combination of several factors such as heightened risk of specific crimes, concerns for their dependents possible victimization coupled with fear of what will happen to their family if they are hurt in some way. Perhaps it is these family concerns that influence men and women to attend neighborhood watch meetings despite that participating in collective action is highly costly and actors can often gain the same benefit from the work of others without any effort

(Olson 1965). It may be that those who attend receive a greater share of the benefits – greater security. Perhaps women, particularly mothers, are more inclined to invest these costs out of concern for themselves and their family.

Another factor may relate to men's pattern of risk-taking behavior and greater contact with riskier routine activities. Perhaps women are more risk-averse and less likely to participate in risk taking behaviors or maneuver in risky areas or put themselves in risk situations. If this is the case then women, when confronted with conditions that indicate there is in fact serious crime, may be more likely due to less exposure and heightened sensitivity, to asses these conditions more seriously, leading to a larger impact on serious crime.

The next stage of the analysis is to explore the consequences of fear of crime for men and women, specifically behaviors that may mitigate or reduce perceived risk. What is the relationship between fear of crime and particular *behavioral consequences?* In the risk literature there are two ways of handling risk that are relevant to fear of crime: utilizing loss control strategies such as investment in insurance, and risk avoidance (Greene and Trieschmann 1981). In future work, I will examine risk reduction strategies in terms of social and individual investment and risk avoidance. What is of particular interest is if fear of crime has different consequences for men and women. Are women who report fear of crime more likely than men to respond to fear of crime by investing personally or communally or engaging in risk avoidance? A concern among some researchers in the fear of crime literature is that fear of crime has consequences for individuals which women share a heavier burden, having adverse effects on their lives (Madriz 1997). Assessing the outcomes of fear of crime may yield a greater understanding of fear of crime and gender differences. Furthermore, fear may have a feedback effect on risk;feelings of fear can influence future perceptions of risk. The nature and direction

of this relationship requires further examination.

Despite these limitations, this research makes a crucial step towards a better understanding of the gender gap in fear of crime through a large survey of multiple cities across the country. This analysis is theoretically driven but limited by data problems. In this paper I have tried to provide a theoretically influenced model of fear of crime for men and women. Unfortunately, these data only allow for speculations of the theoretical difference between male and female fear of specific crimes. Presently, I can only offer tentative reasons to differential effect of serious crime on men and women

In order to get further underneath these findings I will need to analyze the qualitative data collected as a part of the larger dissertation, primarily sixty in-depth interviews with New York City neighborhood residents about fear of crime and neighborhood conditions which should clarify the present findings. A future version of this paper will be supplemented with qualitative accounts of fear of crime. I am hoping that a careful analysis of these in-depth interviews will shed more light on the differences in fear of crime for men and women and its consequences. From this qualitative data I will be able to explore men and women's perspectives on these issues and provide a better account of the gender gap in fear of crime and better identify casual mechanisms.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Reported Levels of Fear of Crime by Sex (N=12,569)

	Men n=5,665		Women n=6,904		
Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Dependent variables					
Fear of crime					
Neighborhood fear of crime	0.30	0.46	0.42	0.49	1=not fearful; 0= fearful
Independent variables					
Individual-level					
Age	41.96	16.79	43.50	17.27	Age in years
Less than high school	0.11	0.32	0.12	0.33	1=did not graduate from high school
High school graduate[1]	0.24	0.43	0.29	0.45	1=graduated from high school
Some college	0.26	0.44	0.27	0.44	1=some college experience
Four or more years of college	0.38	0.49	0.33	0.47	1=completed at least four years of college
Race	0.24	0.43	0.29	0.45	1=nonwhite; 0=white
Hispanic	0.10	0.30	0.10	0.29	1=Hispanic; 0=not Hispanic
Marital status	0.49	0.50	0.45	0.50	1=married; 0= not married
Victim of violent crime	0.09	0.28	0.06	0.24	1=victim; 0=not victim
Victim of property crime	0.40	0.40	0.38	0.40	1=victim; 0=not victim
Informed abut crime	0.71	0.44	0.73	0.43	1=well informed about crime; 0=not well informed
Neighborhood conditions					
Physical disorder	1.07	1.33	1.05	1.33	Index of physical disorder
Social disorder	1.55	1.83	1.40	1.75	Index of social disorder
Police satisfaction	0.87	0.33	0.87	0.32	1=satisfied with neighborhood police; 0=dissatisfied
Perceived Risk indicator					
Serious crime	0.35	0.47	0.34	0.46	1=serious crime in the neighborhood; 0=no serious crime in neighborhood

