

Fear of child victimization and gender: fear of mothers and fathers about their sons and daughters

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Abstract

This study examines the parents' fear that their children will be victims of a crime, from a gender perspective. In a sample of 290 fathers and mothers with under-aged children living in the Basque Country (Spain), the influences of the gender of the parent, the gender of the children and the type of crime were analyzed to establish possible interactions between these variables. A mixed-design ANOVA analysis showed that mothers and fathers reported similar levels of fear for their children, but we found an interaction between the gender of the children and the type of crime: in families with one or more daughters a higher fear for their children was found, especially when considering the threat of sexual assault. Fear for sons was not higher in crimes to which boys could be more exposed. Results showed that girls are viewed as more vulnerable to crimes, specially of sexual nature, which leads us to conclude the relevance of encouraging this line of research in future studies, in order to analyze if these fears, shaped by both the gender of the children and the crime type, are influencing parental practices.

Keywords

Fear of crime, altruistic fear, gender, parent-child relations.

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Introduction

When parents face the possibility that their children could be a victim of a crime, they experience what has been labeled as *altruistic fear of crime* (Warr 1992). The scientific literature has failed to consider this fear because most studies have examined exclusively the fear of *personally* being a victim; but fearing for others, specially the most significant ones, could be more frequent than personal fear and presents gendered patterns, could be transmitted to children and also have relevant impacts in behaviors -such as parents limiting physical activities outside-, as we discuss below. In the last decade, we have started to understand the gendered dynamics of altruistic fears in the family, and since the risk of being a victim of certain types of crime is also gendered, this study aims to expand our knowledge about the fears of mothers and fathers that theirs daughters and sons could suffer specific crime types, and more specifically testing if interactions are found between the gender of the parent, of the children and the crime type.

The failure to consider the *altruistic fear of crime* has been described as one of the most reproachable oversights of the current literature on fear of crime (Warr 2000). The altruistic fears could be more frequent, and often more intense, than concerns about one's own safety when the objects of our fear are members of the family, as it has been found in the U.S. by Warr and Ellison (2000). Moreover, Rader and Cossman (2011) studied fear for others outside the family in a sample of college students also in the U.S. and found that this fear was more salient than fearing personal victimization.

As it will be detailed below, gender has been a key variable in explaining personal fear of crime, and the same remains true for altruistic fears, where the differences found between women and men have been explained from the gender socialization perspective, and more recently, from the doing gender perspective, with samples from the U.S. (Rader 2010; Rader and Cossman 2011). Most studies

1 have focused in married adults with children but little attention has been paid to
2 the gender of the children in relation to the specific typology of crime. This is
3 relevant because different types of crime elicit distinct levels of fear of personal
4 victimization, as found by Ferraro (1995) in his influential work with national
5 data in the U.S., and these fears of specific crimes have a gendered nature with
6 women's fear related to sexual victimization being much higher than among men.
7 This result was found in several countries according to the reviews of the
8 literature by Hale (1996) and Vanderveen (2006). This has also been found in
9 Spain in a recent study with a representative sample of the inhabitants in a Basque
10 city (San-Juan, Vozmediano and Vergara 2012). If similar patterns of fear of
11 specific crimes are found in relation to daughters and sons, it would help us
12 expanding our knowledge about the dynamics of gendered fears in the family.
13 Moreover, parental fear, as a part of the parenting role, influences children's fears,
14 as suggested by a study carried out in Belgium (De Groof 2008), so establishing
15 if specific-by-crime fears occur and are gendered could lead us to new
16 perspectives in this transmission of fears and more generally, in the transmission
17 of gender beliefs. To contribute to this line of research, the present study aims to
18 expand cross-cultural knowledge of altruistic fears by corroborating if the
19 gendered nature of the fear for our children is found in Spain (in the city of
20 Bilbao, in the Basque Country) and by analyzing if the fears that mothers and
21 fathers experience for their daughters and sons are related to specific types of
22 crime; and moreover, if interactions are found among the gender of the parent, of
23 the child, and the crime type.

42 **Cultural and criminological context**

45 Spain constitutes an interesting setting for this research due to the cultural and
46 criminological characteristics of our country. In terms of overall crime, Spain
47 appears to be relatively safe compared to other European and non-European
48 countries, although caution should be exercised when comparing crime rates
49 between countries, due to differences in legislation and other methodological
50 issues (Tavares and Thomas, 2010). According to the police, Spain has a crime
51 rate of 48.9 crimes per 1000 inhabitants, while the European mean is 67.6 crimes
52 per 1000 inhabitants. In the Basque Country the rate is 39.3 crimes/1000
53 inhabitants, using data from 2011 (*Home Office of the Basque Government* 2011).

