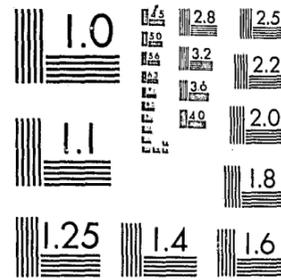


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~~X~~ The Fear of Rape:
A Study in Social Control

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Abstract

Feminists argue that the threat of rape acts as an instrument of social control of women, keeping them in a state of anxiety and encouraging the self-imposition of behavioral restrictions in a quest for safety. This assertion is tested with survey data from residents of Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Women fear crime more than men, and engage in more precautionary behaviors. However, these fears and behaviors are not randomly distributed among women. Those with the fewest resources to cope with victimization, the elderly, ethnic minorities, and those with low incomes, carry the heaviest burden of fear. Psycho-social and environmental factors associated with high fear levels among women include perceptions of high risk of one's own victimization of a multitude of violent crimes (including rape), a sense of physical powerlessness, and weak feelings of attachment to the neighborhood. Fear levels are strong predictors of the use of either of two types of safety strategies, isolating oneself from danger by limiting one's movement through time and space, and risk management in the face of danger by using "street savvy" tactics. Reliance on isolation is associated with women's beliefs about their own physical competence, while use of "street savvy" tactics is related to women's attitudes about the extent of danger in their neighborhoods. The implications of these results for the quality of women's lives are discussed.

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Running Head: Fear of Rape

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In Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape, Susan Brownmiller (1975) argued that rape is an instrument of social control, "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (p.15). While her attribution of conscious collusion in rape by all men evoked a storm of controversy (see Geis, 1977), Brownmiller emphasized that rape is a crime which affects all women, regardless of whether they are actually victimized. By limiting women's freedom and making them dependent on men for protection, the threat of rape provides support for a social system based on male dominance. As Griffin (1979) described it, "The fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they be thought provocative" (p.21).

Police data indicate that the rate of rape in the U.S has been rising sharply since Uniform Crime Report statistics first were reported in 1933 (Bowker, 1979; Hindelang & Davis, 1977). In recent years, women's movement activists have spurred efforts to reduce the incidence of rape and to ameliorate the circumstances faced by those who survive this ordeal (Largen, 1976; Rose, 1977). Rape crisis centers, reforms in the criminal justice system, and greater public awareness of rape as a social problem all are changes brought about primarily by the women's anti-rape movement. Most recently, "Take Back the Night" marches through city streets have demonstrated women's newfound unwillingness to impose restrictions on their own lives because of the threat of rape.

The social science contribution to this endeavor, although riddled with methodological and conceptual problems (Albin, 1977), has greatly increased our knowledge base about the phenomenon of rape and its

consequences. The correlates and consequences of rape victimization, the characteristics of rapists, and socio-legal and public attitudes toward rape all have been the subjects of systematic investigation (see Chappell & Fogarty, 1978; Chappell, Geis & Fogarty, 1974; Clark & Armstrong, 1979; Feild & Barnett, 1977; and National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1981 for bibliographies of this research).

Social scientists have focused less attention on a fundamental tenet of feminist analyses of rape: that it affects all women, whether or not they are actually victimized (Medea & Thompson, 1974; Russell, 1975). Little research has been directed toward investigating the impact of rape on women in the general population, i.e., on women who may not have been victimized but who nonetheless are subjected to the threat of rape and to the concomitant forces of social control described by Griffin (1979) and Brownmiller (1975).

One element of this crime that affects all women is the fear of being victimized. Griffin (1979) verbalized what many women experience: "I have never been free of the fear of rape. From a very early age I, like most women, have thought of rape as part of my natural environment - something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning" (p.3). Such fear can induce a continuing state of stress in women and can lead to the adoption of safety precautions that severely restrict women's freedom, such as not going out alone at night or staying out of certain parts of town. Ironically, taking these precautions does not always provide the protection it promises, since women's own homes are a frequent site of rape victimizations (McDermott, 1979).

To assess the extent and distribution of women's fear, to explore

its determinants, and to examine the strategies that women use to cope with the threat of victimization, we launched a study in 1977 investigating the impact of the fear of rape and of other crimes on the lives of women in urban neighborhoods in Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. This article reviews the findings of that study in the context of previous research and discusses some implications of those findings. (The methods and results of the study are presented in detail in Gordon & Riger, 1978; Gordon, Riger, LeBailly & Heath, 1980; Riger & Gordon, 1979; Riger, Gordon & LeBailly, 1978; Riger, Gordon & LeBailly, in press; Riger & Lavrakas, 1981; and Riger, LeBailly & Gordon, in press.)

