14 Individual and spatial dimensions of women's fear of crime

A Scandinavian study case

Anna Yates and Vania Ceccato

14.1 Introduction

In 2012, a Gallup Poll revealed that 28 percent of women reported feeling unsafe when walking alone in their neighborhood at night compared with only 18 percent of men (Gallup, 2012). Whilst such statistics, which emphasize broad gender disparities in perception of safety, are far from uncommon (Fox, Nobles & Piquero, 2009; Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Pain, 2000; Valentine, 1992; Whitzman, 2007), the characteristics shared by women who declare being fearful are significantly lesser known. Although there has been quantitative research into the characteristics shared by women who report feeling unsafe, such as their age, socio-economic status, previous victimization (Krulichová, 2018; Ferraro & La Grange, 1987; Warr, 1985), this research tends to treat these individual characteristics as distinct in spite of their pivotal interconnections (Liu & Polson, 2016; Pain, 2001; May, Rader & Goodrum, 2009). We submit here that those who are fearful are not a homogeneous group. They significantly vary on their degree of fear, in turn a function of who they are and the environments to which they are exposed. Knowing about women's various degrees of fear helps us to predict its impact, from mild precautionary measures (avoid certain routes and/or times) to mobility impairment and isolation but also engagement on local safety issues (Ceccato, 2017).

In the era of the #MeToo! Movement, fear of sexual harassment and violence seems to be a global concern. In order to improve the understanding of the nature of women's fear of crime and its impact, this chapter also considers the spatialities of their fears, in other words, how their degree of fear affects women's usage of the public realm. The attention of this chapter will thus be focused on (but not be limited to) the most fearful women in the context of a Scandinavian city. Using theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2011), this study hence aims to understand the dimensions of women's fear, namely the ways in which gender, ethnic background, age, and other aspects linked to where women live shape their varied levels of declared fear of crime.

This chapter will investigate:

1. The nature of fear among women who fear the most, in particular, by assessing how gender intersects with other individual characteristics, such as age and ethnicity.

2. The spatial characteristics of women's fear and how this compares across women and impacts on their mobility in public space.
3. Whether the most fearful women tend to engage in activities understood to prevent crime, in comparison with the sample of women who declare feeling safe.

Despite the abundance of research on safety and perceived safety, the intersecting characteristics of the most fearful women has been identified as a significant gap (Pain, 2001). Owing to its reputation as being both safe and perceived as such, Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, has been subject to limited research on fear in comparison with Western European and North American cities (Hummelsheim et al., 2011). Recent findings have denounced Stockholm as a place where high rates of sexual violence are recorded and where an increasingly high percentage of the female population avoid going out in the evening (Eurostat, 2017; BRÅ 2017). Learning from this, the aforementioned limited research proves problematic and justifies further study. It is also in Sweden where the #MeToo movement has had a major media impact (e.g., Aftonbladet, 2018).

For these reasons, the study first explores levels of fear and women's characteristics in Stockholm using cross-tables. Then, regression models are used to assess the impact of women's fear of crime on their behavior, controlling for individual characteristics.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, the relevant literature on perceived safety and the main important aspects that may affect fear are discussed, followed by the hypotheses. The case study and methodology are then presented, followed by a discussion of results. The chapter concludes with commentary on the implications for both research and practice.

14.2 Fear of crime at individual level: theory and hypotheses

Nature of fear of crime

Given that the emotional and physical reactions to crime are unique to each individual, the concept of fear of crime has inherited a diverse range of definitions which Pain (2001) argues acts as a limitation in comparative studies. Empirical results collated from surveys on fear of crime are highly varied, given that, in some cases, they do not access the same underlying construct (Hale, 1996; Lorenc et al., 2012). Fear of crime suffers from conceptual confusion and hence, researchers need to develop a better, more united conceptual understanding (De Donder, 2009; Jackson, 2005; Semmens, 2007; Yin, 1980). For this reason, we emphasize that the most successful definitions are those that appreciate the way in which fear of crime continuously acts to constrain activities in everyday life. Contributing to pivotal ongoing research on the conceptualization of fear of crime, this chapter will employ Gordon and Riger's (1989, p. 2) definition of fear of crime as a 'sense that one must always be on guard,

vigilant and alert'. The attention of this research will be confined to those women who express the highest fear of crime owing to the fact that the consequences of their perception of safety are the most serious and restrictive in their everyday life (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; May, Rader & Goodrum, 2009; Stanko, 1990).

Nevertheless, of great concern is the increased realization that fear of crime's extent and consequences are far from evenly distributed. Amongst current surveys, the finding that women report a higher fear of crime than men is consistent (Pain, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006; Valentine, 1992). This is in part believed to be due to their fear of sexual violence and harassment, a phenomenon that Ferraro (1996) refers to as the 'shadow of sexual assault'. However, it is essential to refrain from stereotyping all females as equally fearful. How a woman perceives her safety is not a sole function of her gender and a plethora of factors ranging from age, ethnic background, relationship status, or any previous personal experiences (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Pain, 2001; Stanko, 1990; Ceccato, 2017); but her safety is embedded in a network of moral political geographies, that involves old and newer types of fears (Pain & Smith 2008; Alexander & Pain, 2012).