1 The International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) carried out in 2004/05 and
2 specifically its European section, the European Survey of Crime and Safety (EU
3 ICS), places Spain, with 9%, in last place in the victimization prevalence rates
4 indicator for 10 common crimes in 2004, among 18 European countries whose
5 mean exceeds 15% (Van Dijk et al. 2007). In the capital of the country, Madrid,
6 the victimization rate is 13.7% according to the same source. A study in the most
7 populated city in the Basque Country (Bilbao), with a representative sample and a
8 methodology that offered data comparable to the results from the ICVS, found
9 that the percentage of people who experienced a crime in the previous year was
10 4.2% (San-Juan et al. 2012). Available data portrays this city as a safe one, in a
11 safe region, within a safe country. This constitutes an interesting context for
12 carrying out research about crime perceptions, since the fear of crime is frequently
13 not related to crime rates or objective risk (Van Dijk et al. 2007) and personal
14 fears increase freedom-limiting behaviors and limits well-being even in secure
15 countries (San-Juan et al. 2012).

16 Besides, even with an acceptable level of overall security, the crime risks are
17 gendered. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
18 Statistical Database, based on police data, offers the distribution of victimization
19 in Spain for males and females, in relation to four types of crime. In every crime
20 the percentage of male victims is higher (82.4% in serious robbery, 70.5% in
21 homicide and 54% in robbery) but 88.6% of victims are women when considering
22 sexual assault.

23 Parental fears, if shaped by gender and type of crime, could be reflecting the
24 actual risk of child victimization for girls and boys. It seems logical to expect
25 gendered patterns similar to those found in adults, but data on the gender
26 distribution among underaged victims is not available from Institutions in Spain.
27 Looking for information in research studies, the work about young delinquency in
28 the Basque Country by San-Juan and Ocáriz (2012) offers some data about the
29 gender distribution of underaged victims in crimes against property: they found a
30 35% of males, 20% of females and in the rest of the cases there was a group of
31 victims of both genders. This could imply a higher risk of victimization in crimes
32 against property among males, but only youth offenders were taken into account.
33 No data is available when the offenders are adults. According to a study on
34 familiar violence in Spain that collected data among juveniles, families and
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1 teaching staff, girls are three times more vulnerable to sex abuse at home than
2 boys (Sanmartín 2011). However, in a review of the literature about the detection
3 of sexual abuse among youth, Del Campo (2003) argues that sexual abuse among
4 boys could be under-estimated. Therefore, the reduced evidence at hand related to
5 the gender of underaged victims only suggest a higher risk of crimes against
6 property among boys and a higher risk of sexual abuse among girls.
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10 With regard to its cultural and social peculiarities, Spain is a young democracy
11 evolving from an openly macho culture, where gender-role stereotyping has
12 showed a marked decline, according to a survey study with large samples that
13 collected data in 1993 and 2001 (López-Sáez, Morales and Lisbona 2008), but the
14 content of gender stereotypes remained stable. Some of them are related to the
15 role of caregiver in the family that women should play, which is coherent with the
16 fact that gender asymmetry remains in Spain mainly in the private familiar
17 context, according to a study with official sources of data and in-depth interviews
18 to a sample of men and women (Moreno and Crespo, 2010). About parental
19 socialization styles, recent data specifically from the Basque Country showed that
20 mothers have a greater influence on the gender socialization of their daughters,
21 and fathers on the sons (Garaigordobil and Aliri 2011), but fathers' and mothers'
22 educational styles are very similar although the girls perceive their mothers as
23 more authoritarian than the boys do (Garaigordobil and Aliri 2012). To sum up, in
24 our country and region we can find a gender gap that is more relevant in the
25 private sphere, resulting in gender differences in the parent-child relations and
26 practices that could also be present when considering parental fears for their
27 children. If these gender differences in fear are found, this will help us
28 understanding how subjective fears could shape educational and social practices
29 even in generally safe countries/regions with low objective risks of victimization.
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48 **Women's and men's fear of crime**

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51 Gender has been identified as a key variable in explaining the fear of crime;
52 women systematically report higher levels, even though men are victims more
53 often. This has been known as the *paradox of fear* (Warr 1984). Feminist
54 literature has criticized the apparent irrationality of the women's fears described in
55 this paradox, for instance in the work by Lupton and Tulloch (1999) carried out in
56 Australia analyzing two case studies, both of them women. Another argument by
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feminists is that part of the research in this area could have not adequately measured certain experiences such as harassment, especially of a sexual nature, or domestic violence – as pointed out in the study by Madriz (1997) using focus groups and in-depth interviews to 140 women in the U.S.- that would help understanding fears by women. If they are taken into account, women’s fears seem to have a greater degree of ‘rationality’ as it is stated in another Australian study (Carcach and Mukherjee 1999) with a broad sample of 6,333 women. For some authors, the ‘hypothesis of the shadow of sexual assault’ (Ferraro 1995) would explain the higher level of fear among women to every type of crime: women’s fear of crime would be a generalized ‘fear of rape’, the fear of a constant sexual threat (Stanko 1990; Warr 1984). Pain (1997) proposes that a woman’s fear of male violence would be a basic element of the fear of crime and as a result, women’s freedom in the public space would be seriously limited in the United Kingdom, according to her study with a sample of almost 400 women for the quantitative survey and 45 follow-up in-depth interviews. This limitation of freedom has been found also in Canada (Keane 1998) conducting secondary data analysis on a national survey of Canadian women. From other points of view, explanations for the paradox have been based on the concept of *vulnerability* (San-Juan et al. 2012). Women would feel more fear due to their greater physical and social vulnerability as has been found in the U.S. (Skogan and Maxfield 1981) in a study combining methodologies -observation, interviews and a survey in three cities with large representative samples of population. In the United Kingdom, Goodey (1997) proposes that this vulnerability would be the result of a gendered socialization that emphasizes passivity and submission in women, according to the results of a research with focused single sex discussion sessions and a questionnaire survey of 663 children. The same author points out the role that socializations plays for men, not reporting fear because doing so would not be appropriate for a male. Another research carried out in the same country -comparing fear of crime and social desirability in a sample of men and women- proposes that men would have a greater fear of crime than women, but they would not want to recognize it publicly (Sutton and Farral, 2005). In Spain, specifically in the Basque Country, and replicating international findings, a higher level of fear has been found among women, related to both to