Our study was grounded in the tradition of research on the fear of crime that was stimulated by the dramatic rise in U.S. crime rates beginning in the early 1960's. (See Dubow, McCabe & Kaplan, 1979, for a comprehensive review of the literature on reactions to crime.) Skogan (1978) estimates that the rate of violent crime increased by 336% between the years 1964-1975. Much of that increase was due to skyrocketing rates of rape, robbery, and serious assaults. The increase in fear of crime roughly paralleled the rise in crime rates. Yet fear is not distributed across the population in a pattern isomorphic with victimization rates. Women and the elderly consistently report the most fear of crime, despite the fact that, with the exception of women's risk of rape, these two groups experience the lowest collective chances of being victimized. While considerable research has investigated fear among the elderly (see Yin, 1980, for a review), less attention has been paid to the determinants of women's fear. The study reported here is an attempt to begin to fill that gap.

Methodological and Conceptual Problems
in the Study of Women's Fear of Crime

Baumer (1978) notes that much of the research on the fear of crime is derived from either national public opinion polls or surveys designed to evaluate specific crime reduction programs. Because of the paucity of independent variables in these studies, analyses of the data are limited for the most part to an examination of the distribution of fear among subgroups of the population. Demographic variables serve either to define the parameters of fearful subgroups, such as women or the elderly, or to act as indicators of constructs such as lifestyle that are hypothesized to affect exposure to crime and, hence, fear and victimization rates (Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garofalo, 1978). Lack of adequate statistical controls through use of multivariate techniques confounds the interpretation of findings (Clemente & Kleiman, 1977) and precludes an assessment of the importance of gender relative to other demographic attributes. Explanations for women's greater fear often are invoked post hoc instead of serving as sources of propositions to be tested. We attempted to solve some of these methodological problems in our research by developing scales to measure more directly a number of potential explanatory variables and by employing multivariate statistical techniques to assess their relative strength as determinants of women's fear.

At the heart of conceptual problems in the study of the fear of crime is the definitional ambiguity surrounding the construct "fear." In a review of the literature in this area, Yin (1980) found only one

study that reported a definition for fear of crime: "the amount of anxiety and concern that persons have of being a victim" (Sundeen & Mathieu, 1976, p.55). Some researchers consider fear to be risk, i.e., people's estimates of their probability of being victimized (Furstenberg, 1971), while others distinguish between risk and feelings of anxiety about that risk. Dubow, et al. (1979, p.1) noted that a variety of questions asking about the constructs "potential danger to self and/or others, fear, risk, concern, worry, anxiety, or behavior" have been used interchangeably as measures of fear of crime.

The National Crime Survey, a nation-wide victimization survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Justice, uses as the measure of fear the question "How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?" Garofalo (1979) identified a number of problems with this measure. First, the question does not mention crime as the source of feelings of lack of safety, and the meaning of the term neighborhood is left to respondents' (probably varying) interpretations. The amount of time people spend outside alone may differ considerably, affecting responses. The question assumes that "at night" means after dark. Finally, the "do you feel or would you feel" portion of the question mixes actual with hypothetical situations. Since Fowler and Mangione (Note 1) identified it as the most frequently used measure of fear of crime, we used this measure despite its flaws so that we could compare our findings with those of other researchers. However, we did omit the "would you feel" portion of the wording in order to focus on women's actual experience of fear.

We have described a number of methodological and conceptual flaws in the fear of crime research, but perhaps most serious is the lack of a theoretical framework for studying this issue. Baumer (1978) asserts that the development of such a framework is the major task confronting researchers in this area. Our investigation employed a conceptual framework derived from social ecology theory (see, e.g., Catalano, 1979). That is, we assumed that both women's fears and their coping responses were multiply determined, and that personal and social factors interacted with the broader contextual and cultural environment in producing these responses. Our goal was to examine the impact of one class of environmental stressors, i.e., the threat of criminal victimization, on women; and to assess the strategies employed by women to cope with that stress. Finally, we saw women not simply as reacting to their environment with fear, but also as shaping that environment in a proactive manner through their use of preventive coping strategies.

