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Predicting Fear of Crime

Considering Differences Across Gender

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The current research tests the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models to determine their relative predictive capacity across separate female and male citizen samples on fear of crime. Although previous literature typically includes gender as a control variable, the present analysis goes beyond this to determine whether the models function differently according to gender. Findings indicate that there are in fact significant differences in predictors of female and male fear of crime. Increased age reduces fear for women but not men, and increased income leads to higher levels of fear for men but lower levels for women. Theoretical implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: *fear of crime; gender; female fear; fear of victimization; fear of crime; vulnerability model; disorder model; social integration model*

Criminal justice scholars have long been concerned with understanding the dynamics and potential causes of fear of crime. This research endeavor has produced a body of literature that posits three dominant or traditional models to explain citizens' fear of crime—the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models. Although research has provided empirical support for each of these models (see Hale, 1996, for a comprehensive review), only a few studies have tested relevant theoretical factors across separate female and male samples (Alvi, Schwartz, DeKeseredy, & Maume, 2001; Gilchrist, Bannister, Ditton, & Farrall, 1998; Schafer, Huebner, & Bynum, 2006). Instead, gender is included as a control variable along with a host of other theoretically relevant factors related to the fear of crime. Such an analytic strategy allows researchers to determine whether gender is important for understanding fear of crime, but it fails to identify the specific ways in which gender might aid in our understanding of this phenomenon. For example, studies that

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simply identify gender as a significant predictor of fear of crime fall short of explaining how the causal processes underlying fear of crime may differ by gender.

Moreover, many empirical analyses have studied female fear in the context of the vulnerability and victimization models, where women's fear of crime is typically understood through their fear of rape and sexual assault (e.g., Ferraro, 1996; Fisher & Sloan, 2003). This focus is not surprising given the unique victimization experiences of women and the socialization processes that influence female cognition and, in turn, women's fear of crime. In addition to examining victimization and vulnerability, however, we may find it instructive to empirically assess the ways in which neighborhood disorder and social integration affect fear of crime, specifically for women. Indeed, differences in gender socialization may influence the degree to which traditional fear of crime predictors explain fear for women compared with men.

The current analysis addresses these shortcomings in the literature by testing the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models of fear of crime across male and female samples. In doing so, the present study identifies whether, and to what degree, the dominant predictors of fear of crime differ across the sexes. This approach moves beyond simply considering gender as an empirical control and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how gender contributes to the fear of crime.

The Need for a Gendered Analysis of Fear of Crime

There is a pervasive tradition within the criminal justice and criminological literature of excluding women from theory building and empirical analysis (e.g., Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Hirschi, 1969; Merton, 1938; Miller, 1958). The result of this neglect has been the development of a male-centered discipline that has largely forgotten the experiences of women as offenders, victims, and professionals (see Belknap, 2001; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Daly, 1995; Flavin, 2001). In an effort to overcome these shortcomings, feminist researchers have drawn attention to this oversight, publishing criticisms of andocentric theory for its inability to fully represent women (see Ageton, 1983; Belknap, 2001; Britton, 2000; Cernkovich & Giordano, 1979; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Feinman, 1986; Klein & Kress, 1976; Leonard, 1982; Morris, 1987; Naffine, 1987, 1996; Richey Mann, 1984; Smart, 1976). In doing so, these researchers have highlighted the experiences of women in criminal justice (see, e.g., Belknap, 2001; Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Datesman, Scarpitti, & Stephenson, 1975; Flavin, 2001; Figueira-McDonough, 1984; Figueira-McDonough & Selo, 1980; Giordano, 1978; Richards, 1981; Sarri, 1987). This has led to the emergence of two more recent research traditions. The first camp continues to use traditional (male-centered) theory but furthers the goals of the feminist research agenda by empirically testing this theory on female samples while highlighting differences in outcomes (e.g., Broidy &

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Agnew, 1997; Steffensmeier & Allen, 1996). The benefit of this approach is that it takes mainstream criminological research and assesses its applicability to women in criminal justice. The second camp takes the unique socialization and experiences of women and aims to build new female-centered theory from the ground up (Flavin, 2001; e.g., Ogle, Maier-Katkin, & Bernard, 1995). These ideas stem from work that highlights the fundamental problems associated with scientific knowledge because of its andocentric epistemology (see Harding, 1991). This approach assumes that mainstream criminological theory is gender biased and any attempt to extrapolate and theory test using female-only samples produces results that are gender biased. Proponents of the latter approach highlight the need for eliminating this bias by essentially starting over or creating new theory that considers the perspectives of women (e.g., Harding, 1991).

The fear of crime literature is grounded in this male-centered tradition, which attempts to explain the causes and predictors of fear of crime by including gender only as a control variable in statistical research (e.g., Moore & Shepherd, 2007; Rountree, 1998; Rountree & Land, 1996b; Wilcox, May, & Roberts, 2006). When research has examined female fear, empirical questions have often centered on feminine notions of female physical vulnerability such as the fear of rape and other crimes of a sexual nature (e.g., Fisher & Sloan, 2003; Junger, 1987; Warr, 1984, 1985; Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2006). Although this approach is important in terms of understanding the unique causal processes of women's fear, questions remain in terms of how other theoretical approaches are able to explain female fear, which is particularly important in light of the fact that women may be differentially affected by traditional predictors of fear (e.g., social integration, disorder) as a result of differences in gender role socialization. The current analysis fills this gap in the literature by testing "mainstream" fear of crime theory on separate female and male samples with the intent of gaining insight into the potential differential effect of these traditional models across female and male populations.