[1]High school graduate is the reference category.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Predicting Neighborhood Fear of Crime

	Model 1				Model 2			
Independent Variables	B	Odds Ratio Exp (B)		Robust Standard Errors	B	Odds Ratio Exp (B)		Robust Standard Errors
Individual-level								
Sex	0.5059	**1.6585**	***	0.0249	0.4005	**1.4926**	***	0.0541
Age	0.0185	1.0187		0.0107	0.0185	1.0187		0.0107
Age^2	-0.0001	0.9999		0.0001	-0.0001	0.9999		0.0001
Less than high school	-0.1643	0.8485		0.2305	-0.1660	0.8470		0.2350
Some college	-0.2337	**0.7916**	*	0.1166	-0.2338	**0.7915**	*	0.1176
Four or more years of college	-0.4843	**0.6161**	**	0.1649	-0.4819	**0.6176**	**	0.1628
Race	0.2466	1.2796		0.1476	0.2432	1.2754		0.1479
Hispanic	0.0840	1.0876		0.0652	0.0896	1.0938		0.0627
Marital status	0.0848	**1.0885**	***	0.0137	0.0871	**1.0910**	***	0.0154
Victim of violent crime	0.2115	**1.2355**	**	0.0824	0.2101	**1.2338**	**	0.0852
Victim of property crime	0.1601	**1.1736**	***	0.0217	0.1660	**1.1806**	***	0.0232
Informed about crime	-0.2802	**0.7556**	***	0.0517	-0.2774	**0.7577**	***	0.0517
Neighborhood conditions								
Index of physical disorder	0.1249	**1.1330**	***	0.0228	0.1242	**1.1322**	***	0.0229
Index of social disorder	0.1670	**1.1817**	***	0.0200	0.1680	**1.1830**	***	0.0202
Police satisfaction	-0.3368	**0.7141**	***	0.0636	-0.3441	**0.7088**	***	0.0641
Serious crime	0.2239	**1.2510**	***	0.0337	0.0732	**1.0760**		0.0767
Sex x serious crime					0.2657	**1.3044**	**	0.1014
Constant		**-1.1344**	***	0.3073		**-1.0728**	***	0.3351
-2 Log Likelihood		-7851.4				-7846.1		
N		12,544				12,544		
Pseduo R^2		0.0791				0.0797		

*p<.05
**p< .01
***p < .001

Table 3: Logistic Regression Predicting Neighborhood Fear of Crime by Sex

	Men				Women			
Independent Variables	B	Odds Ratio Exp (B)		Robust Standard Errors	B	Odds Ratio Exp (B)		Robust Standard Errors
Individual-level								
Age	0.0327	**1.0333**	***	0.0080	0.0080	1.0080		0.0142
Age^2	-0.0002	**0.9998**	***	0.0001	0.0001	1.0001		0.0002
Less than high school	-0.3569	0.6998		0.3027	-0.0073	0.9928		0.1898
Some college	-0.4930	**0.6108**	**	0.1902	-0.0498	0.9514		0.0866
Four or more years of college	-0.6303	**0.5324**	**	0.2007	-0.3748	**0.6874**	**	0.1443
Race	0.2708	**1.3110**	**	0.1048	0.2256	1.2530		0.1898
Hispanic	0.0368	1.0375		0.1079	0.1129	**1.1195**	**	0.0358
Marital status	0.1621	1.1760		0.1144	0.0324	1.0329		0.0659
Victim of violent crime	0.2913	**1.3381**	***	0.0870	0.1333	1.1425		0.1569
Victim of property crime	0.2467	**1.2798**	*	0.1261	0.1000	1.1052		0.1051
Informed about crime	-0.2545	**0.7753**	*	0.1000	-0.3031	**0.7385**	***	0.0272
Neighborhood conditions								
Index of physical disorder	0.1440	**1.1549**	***	0.0250	0.1099	**1.1161**	***	0.0266
Index of social disorder	0.1501	**1.1620**	***	0.0147	0.1836	**1.2016**	***	0.0293
Police satisfaction	-0.2829	**0.7536**	*	0.1379	-0.3912	**0.6762**	***	0.0747
Serious crime	0.0758	1.0787		0.1273	0.3344	**1.3970**	***	0.0660
Constant		**-1.2539**	***	0.3583		-0.5308		0.2871
-2 Log Likelihood		-3412.3				-4414.7		
N		5,648				6,896		
Pseduo R^2		0.0732				0.0739		

*p<.05
**p< .01
***p < .001