Design of the Study

In conjunction with the Reactions to Crime Project (Lewis, 1978) at Northwestern University's Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, we conducted a telephone survey in 1977 of 1620 people living within the city limits of Philadelphia, San Francisco and Chicago. In each city we interviewed 540 adults selected through random-digit-dialing. The sample was weighted to correct for the number of telephone lines per household, since that affected people's chances of being contacted. The weighted N = 1389. (This sample is referred to hereafter as the "3-city aggregate sample.") An additional 3400 respondents, randomly

selected from ten neighborhoods within the three cities, were interviewed by telephone in order to permit an in-depth examination of how crime affects community life. A more complete discussion of the methodology of the telephone interview is given in Skogan (Note 2), and findings are presented in Lewis and Salem (Note 3), Podalevsky and Dubow (in press) and Skogan and Maxfield (1981). At the end of the telephone interview, respondents in six of the ten neighborhoods were invited to participate in an in-person interview about their fear of crimes including sexual assault; the 299 women and 68 men interviewed in person comprise the core sample for our study. We deliberately oversampled women so that the causes and consequences of their greater fear of crime could be explored in depth. An examination of the reliability and validity of responses from persons included in both the telephone and in-person surveys is presented in LeBailly, Note 4.

A comparison of the 367 persons interviewed in-person with the 3-city aggregate sample indicated no statistically significant differences in their area of residence or race. However, the in-person respondents were younger, better educated, and wealthier than the randomly-selected telephone sample. Two percent of the women in the 3-city aggregate sample reported ever having been raped or sexually assaulted. Among the women who were interviewed both in person and on the telephone, 6% reported on the phone that they had been raped or sexually assaulted, while almost twice as many (11%) mentioned such an assault when interviewed in person. (Note that this incidence data is considerably higher than that reported in other victimization surveys (e.g., McDermott, 1979); this may be because the question asked about sexual assault as well as

rape, and because the time frame was not limited to the past six or twelve months, as is typical in many surveys.) These data raise serious questions for epidemiological studies of rape, since methodological artifacts may contribute considerable error to rape rates reported in such studies.

Since the 3-city aggregate sample fairly well approximates the demographic profiles of the cities from which it was drawn, we used that sample to determine the distribution of levels of fear and perceived risk of criminal victimization. However, questions in the in-person interview included a wider range of psychological and self-reported behavioral variables, and therefore we used the in-person survey to examine determinants of fear and coping strategies.

Factors Associated with the Fear of Crime

Fear and victimization rates. Numerous studies of the fear of crime report that female gender is the most consistent correlate of high fear levels (Baumer, 1978; Dubow et al., 1979) although some discrepant findings have appeared (Yin, 1980). Not only is gender a powerful predictor of fear across a number of data sets, it appears to be more important than other salient demographic factors -- age, race and income (Cook, Skogan, Cook & Antunes, in press). Stinchcombe, Adams, Heimer, Scheppele, Smith, and Taylor (1980) found that scores of the least fearful women (those who are young) were higher than those of the most fearful males (the elderly).

In data from the 3-city aggregate sample, women's fear scores were significantly higher than men's (see Table 1). Forty-four percent of women in our sample reported they were "very" or "somewhat" afraid when out alone at night, while only 18% of men responded in this fashion. Men's fear increased sharply over about age 50. Nevertheless, our findings corroborate those of Stinchcombe et al. (1980): Young women, those least fearful among females, had about the same fear scores as elderly men, those men who were most afraid. Older women reported much more fear than young women. Sixty-two percent of women over about age 50 reported that they were afraid to walk alone in their neighborhoods at night. Among both women and men, blacks and Hispanics reported more fear than whites, and respondents with low incomes were more afraid than those with high incomes. This pattern of fear is generally similar to that reported by Clemente and Kleiman (1977), Garofalo (1979), Hindelang et al. (1978) and Stinchcombe et al. (1980).

 Table 1 goes here

The high fear levels of blacks, Hispanics, and those with low incomes may be due to areal effects since these people are more likely to live in high-crime neighborhoods (Furstenberg, 1972) and have relatively high victimization rates (Clemente & Kleiman, 1977). Understanding the high fear levels of women and the elderly is more problematic in light of the relatively low victimization rates experienced by these

groups (with the important exception of women's rate of rape, discussed below) and their lesser likelihood of residential segregation into high-crime neighborhoods (Hindelang et al., 1978). (See Table 1 for victimization rates. Note that rates are presented as number per 100 persons in each relevant demographic subcategory, and not per total population. For instance, the rate in the upper left-hand cell in Table 1 indicates that about 14 victimizations occurred for every 100 women aged 15-26.)

Researchers have generally taken two views of the discrepancy between fear and victimization rates among women and the elderly. As summarized by Dubow et al. (1979), some take the view that women and the elderly are "overly afraid." Since objective crime conditions do not account for fear, these reactions reflect a generally fearful orientation to the world or a lack of trust in the social order. Others (e.g., Stinchcombe et al., 1980; Hindelang et al., 1978) argue that the high fear rates for women and the elderly is appropriate given that they have more to lose if victimized (women could be raped and even a slight injury to the elderly could be serious). In addition, they are likely to be less able to defend themselves. However, high fear of crime among these groups could also partly produce their lower victimization rates, for people with high fear may use a greater number of precautions which, if effective, would keep them from being victimized (Balkin, 1979).