Fear of Crime Models

Numerous theoretical developments have sought to explain the various dynamics of fear of crime. These traditional theories fall into two broad categories. The first category incorporates theories that focus on *facilitators* of fear. Facilitators of fear include factors such as increased vulnerability and/or disorderly local surroundings that would lead a rational individual to be more or less fearful. The second category incorporates theories where fear of crime is understood through characteristics that *inhibit* or reduce the grounds for fear. Such inhibitors may include social ties, neighborhood cohesion, collective efficacy, and community attachment. Thus, three specific theoretical approaches to understanding fear of crime have emerged as relatively dominant in the literature; the vulnerability and disorder models focus on

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the facilitation of fear, and the social integration model concentrates on particular factors that inhibit fear.[1]

Vulnerability

A substantial amount of attention in the fear of crime literature is afforded to the influence of vulnerability on feelings of fear. Existing research uses demographic indicators such as age, sex, race, income, education, and marital status to predict the influence of physical and social vulnerability on fear of crime (see Schafer et al., 2006; Taylor & Hale, 1986). This research (see Hale, 1996) indicates that personal vulnerability facilitates fear of crime (Goodey, 1997; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981) and that persons may exhibit vulnerability primarily as a result of their social position (Garofalo, 1981). Accordingly, mainstream research suggests that individuals who feel able to protect themselves through physical, social, and/or economic resistance may report lower levels of fear compared with those who feel they lack the capacity for self-protection (Killias & Clerici, 2000).

The concept of vulnerability has been divided into two main categories—physical and social vulnerability. Physical vulnerability relates to the perception of increased risk to physical assault. This form of vulnerability stems from the decreased ability to fend off attack because of issues such as limited mobility or the lack of physical strength and competence (e.g., characteristics typically associated with women and the elderly). Age and sex often are used as proxy measures of physical vulnerability operationalized as decreased strength and mobility. Both of these elements theoretically are related to increased physical risk, thus increasing an individual's physical vulnerability (Baumer, 1985; Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Garofalo & Laub, 1978; Ginsberg, 1985; McGarrell, Giacomazzi, & Thurman, 1997; Parker & Ray, 1990; Skogan, 1995; Yin, 1982). In particular, elderly individuals are typically less mobile and, as a result, may be less able to run away from threat and/or resist physical attack. Similarly, women are typically physically weaker (in part because of socialized passivity) in terms of biological differences in strength and muscular capacity compared with males (e.g., Bale, 1992).

Gendered notions of vulnerability motivate the bulk of fear of crime research as related to female fear. For example, women are socialized to portray passivity and behave in a delicate and "ladylike" way, ultimately reiterating and reinforcing their inability to protect themselves from harm without the help of strong and virile men (see Johnson, 1997; Kilmartin, 2000). As such, empirical literature on women's fear of crime centers around the influence of vulnerability, specifically as related to sexual assault and the fear of men (e.g., Stanko, 1992, 1995) and the effect of prior victimization on feelings of fear (see Young, 1992, for an extended discussion). Testing the effect of physical vulnerability on fear as it relates to women is warranted because the sexual vulnerability of women and the documented threat of sexual victimization increase fear (Gordon & Riger, 1989) and, thus, serve as mechanisms of

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social control (see Brownmiller, 1975; Koss et al., 1994; Madriz, 1997). For example, research has established that women are socialized and taught to fear sexual assault, strangers, and potentially dangerous situations or unknown settings (Brownmiller, 1975; Koss et al., 1994; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). As a result, freedoms are curtailed, and relevant decision making almost always reflects a concern for safety often at the cost of independence (Madriz, 1997).

Social vulnerability assumes increased exposure to victimization as a result of a range of factors related to race, poverty, education, marital status, and a limited access to economic and material resources (Baumer, 1978; Bennett & Flavin, 1994; Borooah & Carcach, 1997; Pantazis, 2000; Riger, Gordon, & LeBailly, 1978; Taylor & Hale, 1986; Will & McGrath, 1995). For example, living in economically distressed, high-crime neighborhoods increases the potential for victimization. Education is often correlated with income and, as a result, a lack of education has been related to increases in fear through exposure to crime and crime-prone areas explained by routine activity theory and patterns of residential settlement (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Segregation and high-crime living conditions are most often experienced by racial and ethnic minorities and thus may differentially influence fear responses for persons of color. In addition, individuals lacking the material resources necessary to protect their homes and/or recoup financial losses in the event of property/financial victimization may feel increased social vulnerability. Moore and Shepherd (2006) found that among their sample of respondents, the burden of fear was greater for property crime than for personal crime—reiterating the importance of social vulnerability indicators, such as income, on fear prediction. Finally, persons deficient in material and social resources, or lacking the community and political networks that would enable them to cope successfully with anxiety-producing situations such as individual and institutionalized forms of racism, are likely to experience increased social vulnerability (see Pantatzis, 2000, for a brief review).