Previous research has most commonly examined the relationship between fear of crime and individual-level characteristics such as gender and age (Ferraro & La Grange, 1987; Warr, 1985). Within these studies, it is reported that those who declare feeling the most unsafe—women and elderly—were less likely in reality to become a victim. This phenomenon has been referred to as the 'vulnerability perspective', whereby individuals who understand themselves to be at a greater physical disadvantage when facing a threat consequently report a higher fear of crime (Scarborough et al., 2010). The vulnerability perspective is commonly used to explain the relationships between particular demographic characteristics and heightened fear of crime. Significant among these demographic characteristics are gender and age and, to a lesser degree, relationship status and ethnic background (ethnic minorities, for example, feeling more fearful than the rest of population) (Scarborough et al., 2010). Gender status—LGBTQI—is also recognized as an important factor in defining different levels of fear given varied levels of victimization (Ceccato and Loukaitou-Sideris, forthcoming). Associated with relationship status is the concept of 'altruistic fear' (Warr, 1985). This refers to where an individual may fear that a person other than themselves will be a victim of crime. This notion can hence be applied to understand why individuals who are married and/or with children report an elevated fear of crime. Based on past research, it can be hypothesized that older women, married with children or grandchildren and of immigrant background are likely to be the most fearful (Ferraro & La Grange, 1987; Scarborough et al., 2010; Warr, 1985)

Irrespective of the type of individual characteristics studied, former studies have tended to superficially treat these aspects of an individual's social identity as separate and distinct. For this reason, we shall now draw on Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality. Since its emergence in the black feminist

movement, intersectionality has been used in feminist research on fear of crime to investigate how different aspects of social identity work together in distinct ways to determine the nature and geography of fear (Day, 1999; Pain, 2001; Zhao, 2013). This reiterates the crucial point that neither a person's gender, race nor class for example can explain fear of crime alone (Lewis, 2013; Pain, 2001). Despite its evident potential in research on fear of crime, its increased usage in feminist research is matched with a rising number of critiques that must be addressed. One criticism targets the 'identities' examined in intersectional analysis. Zhao (2013) critiques the limited number of 'identities' invoked in classic intersectional analyses. To develop the analytical potential of intersectionality, she maintains the paradigm must be open to development and, thus, include new categories alongside the conventional 'race', 'gender' and 'class' debate. Learning from theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2011), we must understand how an individual's perception of crime is a function of a complex interplay of individual *and* area-level factors. Ortega and Myles (1987), for example, report how elderly females report a higher fear of crime than elderly males. However, the fear of elderly African American women is far higher than that of elderly white males and females (Ortega & Myles, 1987; in the Swedish context, see Ceccato & Bamzar, 2016). Similarly, Skogan and Maxfield (1981) discuss how lower-income ethnic minorities living in urban areas report higher feelings of unsafety than those living in rural communities (in Sweden, see Ceccato, 2018). Learning from the results of previous studies, it is evident that intersections between demographic characteristics and spatialities must be considered.

Spatial mobilities and fear

Research indicates that women are more fearful in public than private space. This proves somewhat paradoxical given most attacks against women occur in the domestic sphere by individuals known to them (Koskela and Pain, 2000). This spatial paradox is the result of a long-standing gender division of space whereby women learn to understand public space as exclusively masculine whilst the home is perceived as a feminine 'safe haven' (Valentine, 1992). In the public realm, women attach fears to specific environments at both micro-scale, such as high-rise environments (Gifford, 2007; Newman, 1972) public transport nodes (Ceccato, 2012; Uittenbogaard, 2014), or retail environments (Ceccato & Tcacencu, 2018), and macro-scale—entire neighborhoods and entire areas (Brunton-Smith & Jackson, 2011). In response to their fears, women may avoid particular spaces or neighborhoods to reduce their risk of potential victimization (Stanko, 1990).

They understand themselves at risk due to poor lighting and the presence of 'nooks and crannies' (Crowe, 2013, p. 251) that restrict their ability to survey the environment for potential threats and increase the possibility of a potential perpetrator to attack unnoticed (Hale, 1996; Valentine, 1989). It is important to review the relationship between fear of crime and the physical and social

conditions of the local neighborhood (Sampson, 1988). This may explain why women may report a higher fear of crime in some neighborhoods.

Looking at the physical conditions of the neighborhood, one must draw upon Kelling and Wilson (1982) broken window theory. Visual signs of disorder such as graffiti, public drunkenness, or litter indicate to potential perpetrators that locals are unresponsive to misconduct in the neighborhood, potentially lacking the social cohesion needed to prevent any crime. Socially integrated neighborhoods generate self-help networks and support, which are generally understood to alleviate an individual's fear of crime, as they feel more confident in their ability to cope with potential risks (Valentine, 1990). Based on this, it is anticipated that those who are more fearful live in neighborhoods with limited social cohesion and evidence of physical incivilities. That being said, however, some research has questioned the validity of these findings, emphasizing the presence of strong social bonds in run-down neighborhoods and weak social bonds in gated communities (Wacquant, 2008; Valentine, 1990). In response to this mixed picture, this study will thus contribute to ongoing research investigating the relationship between social contacts and physical visual cues in the neighborhood environment. Whilst the physical conditions of neighborhoods are predominantly understood and analyzed at a local scale, the aforementioned social factors operate at a much broader scale, associated with wider processes. One example of this is the process of 'othering' (Lemanski, 2006; Sandercock, 1997). Fueled by the media (Castell, 2010) and the police (Palidda, 2011), individuals' fears at local scale are often closely tied to their wider fears of encountering and living in close proximity to individuals of different ethnic backgrounds.