Yet the discrepancy between fear and victimization rates for women and the elderly also could be a methodological artifact. This discrepancy appears when data are aggregated by demographic characteristics of persons. When place of residence rather than characteristics of persons is used as the basis for aggregating crime statistics, fear levels do

appear to correlate with rates of local crime. In a study conducted in Minneapolis, McPherson (1978) found that residents' perceptions of the seriousness of crime problems in their neighborhoods accurately reflected the rates of reported local crime (with the exception of vandalism, a crime which often is not reported), and that citizens were fearful in proportion to local rates of personal (but not property) crime. Jaycox (1978) found a similar correspondence between fear levels and local victimization rates for residents of two Milwaukee and Brooklyn neighborhoods. In our study, women's fear levels were significantly (albeit weakly) related to local assault rates as indicated by police data (Riger, LeBailly & Gordon, in press).

In addition, other methodological difficulties could be masking a level of rape that is commensurate with women's high degree of fear. Available data indicate that rates of rape in the United States appear to be among the highest in the world (Bowker, 1978). Griffin (1979) suggests that rape rates based on police data be multiplied by a factor of ten to include unreported rapes and those reported but listed as "unfounded" by police. Others give a more conservative, but still sizeable, estimate of unreported rape. Using National Crime Survey data for 1973, Skogan (1977) found that only 44% of rapes that were mentioned to survey interviewers had been reported to police; this figure rose to 56% for 1974-1975 (McDermott, 1979). However, a "reverse record check" found that about a third of known rape victims (i.e., those who had reported the incident to police) did not mention their victimization to survey interviewers, raising doubts about the validity of these data (McDermott, 1979). As Skogan (1977) states, "the doubly dark figure of

crime which is reported neither to the police nor to an interviewer remains elusive" (p.45).

The trends in women's fear levels correspond to the patterns in rape victimizations that are reported to survey interviewers, with the exception of age. That is, black and low income women both report more fear and experience a higher rate of rape (McDermott, 1979) than white and high income women. However, older women (ages 52-93) report the most fear of crime and it is among these women that rape rates are lowest.

Perceived risk of victimization. Although fear levels do not always correspond to victimization rates, they do seem to vary with people's subjective estimates of their likelihood of being victimized. Fowler and Mangione (Note 1) found that perceived risk of victimization was the strongest predictor of fear (or "worry" in their terminology) in their survey of residents of the city of Hartford. Our findings are similar. In our in-person sample, the strongest predictor of women's fear was their subjective estimate of their likelihood of becoming the victim of a violent crime (Riger, Rogel, & Gordon, Note 5). (Risk estimates are presented in Table 1.)

There is a high correlation between rates of rape and violent crime in police data (Bowker, 1978), and the overall rate of crimes against persons is higher in the United States than in most industrialized Western nations (Gurr, 1977; Skogan, 1978). Indeed, the prevalence of violence leads Pinkney (1972) to label the United States "by far the most criminal nation in the world" (p.15). These findings suggest that the incidence of rape is related to a general violence factor in society. Both women and men in our 3-city aggregate sample perceive a relationship

between their own risk of robbery in their neighborhood and a woman's risk of rape ($r=.64$). Rape may be a "bellwether" crime, indicating to men and women alike the dangerousness of the environment (Gordon et al., 1980). Men's estimates of a woman's chances of being raped when out alone in their neighborhood actually exceed women's estimates of their own chances of being raped. These risk estimates are related to fear levels for men as well as women. Men may be less likely to admit fear for themselves than to express concern about danger for their female relatives and friends.

Perceptions of physical competence. Some researchers (summarized in Dubow et al., 1979) suggest that personality traits inculcated in women, such as timidity and passivity, account for women's greater fear scores. In a review of explanations for women's fear, we concluded that women's physiques, rather than their psyches, account for a substantial proportion of the difference between women's fear and that of men (Riger et al., 1978). As Stinchcombe et al. (1980) pointed out, running fast, fighting, and self-defense are not typically part of female sex-role socialization, magnifying the physical differences between the sexes. We asked women in our in-person interview how strong they thought they were and how fast they thought they could run compared to the average woman and man. Sixty-three percent of the women thought they were less physically competent than both the average man and the average woman; only 28% perceived themselves to be better or even similar in speed and strength when compared to the average woman. These perceptions of physical competence were significant predictors of women's fear levels: Women who perceived themselves as less physically efficacious were more likely to say they were afraid.