Women as a group may suffer from increased social vulnerability as a result of the feminization of poverty (Pearce, 1978), given the high prevalence of economically marginalized single mothers with dependent children living in lower class/high-crime neighborhoods (Kimenyi & Mbaku, 1995; Rodgers, 1987). More specifically, women often have fewer assets and less wealth and income than their similarly situated male counterparts and will therefore be at a disadvantage in terms of recouping financial losses and withstanding social victimization (Barak, Flavin, & Leighton, 2001). Undereducated or uneducated women also may face an increased risk of social vulnerability compared with undereducated or uneducated men because, as previously mentioned, education is often correlated with income. As a result, lower education levels influence residential patterns and routine activities, potentially exposing women to crime. Additionally, a lack of education puts women in a particularly vulnerable position—socially oppressed as women[2] and increasingly vulnerable because they lack the social capital and/or social resources to recover from victimization, both of which are often obtained through advances in education (see Coleman, 1988, for a related discussion on education and social capital). Consequently, women, racial and

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ethnic minorities, people living in poverty, and those with lower educational levels report higher levels of fear of crime than their male, White, financially well-off, and well-educated counterparts (Baumer, 1978; Clemente & Kleiman, 1977; Covington & Taylor, 1991; Erskine, 1974; Furstenberg, 1971; Jaycox, 1978; Pantazis, 2000; Parker & Onyekwuluje, 1992; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Taylor & Hale, 1986; Will & McGrath, 1995).Women of color face a double-edged sword in terms of dealing with vulnerability and victimization because their perceptions of worry and fear are shaped by their experiences as women and as racial minorities (see Johnson, 2001).

Disorder

The disorder model originates from Shaw and McKay's (1942) work on social disorganization where facilitators of fear are grounded in perceptions of local surroundings, specifically signs of physical and social neighborhood disorder (Skogan, 1990). The basic assumption of this model is that neighborhood incivilities are the manifestations of physical and social disorder that threaten individual residents more than the actual experience of crime (see e.g., Worrall, 2006). The physical decay and deterioration of a neighborhood signify a lack of local concern and the absence of informal social controls, leading to citizen perceptions of neighborhood disorder.

Researchers have divided incivilities into two conceptual categories—social and physical incivility (Burby & Rohe, 1989; LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; Rohe & Burby, 1988). Social incivility refers to disruptive elements such as loiterers, inconsiderate neighbors, loose dogs, unsupervised and/or unruly teenagers, gangs, beggars, and public drinking. Physical incivility refers to disorderly surroundings such as abandoned cars, vandalized property, trash, vacant houses, and deteriorated homes. Neighborhood residents who perceive disordered social and physical local surroundings are more likely to exhibit higher levels of fear (Gates & Rohe, 1987; LaGrange et al., 1992; Lewis & Salem, 1986; Skogan, 1990; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981).

Furthermore, residents may perceive themselves as having an increased risk of victimization in areas where there are visible signs of community disorder (Covington & Taylor, 1991; Lewis & Salem, 1986). Perceptions of disorder likely translate into environmental uncertainty and perceived threats to personal safety (Kennedy & Silverman, 1985). Research also finds that disorderly surroundings increase fear of crime, thus affecting mental well-being (Guite, Clark, & Ackrill, 2006). Skogan and Maxfield (1981) and Lewis and Maxfield (1980) reported that residents in lower crime neighborhoods consistently identify incivilities or disorderly neighborhood conditions as problems of greater concern than the experience of actual crime. These findings reiterate the importance of Wilson and Kelling's (1982) broken windows theory, which posits a strong connection between disorderly surroundings and fear of crime.

Perceptions of disorder and incivility may differentially affect feelings of fear among women as a result of differences in gender role socialization. For example, parents often treat their sons and daughters differently, holding them to separate

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standards in terms of freedoms (such as imposing curfews) and issues of independence. Male children are encouraged to seek out, investigate, and discover their surroundings with little parental concern or regard for potential danger (see Kilmartin, 2000). The process of male socialization produces a sense of self-confidence and assurance in young boys, and they are taught to welcome unknown or dangerous situations and may be more likely to throw caution to the wind. This same behavior is discouraged among young girls. Parents are more inclined to protect and shelter their daughters, teaching them to fear strangers and to exercise extreme caution when faced with similar situations. Disorderly neighborhood surroundings thus may engender increased feelings of fear for women compared with their male counterparts as a result of definitions of danger and perceptions of threatening situations.

Social Integration

Shifting from facilitators of fear to inhibitors of fear, the social integration model purports that individuals who are more socially integrated within their neighborhoods experience lower levels of fear of crime than those who are not as well connected (Hartnagel, 1979; Lewis & Salem, 1986; Riger, LeBailly, & Gordon, 1981; Rountree & Land, 1996a). Social integration has been defined as a sense of belonging to local surroundings and attachment to the community (Adams, 1992; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Keyes, 1998). Prior research has operationalized social integration as the ability to identify strangers in the area and the degree to which neighbors feel they are a part of the neighborhood (Hunter & Baumer, 1982). Other researchers have defined social integration as possessing a personal investment in the neighborhood, having social ties to neighbors, and feeling neighborhood affect (Kanan & Pruitt, 2002). Additional social integration measures have included participation in formal organizations (Austin, Woolever, & Baba, 1994), involvement in neighborhood activities, engaging in neighborhood information sharing, perceiving similarities among residents, and having friends or relatives who live in the neighborhood (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). In sum, residents who feel connected to their neighborhood and know their neighbors are likely to report lower levels of fear than those who do not have these attachments. Empirical research testing the social integration model has produced somewhat mixed results (Austin et al., 1994; Baba & Austin, 1989; Hunter & Baumer, 1982; Kanan & Pruitt, 2002; Krannich, Berry, & Greider, 1989; McGarrell et al., 1997; Rountree & Land, 1996a). Bursik and Grasmick (1993) and Gibson, Zhao, Lovrich, and Gaffney (2002) argued that prior measures of social integration lack methodological consistency, thus making subjective cross-study comparisons nearly impossible. As such, it is difficult to derive solid conclusions regarding the effect of social integration on fear of crime.