Fear and its effects on behavior

Those individuals who report to be the most fearful are the most likely to change and adapt how they move in space. At this point, it is important to draw upon Jackson and Gray's (2009) concept of functional and dysfunctional fear. In some cases, place–time avoidance—including the aforementioned—should be perceived positively as they are in fact 'functional' (Gray, Jackson, & Farrall, 2011). By that, it is meant that their actions successfully reduce both their fears and likelihood of victimization without negatively affecting their quality of life. In some cases, fear becomes the main motivation for them to take action by supporting activities that make crime and victimization more difficult to occur, such as participating in night patrols or neighborhood watch schemes (Gray et al, 2011). On the other hand, for some, their fears do not solely manifest in a restricted use of public space but in self-confinement, making them 'prisoners in their own homes' (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993, p. 45). In this case, this is a clear example of what Jackson and Gray (2009) refer to as 'dysfunctional fear' whereby their fears reduce their quality of life.

What thus emerges from the literature is that fear of crime is a function of a complex interplay of factors at various scales. What is less clear, however, is what

these dimensions precisely are, and how they intersect. This study will therefore build on current studies that investigate the relationship between fear of crime and individual and area-level characteristics. However, the attention of this research will be almost exclusively focused on women and those who perceive themselves to be very unsafe, given the consequences of their perception of safety can be the most restrictive and detrimental (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993; Stanko, 1990).

Influenced by previous research on fear of crime and its dimensions, we have proposed the following hypotheses:

1. Women vary in their expression of fear, with some expressing fear more than others. Informed by an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2011), the women who declare themselves to be the most fearful exhibit particular individual characteristics that are intertwined with one other.
2. The women who report being the most fearful are the most likely to adapt their behavior, such as restricting their mobility in public space (Jackson & Gray, 2009; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Stanko, 1990).
3. Women who report being the most fearful are the most likely to convert their concerns into constructive action (Jackson & Gray, 2009).

14.3 Framing the case study

The study area

The study area is Stockholm municipality, the capital of Sweden. The attention of this study is confined to the municipality, which covers an area of $216\,km^2$ and has a total population of 910,000. It is an archipelago that is well-connected in terms of infrastructure in the form of bridges, roads, subways, trams, commuting trains and buses. The municipality performs well in measures of well-being in comparison with other capital cities in terms of health, income and wealth, jobs and earnings, housing, education and safety (Stockholm Stad, 2018a). On average, the percentage of residents who are non-Swedish nationals is 31 percent (Stockholm Stad, 2018a). However, in its peripheral suburbs, this figure rests at 86–90 percent. In these suburbs, general unemployment rates are three times higher and average income is two times lower than in comparison with the rest of the city (Stockholm Stad, 2018a). Like many other European cities, Stockholm is thus affected by social, economic and spatial segregation. This affects the declared perceived safety and consequently the housing market (Ceccato & Wilhelmsson, 2011, 2012).

More significantly for this study however, according to EuroStat (2017), is that 96 percent of the population agreed or somewhat agreed that their neighborhood was safe. High percentages were also recorded in other Scandinavian capitals. In non-Nordic capitals, around 75 percent of the population on

average declared feeling safe in their neighborhood. The lowest levels were reported in Greek, Italian and Bulgarian cities where the percentage of the population who reported feeling safe dropped below 75 percent. In Sweden overall, the proportion of women that declare feeling unsafe is 36 percent, which can be compared with 19 percent of men. Women also avoiding going out to a much greater extent than men; 10 percent of the women in the population avoid going out alone late in the evening in their residential area because of fear of being attacked. The corresponding figure for men is 2 percent. The proportion of those who declared feeling unsafe is particularly large among the youngest and oldest women in the survey; among men, on the other hand, there are significantly smaller differences between the age groups (BRÅ, 2017, 2019).

Four out of five Stockholm residents feel safe (Stockholm stad, 2018b). Fear regarding going out into their own residential area in the evening is unevenly distributed across space and by types of residents. Figure 14.1 illustrates the overall percentage of respondents declaring feeling fearful in different districts.
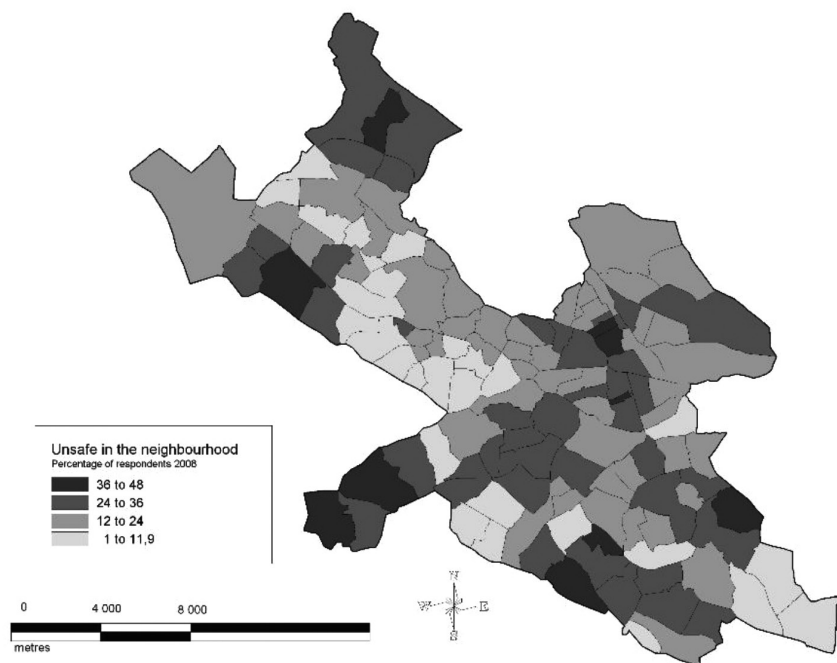

Figure 14.1 Stockholm by respondents who declare feeling fearful in the neighborhood (percent).