Degree of attachment to community. Residents tend to attribute local crime problems to people from outside their neighborhood, suggesting that fear of crime is actually fear of strangers (Conklin, 1975). A belief that others will assist you if you are attacked can reduce fear (Bickman, Green, Edwards, Shane-Dubow, Lavrakas, North-Walker, & Borkowski, Note 6), and people may expect to receive help from acquaintances. Studies of bystander intervention demonstrate that aid is indeed given more frequently to those who are familiar (even if only slightly), and in familiar settings (Hackler, Ho, & Urquhart-Ross, 1974; Latané & Darley, 1970). We expected, therefore, that the existence of ties to other people and to the neighborhood would reduce women's fear. We measured these ties through a series of questions asking respondents: a) if they could distinguish a stranger in their neighborhood from somebody who lived there, b) if they really felt a part of their neighborhood or whether they thought of it more as just a place to live, and c) how many children in their neighborhood they knew by name. The scale constituted from these items was a significant predictor of fear scores: Those women who felt less attached to their neighborhood reported more fear.

In analyses examining the relationship of other forms of community involvement and fear levels, we found that long-term residence and home-ownership were related to less fear. However, social interaction with neighbors and use of local facilities for shopping, etc., were not related to fear levels (Riger, LeBailly and Gordon, in press).

To summarize, we found that fear was distributed in similar patterns for women and men, but that women reported more fear of crime than men.

The most fearful women were those who were elderly, non-white, and lived in low-income households. Three attitudinal variables significantly predicted women's fear (in order of relative importance): perceived risks of becoming a victim of a personal crime, belief in one's own physical competence, and sense of attachment to the community. Perceptions of high risks, a low sense of physical competence, and an absence of community attachment all correlate with high fear levels in women.

One other variable, attitudes toward women's role in society, was related to fear in bivariate analyses but was not a significant predictor of fear when the effects of all variables acting in concert were controlled. We suspect that the impact of this variable is mediated through women's perceptions of their physical ability, since these two variables are associated to a moderately high degree. Women who hold traditional attitudes toward women's role in society are likely to perceive themselves as weak and slow.

Protecting Oneself from Victimization

In a discussion of strategies that people use when interacting with their environments, Cobb (1976, p.311) distinguishes between adaptation ("changing the self in an attempt to improve person-environment fit") and coping ("manipulation of the environment in the service of self"). This distinction is loosely reflected in one made by Dubow, et al. (1979) between avoidance and self-protective behaviors in response to the threat of crime. "Avoidance refers to actions taken to decrease exposure to crime by removing oneself from or increasing the distance from situations in which the risk of criminal victimization is believed to be high" (p.31). Avoidance behaviors such as not going out at night or

staying out of certain parts of town, limit one's exposure to dangerous situations. In contrast, self-protective behavior seeks to minimize the risk of victimization when in the presence of danger, e.g., by using self-defense tactics or asking repair persons to show identification. While avoidance may require changes in one's daily behavior to reduce exposure to risks, self-protection tactics permit the management of risks once they occur (Skogan, Note 7). The analytical distinction between avoidance and self-protection has been empirically supported through factor analysis of a variety of data sets (Keppler, Note 8; Lavrakas & Lewis, 1980; Riger & Gordon, 1979).

Women in our survey used two types of precautionary strategies in response to the threat of crime: isolation and street savvy. Isolation represents avoidance tactics, designed to prevent victimization by not exposing oneself to risk (e.g., not going out on the street at night). Street savvy, on the other hand, represents tactics intended to reduce risks when exposed to danger, such as wearing shoes that permit one to run, or choosing a seat on a bus with an eye to who is sitting nearby.

When we asked women in the in-person interview sample how frequently they used these precautionary strategies, about 41% said they used isolation tactics "all or most of the time" or "fairly often," while about 59% said they "seldom" or "never" did these things (See Table 2). Seventy-one percent of the men said they rarely avoided exposure to risk. (Note that since few men were included in the in-person survey, data on men's coping strategies are presented for illustrative purposes only; as statistical tests would be unreliable.) Among demographic subgroups of women, Latina (69%) and elderly (64%) women and

those with less formal education (59%) rely more often on isolation tactics. Conversely, the lowest levels of use of isolation prevailed among highly educated women (only 32% used them frequently) and among those who are white (33%). As with fear, areal effects may be operating: residential segregation of ethnic and racial minorities into high crime neighborhoods could prompt greater use of isolation tactics.