Nonetheless, social integration may differentially influence female fear when compared with male fear as a result of the relational and interdependent nature of feminine gender role socialization (see Johnson, 1997). For example, socially appropriate ideas

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about womanhood teach that female self-worth and value are derived from women's experience of connectedness to and relationships with others (Koss et al., 1994). These same values of interdependence and reliance on others are not similarly taught among men as part of their socially acceptable masculine identity (Kilmartin, 2000). Furthermore, women are socialized to be dependent on others by relying on intimates, family, and friends for protection and social support, whereas men are brought up to value self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and independence, generally limiting the appearance of needing others. Consequently, feelings of fear and perceptions of risk may be reduced when social networks and social supports exist and women feel enhanced connectedness to others in their immediate local surroundings. These factors may differentially influence women's feelings of fear.

Hypotheses

The purpose of the current analysis is to test mainstream fear of crime theory on separate male and female samples in an effort to identify whether and to what degree predictors of fear differ for women compared with men. Our hypotheses indicate, however, that we expect the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models to predict both female fear and male fear similarly in terms of the direction of the relationship. We also have theoretical reason to believe that the magnitude of this prediction will differ where the relationship between predictors and fear of crime is stronger for women than for men. Despite hypothesized similarities in the direction of these relationships, this analysis is important because excluding women from empirical analysis opens the potential for silencing both the differences and the similarities of women and men, thus undermining our ability to produce sound and generalizable criminal justice and criminological research. As such, we test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Income will be negatively related to both female and male fear but the magnitude of this relationship will be stronger in the female sample, specifically because women typically have less income and fewer wealth and assets than their similarly situated male counterparts. Consequently, we expect income to have a greater influence on female fear because men are more likely to have access to the social resources necessary to counter the threat of victimization.

Hypothesis 2: Education will be negatively related to fear in both the female and male samples so that as education increases, fear will decrease; however, the magnitude of this relationship will be stronger for females. Men are likely to have access to social resources despite their educational achievement levels because of their privileged social position in a patriarchal society.

Hypothesis 3: Race will be related to fear in both the female and male samples, but the magnitude of this relationship will be greater in the female sample. In particular, we expect minority respondents to report more fear than their White counterparts, and we

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expect minority women to be more fearful than minority men because they theoretically face an increased risk of vulnerability and victimization.

Hypothesis 4: Age will be positively related to fear for both women and men, and there will be no significant difference in the magnitude of this relationship. We expect age to function similarly for both samples because as both women and men age, they become more physically vulnerable, thus increasing their respective fear of crime.

Hypothesis 5: Disorder will be positively related to female and male fear, but the magnitude of this relationship will be stronger in the female sample. Prior theory and research establish that women are socialized to be more fearful of unknown or potentially dangerous situations, especially as they are related to sexual violence and vulnerability (see Brownmiller, 1975; Burt & Estep, 1981; Griffin, 1971; Gustafson, 1998; LaViollette & Barnett, 2000; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). Indeed, women are taught to exercise prudence and caution by parents, teachers, and community institutions (e.g., Gardner, 1990). As such, disorderly local surroundings should better predict fear of crime among women.

Hypothesis 6: Increased levels of social integration will be negatively related to female and male fear, but the magnitude of this relationship will be stronger for women. Appropriate gender role socialization supports the idea that women are taught to be interdependent and relational. Therefore, we expect that increased social integration will decrease female fear. Moreover, the magnitude of this relationship should better predict fear of crime among women.

Data and Methodology

Sample

The data for the current analysis were derived from the 2003 Eastern Washington Crime and Criminal Justice System Survey. The survey was conducted by Washington State University's Division of Governmental Studies and Services for the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Washington. In line with Dillman's (1978) "total design method," three waves of self-administered survey instruments were mailed to a random sample of household addresses (extracted from local telephone directories) within 21 cities across the eastern district of Washington.[3] From the 8,836 correct addresses identified, 2,861 respondents completed and returned a survey instrument, and necessary information for the current analysis was available in 2,638 of the cases.[4] The response rate was relatively low (32.4%) and to err on the side of caution, generalizations should be limited to populations with similar demographic characteristics to the current sample.

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis and demographic information for the samples. Males were significantly older than females (59 years vs. 57 years old, respectively). There were no significant differences between the samples with regard to race; 93% of the female sample reported being White whereas the remaining 7% reported being of minority status. For males,

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Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Females (n = 953) *M*	Females (n = 953) *SD*	Males (n = 1,685 *M*	Males (n = 1,685 *SD*	Difference Tests
Dependent variable					
Worry of victimization	8.61	4.24	7.56	3.87	t = 6.29*
Independent variables					
Age	56.66	17.15	58.75	14.71	t = –3.17*
White (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*)	0.93	0.26	0.94	0.24	χ^2 = 0.85
Income	6.11	0.53	6.13	2.50	t = –0.37
Education	3.89	1.82	4.23	1.90	t = –4.52*
Disorder	13.07	4.80	12.29	4.21	t = 4.21*
Social integration	0.17	3.22	–0.11	2.78	t = 2.25*

*p < .05.