Data source: Stockholm safety survey, response rate is 51 percent.

Source: Author.

Data and methods

The safety survey datasets from 2008, 2011 and 2014 were imported into SPSS after a process of data cleaning (e.g., excluding missing values, outliers). The overall aim of each survey adheres with the city council's goal of creating a safer city, thus the data can be compared with results of previous surveys. Data are collected through a mail survey with a random sample of registered domicile 16–79 years (not longitudinal). In 2014, there was a random sample of 32,279; 16,434 responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 51.1 percent. This has been fairly constant since 2008 when the survey started.

Pre-analysis

The three datasets were merged to form one large dataset that thus contained the survey question and responses from every year. There were two main reasons for doing this. First, the focus of our paper is confined to the most fearful women. If using cross-sectional data, of one year only, these women would compose a very small proportion of the population. The three datasets were therefore collapsed into one to increase the data robustness. Second, the focus of this paper is also confined to investigating the impact of fear on women's behavior, avoidance of places for instance. If using cross-sectional data, of one year only, the limited data would make it difficult to discuss the potential variety of types of places that this group of women avoid. Whilst we do not wish to denigrate the importance of considering the temporal dimensions of women's fear, this aspect is outside the scope of this study and our respective focus on the spatiality of women's fear.

Due to some differences between each survey's format, each dataset was reorganized to ensure that the survey questions and their respective responses were aligned with one another. For example, perceived safety in one's residential area was originally categorized on a scale from 1 to 5, from '*very safe*' to '*very unsafe*' (*How secure or insecure do you feel collectively in your neighborhood?*). Since the focus of this research is predominantly confined to women who report feeling '*very unsafe*', a dichotomous variable was generated that split responses between 1,2,3,4 (*Safe*) and 5 (*Very unsafe*). Ten other variables were similarly transformed to improve analysis (see appendix 14.1). They were transformed to produce fewer but broader categories. Data points with missing values were filtered out for the analysis.

Cross-tabulation using chi-square tests were then used to generate comparisons between distributions of two or more variables, for example, the difference between men and women in terms of their fear of crime. Before investigating the common attributes shared by women who reported feeling most unsafe, women's and men's fear of crime were first compared on the basis of results collected from the Safety Survey in 2008, 2011 and 2014. Analysis using cross-tabulation thus, in part, investigated the strength of the relationship between women who reported feeling very unsafe compared with the remaining female

participants in terms of their individual characteristics: age, relationship status, number of children, ethnic background and whether they had been previously victimized. In order to evaluate hypotheses of variables in contingency tables, the chi-square test was used or, in the case of small expected frequencies, Fisher's Exact Test. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used in order to test independence between variables after some basic descriptive data analysis to identify remaining outliers and missing data. It must be appreciated that cross-tabulation does not indicate causality. Therefore, to test Hypotheses 2 and 3, we modelled women's fear and behavior using binary logistic regression.

Modelling women's fear

Three sets of models were applied: the first model assessed the nature of women's fear. The dependent variable Y is (a) women who declared most fearful (1 = Yes, very unsafe, often unsafe, No = 0). The second model tests whether fear affects behavior, namely through place avoidance (Table 14.2, later). The dependent variable Y indicates whether they engage in avoidance behavior (1 = Yes, keep away from certain places/streets, using the alternatives: always, often, do not go out fear of being a crime victim), among most fearful women and among (b) all unsafe women, No = 0). The third model tests functional fear, for instance, expressing a pro-active behavior such as asking help from neighbors to watch their homes (Table 14.3, later). The dependent variable Y indicates whether they engage in pro-active behavior (1 = Yes, we have neighbors looking out for the residence when we are absent, among (a) most fearful women and (b) all unsafe women, No = 0).

14.4 Results

Gendered fear and the most fearful

Women consistently reported a higher fear of crime than men ($\chi^2(1, N = 54,095) = 1,138.468$, $p < 0.000$). Whilst 21 percent of male respondents declared feeling '*unsafe*' in their neighborhood, the figure stood at 34.1 percent for women. This difference is fairly stable in all three years. Although women declare feeling more fearful than men, they are far from being a homogeneous group. Among them, 29 percent felt very safe, 36.9 percent felt safe, 29.5 percent felt quite unsafe, 3.8 percent felt unsafe ($\chi^2(1, N = 54,095) = 2,088.562$, $p < 0.00$). However, the attention of this chapter is confined to the most fearful women, who represent 0.8 percent of all women. Below, we discuss women's profile in terms of safety perceptions.

Amongst women who reported feeling 'very unsafe', most female respondents tended to be single ($\chi^2(1, N = 54,095) = 29.799$, $p < 0.07$) with children ($\chi^2(1, N = 17,631) = 23.372$, $p < 0.005$). The most fearful women tended to have between two to four children. Concerning their ethnic background, the vast majority were not born in Sweden ($\chi^2(1, N = 29,815) = 32.991$, $p < 0.00$).