Table 2 goes here

The distribution of the use of street savvy tactics did not differ significantly among demographic subgroups of women. Overall, about 74% of the women in our sample reported frequent use of street savvy tactics while 26% seldom used them. Among men, 90% said they rarely used these tactics. Elderly women used street savvy tactics least often among women (33% responding "seldom" or "never"), while black, Latina and poor women used them frequently.

Fear of crime is the best predictor in our study of the use of isolation behaviors (Riger, Gordon & LeBailly, in press), a finding congruent with previous research (Dubow et al., 1979). Women who assess their neighborhoods as unsafe and women who perceive themselves to be low in physical competence are likely to rely on isolating tactics as a means of protecting themselves. Race and amount of formal education also were significant predictors, in the directions described above. Although differences among age levels were significant in bivariate analyses, age was not related to the use of isolation when the effects

of all variables were controlled simultaneously.

The most powerful predictor of the use of street savvy tactics also, was fear of crime. Women who are afraid are more likely to use street savvy tactics than those who are not afraid. Since most people have never been victimized or seen a crime being committed, they may use the presence of phenomena such as vandalism or burned out or abandoned buildings in the neighborhood as indicators of danger (Stinchcombe et al., 1980) or social disorder (Lewis & Maxfield, 1980). Perceptions of the frequency of such phenomena contribute to the increased use of street savvy tactics. Such signs of social disorganization affect people's perceptions of the crime problem in their neighborhoods, and consequently, their reactions to that problem. It seems, then, that when their trust in the social order is low, women rely on themselves for protection when they are exposed to danger rather than expecting forces within the neighborhood to regulate behavior within its boundaries.

Finally, we asked women in our study how frequently they engaged after dark in each of a series of everyday but potentially dangerous activities, such as being home alone, using public transportation, or walking through public parks (Gordon et al., 1980). In every instance, how often our respondents reported doing something was significantly and negatively related to their levels of worry about possible harm when doing those activities. People did least often the things that worried them most. Especially important for understanding the impact of fear on the quality of women's lives, activities done least often by women in our sample are those associated with the most choice, such as going out for entertainment alone at night. Activities which seem less

discretionary, such as using public transportation, were avoided less than social or leisure activities.

To summarize, women in our sample used street savvy tactics frequently and isolating tactics less often, although they use both kinds of tactics more often than men. Differences in use of isolation reflect age, racial and educational differences, with elderly and Latina and black women and those with less education relying on this tactic more frequently than younger and white women and those with more education. The attitudinal correlates associated with the use of precautionary behavior are different from those associated with fear, with the exception of perceptions of physical competence. And, aside from fear, correlates of isolation differ from those of street savvy. Reliance on isolation appears to be associated with how a woman feels about herself, in particular her physical competence, while reliance on street savvy for protection seems a function of her attitudes about the danger and decay in her neighborhood. High fear levels are associated with infrequent engagement in everyday but potentially dangerous activities, particularly those involving the most choice.

Some Implications for the Quality of Women's Lives

Feminist analyses of the effect of the threat of rape on women assert that it operates as an instrument of social control, encouraging women to restrict their behavior and keeping them in a state of stress (Brown-miller, 1975; Griffin, 1979). A sizeable proportion of women in our study report high fear of crime. Those with the fewest resources to

cope with victimization--the elderly, blacks and Latinas, women with low incomes and less formal education--are those who carry the heaviest burden of fear. Although the pattern of fear among women is similar to that among men, women's fear is significantly greater. Thus the distribution of fear appears to follow existing social cleavages delineated by gender, age, race and social class, that mark status and power inequalities in our society.

Although fear appears disproportionate to the risks women face as measured by victimization and reported crime data, women's fear is proportionate to their own estimates of risk. It is understandable that women perceive themselves to be at risk of rape, and that these risk perceptions affect their levels of fear. What is intriguing is that women perceive themselves to be at higher risk of robbery and assault than men, even though all available statistics indicate that men are the most frequent victims of these crimes. A conclusive test of the relationships among fear, victimization, and risk awaits improvements in methods of measuring the "true" amount of crime and some non-self-report ways of measuring fear and precautionary behavior.

It is possible that women's high perceived risk produces fear and consequent precautionary behavior, which in turn leads to low rates of victimization (Balkin, 1979). Since their estimates of risk of robbery and rape are highly correlated, women may perceive a general threat of personal violence from any of a multitude of crimes. The original feminist formulation of rape as a means of controlling women may need to be expanded to include other crimes of violence. Bowker (1978) suggests that wife-beating is a better example than rape of forces of

social control that affect women. Since our study focuses on street crime, we did not include domestic violence in our calculations of women's fear. Whatever the causes of violence, the effects may be to reinforce constraints already operating on low status victims, and, hence, further encourage them to restrict their behavior.