94% reported being White and 6% reported being of minority status. Annual income for the two samples was nearly identical (and nonsignificant). The average male and female respondent reported an income that ranged from $50,000 to $59,000. Small but significant educational differences were observed; the average female reported being slightly less educated than the average male (3.89 and 4.23, respectively).

Dependent Variable

Worry of Victimization. The dependent variable for the present analysis is based on a seven-item index capturing respondents' frequency of worry about becoming the victim of specific crime scenarios (i.e., being sexually assaulted; being attacked while driving your car; being mugged; being beaten up, knifed, or shot; being murdered; being burglarized while someone is at home; being burglarized while no one is at home).[5] Respondents were asked, "How much do you worry about each of the following situations?" Responses to each of these questions (seven in total) were captured on a 4-point scale where 0 represents *never*, 1 represents *seldom*, 2 represents *somewhat frequently*, and 3 represents *very frequently*. Responses were then summed to create a seven-item scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 21 (*very frequently*). A reliability test of the measure demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .89).

Independent Variables

Social and Physical Vulnerability. Education, income, and race are included in the analysis as proxy measures of individual social vulnerability to criminal victimization. Educational achievement was captured on a scale of 1 (*less than high school*)

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to 7 (*graduate degree*), and annual income was measured on a scale of 1 (*less than $10,000*) to 10 (*more than $90,000*). The last indicator of social vulnerability, White, was captured as a dichotomous measure (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*).[6] In addition, age was included as a proxy measure for physical vulnerability and was measured as the actual age of the respondents at the time of the survey.

Disorder. Perceived disorder or incivility was measured by summing the responses to eight questions regarding the seriousness of neighborhood problems (i.e., vandalism, groups of teenagers or others hanging out and harassing people, garbage and litter, traffic problems, people drinking to excess in public, dogs running at large, the presence of youth gangs, noise). The resulting scale ranged from 8 (*no problem*) to 32 (*a serious problem*) and demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .83). Although previous research has distinguished between perceptions of physical disorder (e.g., trash, abandoned buildings, vandalism) and perceptions of social disorder (e.g., public drunkenness, noisy neighbors; e.g., LaGrange et al., 1992; Taylor & Hale, 1986), the current analysis was unable to replicate this finding. Results from an exploratory factor analysis indicate that all eight measures—whether physical or social in nature—load on a single factor. This is consistent with more recent research, in which measures of social and physical disorder were also found to represent a single underlying construct (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999).

Social Integration. Social integration was captured through responses to four questions derived from prior literature (Gibson et al., 2002; McGarrell et al., 1997) examining the link between social integration and fear of crime: "Would you describe the area where you live as a place where people help one another or a place where people mostly go their own way?" "Do you feel the area where you live is more of a real home or more like just a place to live?" "How often do you talk with your neighbors?" "When you do a favor for a neighbor, can you trust the neighbor to return the favor?" Individuals scoring higher on the resulting scale demonstrated higher overall levels of social integration. The number of possible responses to each item varied. For example, the first two items elicit dichotomous responses, whereas the third and fourth items are captured on 5- and 4-point scales, respectively. Thus, to account for the differing metrics in which the items were measured, responses to each item were standardized (i.e. converted to *z* scores) prior to summation. Reliability tests for the resulting index indicated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .71).

Analytic Strategy

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were estimated to determine whether the specified predictors of fear of crime differ for male and female samples. To accomplish this task, two separate models were estimated. Such an analytic strategy allows us to determine the specific ways in which predictors of fear of crime differ

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across the sexes. Most previous analyses that have tested the effect of gender on fear of crime have done so by simply including gender as a predictor in a single OLS regression model. Although this approach is able to identify whether gender is important for understanding fear of crime more generally, it does little to explain the specific ways in which gender might matter. By modeling predictors of fear of crime across separate female and male samples, however, the current study provides an in-depth analysis of the more specific ways in which gender influences fear of crime. For example, it is very possible that predictors of fear of crime operate differently for women compared with men, and the current approach is able to address this concern.

In light of the current strategy, the first model displays the predictors of worry of victimization for the female sample, whereas the second model displays the predictors of worry of victimization for the male sample. To determine whether the regression coefficients of each independent variable differ across samples, z tests were conducted.[7] In the end, the OLS regression models allow for a comparison of the direction and magnitude of the predictors of fear of crime (measured as worry of victimization) across female and male respondents to determine whether the male-centered theoretical frameworks used in the current analysis can be effectively applied to females.

Results

Table 2 displays the results of the OLS regression models predicting worry of victimization for female and male respondents as well as the corresponding z tests indicating whether the observed differences across samples are statistically significant. The regression models appear to explain more variation in the dependent variable for the female sample compared with the male sample. Specifically, the models explain approximately 16% of the variation in worry of victimization for the female sample and 12% for the male sample. When we look at each independent measure individually, however, it is apparent that some measures better explain female fear whereas others better explain male fear.

Income was found to exert a negative influence on worry of victimization for the female sample, yet in the male sample it had the opposite effect, and this difference was statistically significant as indicated by the corresponding z test. More specifically, increases in reported income corresponded with decreases in reported worry of victimization for females and increases in worry of victimization for males. These findings provide only partial support for the first hypothesis, and the discovery that increased income led to increased fear in the male sample was unexpected.

The second hypothesis was not supported by the data because education failed to exert a significant influence on worry of victimization for either sample, and the coefficients were only in the predicted direction for the sample of women. Contrary to the results, education was predicted to negatively influence worry of victimization for both women and men but to a greater degree in the female sample.