Finally, most female respondents who declared feeling 'very unsafe' had been a victim of crime in the last 12 months ($\chi^2(1,\ N=28,795)=30.736,\ p<0.00$). In summary, women who reported feeling the most unsafe were below the age of 30 years, with 2–4 children, non-native born (born in a country other than Sweden) and had been previously victimized.

Women's fear, neighborhood context and effects on behavior: exploratory analysis

Women who report being 'most unsafe' are also the most likely to adapt and restrict their mobility in public space. Findings show that 45.9 percent of women who declared feeling 'very unsafe' in their neighborhood reported that if the opportunity arose, they would move away from their current residential area due to the perceived extent of crime. Only 3.2 percent of the remaining sample felt the same ($\chi^2(1,\ N=53,439)=1,367.586,\ p<0.000$). In order to better understand women's fear of crime, the level of social cohesion in respondents' neighborhoods was also investigated.

Compared with the rest of the women in the sample, women who felt unsafe tended to have a more negative picture about neighbors and their own neighborhoods. Findings show that although 31.5 percent of respondents felt that neighbors helped each other, only 23.3 percent of women who declared feeling 'very unsafe' witnessed neighbors supporting one other ($\chi^2(1,\ N=49,889)=113.954,\ p<0.000$). In the same way, 24.6 percent of female respondents who reported feeling '*very unsafe*' in their neighborhood felt that they could trust people in their residential area, whereas, the figure stood at 39.4 percent for the remaining population. They also tend to live in neighborhoods where physical incivilities are present and where they have been a victim of vandalism. Whilst 15.1 percent of very fearful women observe some form of vandalism where they live, only 7.4 percent of the remaining population had been a victim of vandalism ($\chi^2(1,\ N=53,451)=20.183,\ p<0.000$).

Fear is not homogeneously distributed across the neighborhood and appears to be triggered by certain environmental features in the neighborhoods. Amongst women that declared feeling most fearful, 56 percent worried about spending time close to the metro or train station; however, only 12.9 percent of the remaining population felt the same ($\chi^2(1,\ N=53,224)=408.035,\ p<0.000$). Similarly, 56.7 percent of women who reported feeling 'very unsafe' overall, expressed worry when walking home from/to the aforementioned metro and/or train station, whilst only 21.1 percent of the remaining population felt unsafe ($\chi^2(1,\ N=53,386)=181.150,\ p<0.000$). What emerges is a stark difference between how very fearful women and the remaining population express their safety in public places, in particular transport nodes and on the way from/to them. Although the most fearful women express higher levels of fear of crime in their neighborhood than the rest of women in the sample, it is still unclear whether and to what extent this fear affects their mobility through public space. However, results from the cross tables and chi-square analysis

indicate significant associations between an individual's perceived safety and their mobility in their neighborhood. Amongst those women who reported feeling '*very unsafe*' in their neighborhood, 64.6 percent reported that they actively kept away from certain places and streets to avoid being exposed to any violence or threats ($\chi^2(1, N=50,356)=185.460, p<0.000$). There are indications that women who report these events are the most fearful and are more likely to convert these concerns into action. Amongst those who report being the most fearful, 29.2 percent among those who declare being most fearful ask neighbors to keep an eye on their property (and vice versa), against 4.1 percent of the rest of female sample.

In the next section we identify both individual and neighborhood level factors affecting women's fear. Then, we assess whether fear helps explain women's behavior controlling for individual and neighborhood factors.

Modelling fear, neighborhood context and effects on behavior: confirmatory analysis

Table 14.1 shows the modelling results of the binary logistic regression for two groups of women: (a) most fearful women (composed of those feeling very unsafe, often unsafe, or those who do not go out for fear of being a crime victim) and (b) all unsafe women (composed of women who declared that they felt sometimes unsafe or expressed some degree of fear plus (a)). This means that (b) it is constituted by all women in the sample who declared some level of fear, from mild to severe levels of fear, including (a).

Individual characteristics

The most fearful group of respondents tends to be women born abroad. They also tend to live by themselves, were crime victims (in the last 12 months) and are older than the rest of the sample. For example, if the person was born abroad, her odds of belonging to the most fearful group of women increases by 41.7 percent. Age affects those women who express more moderate levels of fear. In terms of age, for every unit in increase in age, the model estimates show an increase by less than 1 percent for the most fearful women and 2.3 percent for all unsafe women (the odds ratio is 1.023 for an additional year in age). After controlling for all variables in the model, if the person lives alone, her odds of being fearful increases by 27.4 percent among the most fearful women (a), in comparison with only 8.4 percent for the remaining unsafe women (b).

The neighborhood context

The neighborhood context is also relevant to explain differences in declared fear among female respondents; in particular for the most fearful women (four out of five variables are significant). Among the most fearful women, they rarely exchange favors or chat and struggle to recognize people in their own neighborhood.