The sizeable proportion of women who use isolation tactics regularly gives support to the argument that the impact of the threat of crime on many women is restrictive. Numerous studies have found that women use avoidance behaviors more than men (summarized in Dubow et al., 1979). The social and work opportunities lost to women because of the threat of crime seem likely to very much reduce the overall quality of their lives. Although the precautionary strategies employed by women may not involve significant monetary expenditures, these strategies are undoubtedly costly in terms of personal freedom.

Hindelang et al. (1978) argue that shifts in behavior due to fear of crime are subtle. They assert that people don't change what they do, only how they do it; for example, they might drive instead of walk to their destination. Our findings suggest that for women, the sum of these subtle shifts may exert a considerable toll on their time, effort and freedom. When we asked our respondents how often they avoided doing necessary activities such as shopping or errands because of fears for their safety, 78% of the men but only 32% of the women responded "never." Thirty-four percent of women in our sample said they avoided doing these things because of fear for their safety "fairly often" or "most of the time." When we asked about behavior that didn't involve necessary tasks but rather consisted of things they wanted to do, like visiting friends

or going to movies, 75% of males but only 30% of females reported they never let fear deter them. Thirty-six percent of females said they often avoided doing such activities because of fear of harm.

Other data suggest that the price paid by women for safety is greatest in the area of behaviors involving the most discretion, such as visiting friends or going out for evening entertainment (Gordon et al., 1980). High fear seems to shrink the scope of women's choices about their lives by restricting their movement through time and space, giving credence to feminist arguments that the threat of criminal victimization severely limits women's freedom.

The important role of self-assessments of physical competence in determining women's reactions to crime, both in fearful attitudes and in isolation behavior, raises intriguing questions for future research. What are the socialization and situational factors that induce women to believe that they are less physically powerful not only than men but also than most women? How do feelings of physical powerlessness affect women's beliefs about potency in other areas of their lives, such as work and family interactions? And are perceptions of physical competence related to women's likelihood of resisting attack? Larwood, O'Neal and Brennan (1977) suggest that the "social inhibition" that suppresses the expression of physical aggression by females can be disinhibited under certain circumstances. Cohn, Kidder and Harvey (1978) found that after taking a self-defense training course, women reported feeling stronger, braver, more active, more in control, bigger, and safer. Among those we interviewed in person, 31% of the males but only 17% of the females had taken self-defense training.

Perhaps the central question to be answered by research on precautionary behavior is whether the use of such behavior keeps women safe from crime. There were an insufficient number of victims in our sample to directly test this question. Other analyses of nation-wide data sets suggest that it is rates of exposure to crime, rather than degree of precaution, which determine victimization. Hindelang et al. (1978) hypothesize that the probability of being in dangerous places (e.g. streets and public parks) at times (especially nighttime) when crimes are likely to occur is strongly related to victimization rates. Yet in a test of this hypothesis, we found that exposure was related to property but not personal victimization (Rogel, Gordon, Riger & LeBailly, Note 9). Women are often assaulted in their homes, and are more likely than men to know their attacker (Bowker, 1978). These findings suggest that while limiting exposure to street crime may keep women safe from some attacks by strangers, it will not prevent their victimization from a myriad of other forms of violence. And the costs that women pay by limiting their exposure to risk may be considerable.

A number of issues raised by this study remain to be explored. We have just begun to examine the role of neighborhood differences in women's reactions to crime. We indicated above that the presence of signs of social disorder, such as abandoned buildings or teenagers hanging out on streetcorners, contributed to the use of street savvy tactics. The effects on fear and behavior of other factors in the built environment, as well as community social climate (Krupat & Guild, 1980) and the "climate of concern" about crime (Conklin, 1975), warrant further investigation.

While our data strongly support the belief that fear of crime constrains women's freedom, it is necessary to point out the limitations of our study. Our data are based on self-reports, are correlational in nature, and are limited to a cross section of the population at one point in time. While the findings fit an interpretation which suggests that perceived risks determine fear levels, and fear in turn (along with other specified factors) determines use of precautions, the correlational nature of the study prevents us from assuming causal linkages or their directions. It is possible that the use of precautionary behavior leads people to infer that they must be afraid, rather than vice versa (see Bem, 1970). And other, unexamined factors are not ruled out in this, or any other, correlational study.

The freedom to walk safely through city streets should be a right enjoyed by every citizen in this country. As our data indicate, this freedom is denied to many more women than men, albeit often through the use of self-imposed behavioral restrictions. The threat of crime, by creating a constant state of apprehension about possible victimization in many women and by leading to the self-imposition of behavioral restrictions, has the effects that feminists decry: It limits women's opportunities to be active participants in public life. Although the direct effects of crime may be more severe for men since they are more frequently victimized (except for rape), the indirect effects, in terms of fear and restriction of behaviors, appear to be much more severe for women. One observer has noted that fear of crime may be an important social problem in itself (Maltz, Note 10). If so, it is a problem which disproportionately affects the lives of American women.