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Table 2
Differences in Predictors of Worry of Victimization for Female and Male Samples

	Female Respondents (n = 953)	Male Respondents (n = 1,685)	z Test (One-Tailed)
Social vulnerability			
Income	–0.483/0.240*	0.105/0.041*	–2.415*
	(–0.061)	(0.068)	
Education	–0.049/0.071	0.009/0.051	–0.663
	(–0.021)	(0.004)	
White (0 = *no*; 1 = *yes*)	–0.481/0.501	1.056/0.373*	–2.461*
	(–0.030)	(0.066)	
Physical vulnerability			
Age	–0.018/0.008*	0.000/0.006	–1.804*
	(–0.073)	(0.000)	
Disorder	0.298/0.027*	0.313/0.022*	–0.431
	(0.342)	(0.341)	
Social integration	–0.080/0.041*	–0.035/0.033	–0.855
	(–0.061)	(–0.025)	
Model R^2	.156*	.119*	

NOTE: Standardized coefficients are in parentheses.
*$p < .05$.

The third hypothesis also failed to receive support. Whites were more fearful than minorities in the male sample, and in the female sample, race was not a significant predictor.

Similar findings emerged when we examined the fourth hypothesis. In this case, age was predicted to have positive effects on worry of victimization for women and men alike, although the relationship would be stronger in the sample of women. Contrary to expectations, the results indicate a negative relationship between age and worry of victimization for the sample of women whereas age appears to have no significant influence for the sample of men. The observed difference between the regression coefficients was statistically significant.

The fifth hypothesis received partial support from the findings. Specifically, the relationship between disorder and worry of victimization was positive and in the predicted direction for both samples. It was hypothesized, however, that the relationship would be stronger among the female sample, which was not the case. The z test failed to reach a level of statistical significance, indicating no difference between the regression coefficients across samples. Although the direction and magnitude (slope) of the relationship between disorder and worry of victimization were the same across male and female samples, an important difference was uncovered. As shown in Table 1, women perceived significantly more disorder than men, contributing to higher levels

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of worry of victimization. This important difference occurs despite the fact that the slopes of the relationship between disorder and worry of victimization are unaffected by sex of the respondent. Thus, disorder affects attitudes of worry of victimization in a similar manner for men and women (as indicated by the similar slopes), yet the small disparity discovered in the mean levels of disorder led to an overall increase in levels of fear for women compared with men.

Finally, social integration was found to decrease worry of victimization for females but not for males, yielding partial support for the sixth hypothesis. The relationship between social integration and worry of victimization was negative and statistically significant for women, whereas the same relationship was negative but not statistically significant for men. Although the *z* test comparing the regression coefficients failed to reach a level of statistical significance, the current analysis treats the coefficients as different. This difference, albeit small, is recognized in light of the fact that one coefficient (representing the relationship between social integration and worry of victimization in the female sample) is statistically significant whereas the other (representing the relationship between social integration and worry of victimization in the male sample) is not significant. Thus, social integration appears to slightly inhibit female fear, yet it has no effect on male fear.

Discussion

The primary objective of the current analysis was to examine the predictive capacity of relevant theoretical variables on fear of crime across separate female- and male-only samples. Gender does in fact play a significant role in understanding predictors of fear of crime, and several important differences between the female and male samples arose. Although discovering differences in fear of crime between men and women was an expected outcome of the current work, it may be the case that specific predictors of fear of crime are mediated by factors outside the scope of this study. Examples include exposure to media reports on spikes in crime trends or rare crime-related events (Lee & DeHart, 2007) and knowing someone who has recently been the victim of a crime (Swaray, 2007). Additionally, prior personal victimization and involvement with the criminal justice system may shape perceptions about worry of victimization. Future empirical analysis should focus on replicating the differences uncovered in the current analysis and on better understanding what factors might mediate these differences. Several of the observed differences in the samples, however, were not congruent with proposed hypotheses.

The current analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between disorder and worry of victimization in both the female and male samples where perceptions of increased disorderly surroundings led to increases in reported levels of fear. The magnitude of this relationship, however, did not significantly differ across the two

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samples as predicted (Hypothesis 4). This finding was unexpected given the socialization processes that teach women to be fearful and cautious of their surroundings while simultaneously encouraging men to exhibit fearlessness and seek out dangerous situations (Kilmartin, 2000; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). Although disorder appears to operate the same across gender, results from the current study indicate that women may attribute higher levels of disorder to their surroundings compared with men. Thus, disorder may influence men and women in similar ways, yet differing socialization processes lead women to perceive more disorder than men when placed in similar situations (e.g., Smith & Torstensson, 1997). The net result is that women may in fact experience more worry of victimization than their male counterparts attributable to their elevated levels of perceived disorder (see Reisig & Parks, 2000, and Schieman & Pearlin, 2006, for related discussions on subjective differences of individual perceptions).