Table 14.1 Results of binary logistic regression, $Y = $ (a) women who declared they felt most fearful (very unsafe, often unsafe, do not go out fear of being a crime victim); (b) all unsafe women

	Most fearful women			All unsafe women		
	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)
Individual attributes						
Age	0.008***	0.001	1.008	0.023***	0.001	1,023
Alone	0.242***	0.038	1.274	0.081*	0.470	1.084
Family (number of children)	0.022	0.016	1.022	-0.033	0.021	0.967
Born abroad	0.349***	0.040	1.417	-0.209***	0.049	0.812
Victimized last 12 months	0.002***	0.001	1.002	-0.001	0.001	0.999
Social environmental attributes						
Wish to move out, if could	0.008***	0.001	1.008	0.004*	0.002	1.004
Chat with neighbors	-0.009*	0.003	0.996	-0.007**	0.002	0.993
Exchange favors in neighborhood	0.000	0.001	1.000	-0.006***	0.002	0.995
Neighbors get along well	0.003***	0.001	1.003	0.002	0.001	1.002
Recognize people in neighborhood	-0.005**	0.002	0.995	-0.002	0.002	0.998
Constant	-1.182***	0.076	0.307	0.114	0.088	1.120
Nagelkerke R Square	0.020			0.048		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.015			0.030		
Sig.	23,267.815			16,705.371		

Notes

(* Significant at 10% level; ** Significant at 5% level and *** Significant at 1% level.)

Unexpectedly, controlling for all other variables in the model, for every extra neighbor that they get along with, the odds of them declaring being fearful increases by 3 per cent. For both groups, fear levels are associated with the desire to moving away from where they currently reside, that is, if they had the economic resources. There are indications that among those women who declare a moderate level of fear, the fact that they do not exchange favors with neighbors negatively affects their perceived safety. However, among the most fearful women, their declared levels of fear are not affected by whether they exchange favors with neighbors.

Fear impact on behavior: dysfunctional and functional fear

Table 14.2 shows the results of the binary logistic regression that, after controlling for other variables, women's fear in the neighborhood does not lead to place avoidance. The dependent variable in this model is an indicator of women's place avoidance in the neighborhood (keep women away from certain places/streets, always, often, or do not go out for fear of being a crime victim), while the covariate is fear in the neighborhood among (a) most fearful women and among (b) all unsafe women.

Place avoidance is triggered by poor social contact with neighbors rather than actual fear of crime experienced in the neighborhood. Those who avoid places and declare some degree of fear (b), exhibit signs of poor contact with neighbors (do not recognize people in the neighborhood, do not chat or change favors with neighbors) and wish to move out from the area if possible. Yet, neighborhood context variables are more important to explain place avoidance for the overall female population than amongst those who fear the most (only two neighborhood variables came out significant for most fearful women (a) and four out of five for all unsafe women (b)).

For the overall sample, being a victim of crime in the last 12 months appeared to not have an impact on whether they showed signs of dysfunctional fear. However, for the most fearful group of women, victimization leads to place avoidance. This is the only individual factor affecting dysfunctional fear among the most fearful women (Table 14.2). Age, ethnic background and relationship status (family) are significant individual factors that help explain the variation of dysfunctional fear among women declaring some degree of fear (b). This group tends to be native Swedes, older, live by themselves and non-crime victims.

There are clear differences between the most fearful women and the unsafe women with regards expressions of functional fear. Asking neighbors to look out for one's residence when one is absent (as a measure of agency against of crime) only happens in neighborhoods by women with low or moderate levels of fear (Table 14.3 (b)). For the most fearful women, fear experienced in the neighborhood does not lead to action or engagement, contrary to what was initially expected in Hypothesis 3. Here again, poor social contact in the neighborhood

Table 14.2 Results of binary logistic regression, Y = (a) avoidance behavior—keep away from certain places/streets (always, often, do not go out fear of being a crime victim)—among most fearful women and among (b) all unsafe women

	Place avoidance: dysfunctional fear			All unsafe women		
	Most fearful women					
	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)
Individual attributes						
Age	0.017	0.005	1.018	0.014***	0.001	1.014
Alone	0.236	0.166	1.266	0.196***	0.041	1.217
Family (number of children)	0.030	0.072	1.030	0.022	0.017	1.022
Born abroad	0.195	0.164	1.215	−0.101***	0.043	0.904
Victimized last 12 months	0.002***	0.002	1.002	−0.003***	0.001	0.997
Fear in the neighborhood	0.001	3.227	1.001	−0.001	0.068	0.999
Social environmental attributes						
Wish to move out, if could	0.009***	0.005	1.009	0.013***	0.002	1.013
Chat with neighbors	−0.014***	0.007	0.986	−0.012***	0.002	0.998
Exchange favors neighborhood	−0.03	0.006	0.997	−0.005***	0.001	0.995
Neighbors get along well	0.02	0.004	1.002	0.002	0.001	1.002
Recognize people neighborhood	0.000	0.008	1.000	−0.009***	0.002	0.992
Constant	−3.141	3.227	0.043	−0.219***	0.078	0.804
Nagelkerke R square	0.025			0.073		
Cox & Snell R square	0.014			0.053		
Sig.	1539.27			21033.030		

may lead to precautionary behavior, in particular amongst those that show low or moderate fear levels.

Overall, women ask neighbors to look out for their residence when they are absent, most often when they are young individuals with families, than the most fearful ones. They are often Swedish born that have not being victimized by crime and do not show high levels of fear where they live, even when they would prefer to live somewhere else and experience poor levels of social cohesion. Note that all variables that indicate social interaction in neighborhoods show a negative sign (Table 14.3), which indicates the overall low levels of social engagement in precautionary measures.