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Table 1. Demographic Distribution of Victimization Rates, Fear, and Perceived Risk of Victimization, by Gender.

Category	Rates of Crimes against Persons ^a		% Afraid		Perceived Risk of Robbery ^b		Perceived Risk of Assault ^b		Perceived Risk of Rape for Women ^b		N ^c	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Sample	14.73	23.05	43.6	17.9	4.15	2.87	3.34	2.27	2.88	3.08	693	643
Age												
15-26	14.35	26.84	35.2	10.6	3.67	2.31	2.96	2.02	3.15	2.98	160	167
27-33	10.76	17.45	31.8	15.5	4.22	3.03	3.44	2.23	3.39	3.19	137	158
34-51	9.05	13.93	37.3	16.7	4.44	3.18	3.65	2.40	2.81	3.28	166	164
52-93	9.30	11.32	62.0	32.3	4.28	2.98	3.38	2.63	2.15	3.04	172	119
Race/Ethnicity												
White	10.21	16.22	39.8	14.8	3.71	2.60	2.99	2.03	2.55	2.83	390	380
Black	13.51	22.54	50.7	22.3	5.16	3.47	4.17	2.76	3.67	3.80	206	161
Latino/Other	5.79(O)	9.80(O)	52.9(L)	30.7(L)	5.44(L)	3.05(L)	3.53(L)	2.92(L)	3.11(L)	3.61(L)	33	36
Income												
< \$6000	15.44	27.25	56.4	30.1	4.70	2.96	3.99	2.38	2.83	3.97	149	67
\$6000-9999	12.14	21.28	45.4	17.8	4.05	3.38	3.46	2.87	3.12	3.47	114	89
\$10000-14999	8.46	13.25	37.0	17.5	4.46	3.13	3.39	2.33	2.82	2.77	115	140
\$15000 +	8.30	13.44	32.3	15.1	3.96	2.63	3.03	2.10	2.83	2.97	144	215
Education												
< H. S.	10.37	16.55	54.7	29.9	4.79	3.71	3.84	3.13	2.79	3.66	112	78
H.S. Grad	10.46	20.33	46.1	18.3	4.54	2.88	3.62	2.35	3.21	3.02	243	194
> H. S.	12.06	16.19	37.0	14.2	3.78	2.70	3.07	2.07	2.72	3.01	315	350

^a Victimization rates were calculated from 1976 National Crime Survey data for Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, and represent the number of crimes against 100 persons in each demographic subcategory. Women's rates were based on rape, robbery, and assault, while rape was omitted for men since this data was not available. All other data are from the 3-city aggregate sample.

^b Measured on a scale from 0 (no risk) to 10 (extremely high risk).

^c Actual N's vary slightly across each row due to missing data.

Table 2. Demographic Distribution of the Frequent Use of Precautionary Behaviors, by Gender

<u>Category</u>	<u>% Often</u> <u>ISOLATE</u>		<u>% Often</u> <u>STREET SAVVY</u>	
	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Sample	10.3(68) ^a	41.5(299)	29.4(68)	73.9(299)
Age				
18-26	5.3(19)	37.3(102)	15.8(19)	74.5(102)
27-33	5.6(18)	35.7(56)	33.3(18)	75.0(56)
34-51	16.7(18)	38.8(98)	38.9(18)	75.5(98)
52-93	15.4(13)	64.3(42)	30.8(13)	66.7(42)
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	9.1(11)	45.0(100)	36.4(11)	78.0(100)
White	4.9(41)	33.3(159)	22.0(41)	68.6(159)
Latino	11.1(9)	69.2(26)	22.2(9)	80.8(26)
Income				
< \$6000	14.3(7)	38.0(50)	28.6(7)	84.0(50)
\$6000-9999	-0-(9)	40.7(54)	33.3(9)	77.8(54)
\$10000-14999	18.8(16)	52.5(61)	31.3(16)	77.0(61)
\$25000 and over	11.1(27)	38.7(106)	33.3(27)	67.0(106)
Education				
< H.S.	15.4(13)	59.1(66)	53.8(13)	71.2(66)
H.S. Grad	22.2(9)	44.3(88)	33.3(9)	81.8(88)
> H.S.	6.5(46)	31.7(145)	21.7(46)	70.3(145)

^a Numbers in parentheses indicate N's.

END