The observed relationship between social integration and worry of victimization was partially consistent with the sixth hypothesis. We expected increased levels of social integration to reduce fear for both women and men. In addition, we predicted that the magnitude of the social integration/fear relationship would be stronger in the sample of female citizens compared with their male counterparts. These expectations are grounded in gender-based theory and ideas about the differences in socialization for women and men, where women are taught to define themselves in terms of their relationships with and connection to others. This interdependence and reliance on social support may reduce fear more so for women than men. The current findings are consistent with this theoretical expectation; social integration significantly decreased worry of victimization for the female sample. Contrary to our hypothesis, the relationship between social integration and worry of victimization failed to reach statistical significance in the male sample, although it was in the hypothesized direction. This is not entirely surprising because men are socialized to achieve independence and self-reliance rather than seek emotional and other forms of social support from those around them (Kilmartin, 2000). The degree to which men are socially integrated may not have a significant effect on their perceptions of fear because social connectedness and interdependence are not characteristics that men are taught to value. They may, therefore, be less likely to rely on these social connections to mediate their feelings of fear.

It is also possible that the relationship between social integration and fear of crime functions differently than hypothesized in the current analysis. For example, it is plausible that individuals who are less fearful of becoming victimized are more apt to seek out and develop personal relationships with those around them, increasing the degree to which they are socially integrated. Unfortunately, because of the nature of cross-sectional analyses, specific causal direction cannot be sufficiently examined. Further research should attempt to uncover the directional nuances of this relationship.

Although the findings discussed here partially support the proposed hypotheses, some of the results were in the opposite direction predicted. First, the relationship

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between income and worry of victimization in the male sample was positive (although it was predicted to be negative) and differed significantly from the results discovered in the female sample where the relationship was negative (Hypothesis 1). Thus, increased income decreased fear of crime for women (as predicted), yet it increased fear of crime for men. One possible explanation for this finding relates to what Johnson (1997) calls the control–fear paradox, which details the relationship between control and fear under a patriarchal social system. The control–fear paradox suggests that men are socialized in a patriarchal system to desire and seek control over all aspects of their lives. This control is accomplished in terms of their finances, income, family, profession, material resources, and social networks. Johnson (1997) argued that the more control men have, the more they fear losing control. As such, perhaps increased income serves as a proxy for increased control, where individuals with greater assets, wealth, and earning potential generally have more power and greater access to material and social resources (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2004). Men are taught to define themselves in terms of social status (Kilmartin, 2000), especially with regard to job prestige—typically quantified as salary and other forms of monetary compensation. Thus, the more money men make, the more control they have. According to Johnson (1997), the more control men have, the more they may fear losing their established income-related control. Although Johnson's (1997) discussion of the paradox of control and fear does not refer to fear of crime specifically, this particular form of fear can be understood as threats to personal safety, financial stability, and property and can therefore result in a loss of personal or autonomous control over one's own surroundings and one's life. It is through this theoretical lens that the current unexpected findings may be interpreted.

Furthermore, Johnson (1997) argued that this socialization process may also affect women, but to a lesser degree. In other words, although women may learn to seek control of their autonomy and immediate surroundings, patriarchal society does not pressure or demand that women *define* themselves in terms of the amount of control they have. Instead, and as previously discussed, women are socialized to derive their value and self-worth from their dependence on and connectedness to others and not from the independent control that they may yield over their own lives. As a result, women face very limited social risk and/or social consequence if they lose control over their autonomy (e.g., finances, earning potential, material resources). Consequently, women as a social group would not be constrained by a socialized fear of losing control. Therefore, according to the relationship between fear and control as discussed by Johnson (1997), it would make reasonable theoretical sense that increases in income would not be followed by increases in fear of crime in a female sample. Further research should empirically explore and test these theoretical explanations in more depth.

A second unexpected finding that warrants further explanation is the relationship between race and fear of crime. In particular, White males were statistically more fearful than minority males, calling into question the theoretical relevance of social

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vulnerability in this sample. Instead, White males may be more fearful because they have more to lose in terms of property and monetary possessions and thus feel more threatened with regard to personal/property victimization. It may also be the case that minority men face increased exposure to high-crime areas and are socially conditioned to tolerate crime. In addition, race was not a significant predictor for fear of crime in the female sample. Race effects differed across the male and female samples—a finding that supports our overall contention that fear of crime may function differently across genders. This difference was not, however, in the hypothesized direction. Again, the theoretical concept of social vulnerability, at least as measured by minority status, is inconsequential in the current sample of women. Future research should investigate the interaction between race and gender in alternate geographical, political, and economic populations to identify whether this pattern of fear is consistent for women of color in different contexts. Moreover, the current study measured race dichotomously as White and non-White because of the small proportion of minority respondents in the sample. To more accurately consider the relationship between race/ethnicity and fear of crime, future research should examine the possible differences in predictors of fear of crime among Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American populations, because their perceptions and experiences may be different from Whites and African Americans.

Finally, the relationship between age and worry about victimization in the female sample was unexpected. The current findings indicate that this relationship was in the opposite direction predicted by the mainstream vulnerability theory, which suggests that as individuals age, they become more fearful of criminal victimization. The current research, however, found that increases in respondent age were related to decreases in fear only among the female sample. Prior mainstream theory and its respective research that seek to explain fear of crime suggest that women and elderly people are more physically vulnerable and are therefore more likely to report higher levels of fear compared with their male and youthful counterparts. Although this seems to make intuitive sense, in light of the different and unique experiences of women, the current finding may be explained instead by looking to the relationship between age and risk of sexual victimization (see Pain, 1997, for a related discussion).[8] Specifically, as women age, they face less risk of sexual violation.[9] As previously discussed, women are taught to fear strangers and unknown settings, particularly in the context of sexual assault (see Koss et al., 1994). Most young girls, and therefore most women, hold images of "the stranger" as a potential perpetrator of sexual assault. Parents, teachers, and university educational programming on sexual assault all teach that women (all of whom are sexually vulnerable) should travel in groups, use only well-lit and established pathways, have a safety plan, and constantly be aware of immediate surroundings (see Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). Thus, women, in particular, are taught to fear. The result is often an exaggerated fear of strangers and unknown settings.