Amongst those who fear the most, being older, having kids and experiencing victimization increases the odds of showing functional fear when compared with the rest of women. Asking neighbors to look after their homes is a decision influenced not only by women's individual characteristics but also by how one feels about their neighborhood. However, this is more likely to happen among women who declare low or moderate degree of fear than those categorized as most fearful. Finally, individual characteristics such as victimization and age, play a bigger role in determining functional fear than the neighborhood social characteristics tested in this study.

14.5 Discussion of results

It is no surprise that fear of crime is gendered. Our findings indicate that women reported a higher fear of crime than men. This result resonates with previous research (e.g., Ferraro, 1996; Lee, 2007; Valentine, 1992; Macassa et al., 2018) and acts to justify this paper's specific focus on women's fear of crime that aims to investigate fear as a function of multiple individual characteristics and neighborhood contexts. The implications of findings for future research and policies will be discussed in the conclusion.

Informed by intersectional analysis, our exploratory analysis indicates that the most fearful women were relatively young, single with children, from an immigrant background and had been previously victimized. Drawing on Warr's (1985) notion of 'altruistic fear', women with children tend to report a higher fear of crime than women without children, as they fear for not only their own safety but for the safety of their children.

Albeit that individual characteristics are a significant determinant of a women's perception of safety, it is of equal importance to review the relationship between women's fear of crime and their respective neighborhood (Sampson, 1988). Confirming what is reported in mainstream literature, women who feel most unsafe tend to live in neighborhoods that show signs of both physical and social incivilities, poor social contact, poor social cohesion and/or low collective efficacy (Sampson, 1988; Kelling & Wilson, 1982).

When modelling fear as a function of individual and neighborhoods characteristics, the picture becomes more mixed. Although most individual characteristics remain important in explaining fear of crime among all types of women,

Table 14.3 Results of binary logistic regression, $Y=$ (a) we ask neighbors to look out for the residence when we are absent, among (a) most fearful women and (b) all unsafe women

	Ask neighbors to look out for the residence: functional fear					
	Most fearful women			All unsafe women		
	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)	Coef.	St. dev.	Exp(B)
Individual attributes						
Age	0.006***	0.003	1.006	−0.019***	0.001	0.981
Alone	−0.101	0.099	1.107	−0.292***	0.039	0.747
Family (number of children)	0.088***	0.041	1.092	0.058***	0.016	1.059
Born abroad	−0.052***	0.105	0.949	−0.345***	0.042	0.708
Victimized last 12 months	0.000**	0.002	1.000	−0.005***	0.001	0.995
Fear in the neighborhood	0.003	324,42	1.003	−0.001***	0.045	0.999
Social environmental attributes						
Wish to move out, if could	0.007	0.003	1.007	0.006***	0.002	1.006
Chat with neighbors	−0.011	0.008	0.989	−0.009***	0.003	0.991
Exchange favors in neighborhood	−0.003	0.005	0.997	−0.002***	0.002	0.998
Neighbors get along well	−0.011***	0.003	0.995	−0.009***	0.001	0.991
Recognize people in neighborhood	−0.003	0.007	0.997	−0.004*	0.003	0.996
Constant	−3.338	3.423	0.034	0.993	0.077	2.699
Nagelkerke *R* square	0.584			0.075		
Cox & Snell *R* square	0.194			0.055		
Sig	3,330.81			21,567.22		

Notes

(* Significant at 10% level; ** Significant at 5% level and *** Significant at 1% level. Total sample = 30,903).

the neighborhood context is the most relevant when explaining variation of declared fear among the most fearful women (four out of five variables are significant) than for those with moderate fear. This thus reiterates the importance of including neighborhood variables in future intersectional research investigating women's fear of crime.

Nevertheless, whilst this model does not include socio-economic status, one can hypothesize that the most fearful may live in segregated areas, often suffering from social and economic deprivation. In order to gain a better insight into the spatiality of their fear of crime, our level of analysis must shift from a broad scale to a finer scale. Within the neighborhood, transport nodes and the way to/from them are a point of concern when examining women's victimization and transit fear (Ceccato, 2012; Uittenbogaard, 2014; Ceccato & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2020).

The initial hypothesis that women's fear of crime would lead to place avoidance (Jackson & Gray, 2009) does not hold in this case (Table 14.2). For the most fearful group of women, previous victimization leads to place avoidance but not fear of crime. Moreover, amongst women who are less fearful, poor social interactions (such as not recognizing people in their neighborhood, having poor contact with neighbors, not exchanging favors) in the neighborhood increases their odds of exhibiting signs of dysfunctional fear, including place avoidance behavior. Similarly, fear does not affect women's agency by promoting constructive action (indicated here by asking neighbors to look for their homes while absent). This finding also refutes Hypothesis 3 that expected some expression of functional fear.

More interestingly, not being able to recognize people in one's neighborhood—an indicator of poor social bonds—is a strong predictor of functional and dysfunctional fear. The mechanisms linking local social bonds and women's precautionary behavior are difficult to disentangle using our current modelling strategy. However, we can argue that whilst poor social bonds help explain variation in women's precautionary measures, it is possibly fear of crime (that turned out non-significant) which indirectly affects women's behavior. As suggested by Sandercock (1997), fear of crime can translate into "fear of others" which leads to poor social bonds that often causes animosity between individuals and gives expression to the "fear of the unknown". Rapid changes in an area especially with rapid population inflow—in the form of waves of different types of immigration—are argued to have an impact on residents' sense of safety, regardless of whether crime levels change or not (Hunter, Krannich, & Smith, 2002). The perceived social distance between different types of residents, in this case, because of their ethnic background, can be maximized by people themselves. This can give expression to *us–them* feelings (as part of an *othering* process, namely when one transforms the difference into *otherness*). Further research needs to investigate the relationship between the community changes (expressed by changes in their environment), quality of social interactions and women's functional and dysfunctional fear regardless of its levels.

14.6 Conclusions and recommendations

This study sought to examine the nature and the spatial dimensions of women's fear of crime. Findings show that the most fearful women share a number of similarities: they are often previously victimized and born abroad. Whilst elderly women are commonly recognized as more fearful than younger individuals, attention should turn to equally consider the fearful, young, single mother, whose fears are often lesser known and deemed less worthy of intervention. Further research could consider intersections between age, family structure and socio-economic status to compare how fears operate for differently situated young women.

Findings also show that the most fearful women were most likely to restrict their use of public space through avoiding certain places, confirming what has been previously established in previous research (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Stanko, 1990; Bastomski & Smith, 2017). However, contrary to what was initially expected, for the most fearful women, fear experienced in the neighborhood does not lead to place avoidance or acts of functional fear (e.g., asking neighbors to look out for one's residence when one is absent). Instead, poor social contacts at neighborhood level is more closely associated with behavior changes. These results have important theoretical implications.

Fear should not be understood as an enduring, fixed trait that is inherently gendered but rather a phenomenon that every individual can experience to a varying degree at different points in their life (Fattah & Sacco, 1988). Some of them are related to individual characteristics and others intertwined with the environment that individuals are exposed to. This calls for a holistic approach to safety that encompasses an understanding of the intersectionality of victimization and fear, in a frame that goes beyond age or gender and looks for intersections of an individual's characteristics and environmental contexts. Through implementing a combination of individual *and* neighborhood policies, we can hope women's fear of crime can be better tackled, and a more inclusive and equitable use of public space can be achieved. In practice, this demands, for instance, mobility policies that are non-gender neutral, sensitive to the mobility needs of individuals and that encompass a whole journey perspective to women's safety.

Another important theoretical contribution is the fact that it is difficult to disentangle fear of crime (as a measure of safety) from closely related theoretical constructs. Multifaceted aspects that go beyond individual characteristics and neighborhood conditions determine what causes fear. The fact that most fearful women seems to respond (by expressing functional and dysfunctional fear) to the quality of the social environment but not to fear is an example of such complexity. One could speculate that poor contact with neighbors leads to fear of others and, in turn, place avoidance. However, the scope of this paper does not permit us to make any further speculations on the direction and relationship between these factors. This thus emerges as a limitation that could be further explored in future research.

Appendix 14.1 Dataset of the study

Data type	Variable	Description	Unit
Dependent variable	Perceived safety	How secure do you feel in your neighborhood?	Categorical
Individual attributes	Gender	Gender of the respondent	Categorical
	Age	Age of the respondent	Categorical
	Relationship status	Relationship status of the respondent	Categorical
	Children	How many the children the respondent has	Categorical
	Ethnic background	Ethnic background of the respondent	Binary
	Previous incidents of victimization	Whether the respondent has been a victim of crime over the last year	Binary
Spatial dimensions	Satisfaction with neighborhood	If you could choose freely, would you move from your current neighborhood?	Categorical
	Social cohesion in neighborhood	Agree or not with the following statements about your neighborhood	Categorical
	Public transport nodes	Perception of safety at/on the way home from the metro station	Categorical
	Perceived safety in the residential area	If you go out alone late in the area you live, do you feel safe or unsafe, or do you worry about being exposed to a crime of any kind in your neighborhood	Categorical
	Functional and dysfunctional fear	Whether the respondents avoid places.	Categorical

Future studies should explore new strategies when modelling women's fear in relation to individual and environmental characteristics where women live, perhaps using, for instance, multilevel models and testing theoretically driven interaction factors. Moreover, the analytical framework could have involved other control variables, such as socio-economic conditions of respondents and the temporal dimension of fear of crime.

Another limitation of this study is that it has focused on women's victimization only, and therefore neglected fear among men and those who are potentially more at target from hate crimes, such as those belonging to the LGBTQI community. Data permitting, future research should aim at gathering evidence about fear experienced by gay and transgendered persons for example—a group that are often targets of harassment and sexual violence (Gekoski et al., 2015).

Finally, learning from Ditton, Chadee, and Khan (2003), the data utilized and analyzed in this paper could be combined with qualitative methods in future research. Combining these methods is believed to better uncover and identify clear explanations for perceptions of safety. This in turn would contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the conceptualization of fear of crime, commonly identified as an issue in contemporary literature.

Despite these limitations, this chapter has contributed to a better understanding of women's fear of crime in a Scandinavian capital. Unlike previous research, which has tended to solely concentrate on one dimension (often individual factors), this chapter has attempted to explore women's fear of crime by investigating and mapping its various dimensions. Furthermore, this research has also provided a unique perspective on women's fear of crime by focusing on women who reported to feel the most unsafe. The fact that women's safety is closely tied to the quality of social interactions at the neighborhood level lead us to think about the need of social programs or schemes that focus on establishing and building strong social ties. This in turn, can alleviate women's fears, maximize their agency and improve their navigation through public space.

14.7 Acknowledgments

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