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The likelihood of sexual victimization decreases when women grow older, and as a result, changes in levels of fear may be expected. This explanation supposes, however, that worry about sexual victimization is driving female respondents' reported levels of fear. To gain a greater understanding of the negative relationship between age and female fear, further research should look more closely at this relationship in the context of the current findings. In particular, research testing the "shadow hypothesis" has found that rape operates as a "master offense" so that women's fear of rape conditions fear responses to unrelated crimes (e.g., burglary, robbery, murder). This proposition has been tested with a general community sample (Ferraro, 1996) and among female college students (Fisher & Sloan, 2003). Researchers should attempt to investigate the role of the shadow hypothesis among older citizen samples to determine the predictive ability of this particular perspective in understanding the complex relationship between female fear, age-related vulnerability, and the fear of rape and sexual assault. It may also be instructive to further consider the dynamics of the relationship between age and worry of victimization, because it is possible that these measures could be related in a nonlinear fashion. Additionally, research could benefit from testing the intersecting relationships between age and worry of victimization as mediated by other independent variables (e.g., race, income, education) across both female and male samples, because it is possible that certain women and men of varying age groups may be more fearful than others (e.g., younger minorities).

Researchers should continue to address differences in fear responses among women and men and should do so in a hierarchical or broader community context, controlling for community-level factors such as crime rate, racial and economic threat, degree of urbanization, geographic location, and the percentage of the local population headed by single women. Empirical investigations in the fear of crime literature should delve deeper into understanding what motivates older women to report lower levels of fear than their aged male counterparts especially in light of the current findings and traditional theory on the influence of age (as a function of vulnerability) and fear.

The current analysis reveals that the traditional models of fear of crime function in ways that are both similar and different across female and male samples. Thus, attempts to fully understand or advance the literature on fear of crime should remain sensitive to the ways in which predictors of fear may differ between women and men. The current findings also highlight the need to consider the effects of using general theory to explain phenomena that are not limited to the experience of one gender. Such shortsightedness can undermine our ability to accurately generalize research conclusions, ultimately painting an incomplete picture about what contributes to and motivates fear of crime.

Notes

1. Additional work on victimization using the structural-choice model (e.g., Meithe & Meier, 1990; Rodgers & Roberts, 1995; Wenzel, Koegel, & Gelberg, 2000) as well as the influence of mass media

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messages about crime (e.g., Dowler, 2006; Fabiansson, 2007) may inform research on fear of crime, but because of data limitations, the current research only looks at the vulnerability, disorder, and social integration models. Future research on fear of crime should theoretically and empirically develop and test the structural-choice perspective. Additional effort should focus on better understanding the way media influences perceptions of fear. 2. From a broad theoretical stance, a patriarchal society awards men a greater deal of privilege than women, and as a result, men (as a social group) are generally more well off than women in a multitude of arenas (e.g., economic, political, occupational) (see Johnson, 1997). Consequently, any gains women make will theoretically have a greater effect on their social status and access to economic, political, and occupational resources and, as a result, a greater effect on their perceptions of vulnerability and fear. In other words, advances matter for women primarily as a result of their oppression and subordinate social position. A more specific example of this can be seen by looking at differences in wage-earned labor. Despite education levels, men are typically paid more than women in a variety of occupations and thus may generally have more access to resources than women. Women need to achieve higher education levels to keep up with men in terms of pay rates and access to related resources—even those men who are undereducated or uneducated.

3. As required by the Dillman (1978) method, reminder postcards were sent to the entire sample 1 week after the first mailing, Approximately 1 month after the initial mailing, a second survey instrument was sent to nonrespondents. After approximately 2 months, a final wave of surveys were mailed out to those who had yet to respond.

4. Cases with pertinent missing data were deleted from the sample.

5. One item in the seven-item Worry of Victimization Scale is phrased in such a way that it raises a limitation with regard to the measure. Specifically, one of the items asks the respondents how often they worry about themselves or *someone in their family* being sexually assaulted. Because this question asks about fear of victimization for both the respondents and their family members, it is possible that this particular item is biased upward. This bias, however, should be somewhat minimized by the other six items in the Worry of Victimization Scale and is unlikely to alter the findings in a substantial way.

6. Because of the small proportion of the sample that identified themselves as other than White, the variable capturing race was measured dichotomously. The non-White category for this measure includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and respondents who identified themselves as "other."

7. To accurately test for significant differences between regression coefficients, the current analysis relies on the following formula as described by Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero (1998):

$$Z = \frac{b_1 - b_2}{\sqrt{SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2}}.$$

8. We believe that this theoretical speculation does not detract from the overall purpose and subsequent contribution of the current analysis, which is to test three distinct "mainstream" fear of crime models on separate male and female samples to determine whether there are differences in terms of the direction and magnitude of the relationships for men and women. By speculating that gender socialization (e.g., fear of rape) may influence the relationship between age and fear for women (but not men) and, as a result, explain the negative relationship between age and fear in the current research, we are reiterating that existing theory falls short in terms of both considering women's unique experiences and explaining female fear.

9. Generally, women between the ages of 18 and 23 are at the highest risk of sexual assault (see Koss et al., 1994; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997).

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