1 sexual assaults and to other types of crime such as robbery, according to a study
2 with a broad sample of general population (Vozmediano, 2010). Another study
3 carried out in a Basque city, with a representative sample of 1700 participants,
4 showed that women also use more avoiding self-protective measures to protect
5 themselves from crime (San-Juan et al. 2012) which implies a reduction in the
6 freedom of movement in public spaces.
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11 Beyond the perspective chosen to study the gendered experience and expression
12 of fear, what is clear in the criminological literature is that nowadays men's and
13 women's fears are experienced and reported differently. It seems logical to expect
14 that something similar would occur in the case of altruistic fears. Therefore, much
15 of the research on the altruistic fear of crime has been approached from a gender
16 perspective.
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22 **Women's and men's altruistic fears for their sons and daughters**

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25 Empirical research has shown that the fear for others is shaped by gender. But in
26 comparison to personal fear, altruistic fears might not be always higher among
27 women. Warr and Ellison (2000) found gender asymmetry in the fear for the
28 partner, so that the men fear for their wives to a greater degree than the women for
29 their husbands, in a telephonic survey with more than 1000 participants of the
30 U.S. There was a large difference among younger couples, while in older couples
31 it diminished, without ever disappearing. In agreement with previous results,
32 Snedker (2006), using qualitative data and a small sample from the same country,
33 found that men showed a greater fear for their partners. This was not reciprocated
34 by the women's fears for their husbands' safety. More recent studies confirm that
35 in the U.S. men report more fear that their wives will be victims of crimes; this is
36 compatible with not expressing fear for their own safety, given that recognizing
37 that they are protective of the women is acceptable to their masculinity (Rader
38 2010). In terms of femininity, Rader (2010) argues that for women it is acceptable
39 to fear for their children as part of their natural child-rearing ability, but not for
40 their husbands.
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55 Going into detail about parental fears, authors like Mesch (2000) have proposed
56 that the fear for one's children can constitute an important part of the fear
57 expressed by women. In her study, a survey with a representative sample of
58 women in the third largest city of Israel, women reported experiencing more fear
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for their children than for their own safety; furthermore, younger women with younger children expressed greater fear. For the author, the explanation lies in the traditional family roles, an interpretation that agrees with the results from Fishman and Mesch (1996) also in Israel, and those found in the U.S. by Warr (1992), which show a greater percentage of women who fear for their children, in comparison with men.

Warr and Ellison (2000), however, found that mothers and fathers only showed slight differences in the U.S. For the authors this result is somewhat surprising, taking into account that child-rearing responsibilities usually correspond to women to a greater degree, but they argue that this could be compensated by the role of ‘family guardian’ that many fathers adopt. In any case, they do find differences depending on the gender of the children. The fear for girls is greater and, furthermore, remains when they reach adulthood.

Also in U.S., Snedker (2006) found that both parents were worried about their children; analyzing the open responses given by the participants, the author interprets these fears based on the father’s *protector* role and the mother’s *caregiver* role, as in Warr and Ellison (2000). Tulloch (2004) studies parental fear in Australia, combining closed questions with semi-structured interviews that underwent discourse analysis. The results are coherent with those obtained by Warr and Ellison (2000): a high percentage of parents expressed anxiety about the fact that their children could be the victims of a crime, with the parent’s gender being irrelevant in this case. The qualitative analysis offers interesting information about the parents’ discourse during the childhood and adolescence of their sons and daughters, showing the difficulty of guaranteeing their children’s safety, while wanting to promote their necessary autonomy. The authors find that discourses about ‘stranger danger’ appears in the study, although the parents rarely make explicit reference to the risk of sexual abuse. In adolescence, concern about crime remains as one of the many challenges their sons or daughters must face in life.

Implications of studying parental fears

The family context is the center of the gender socialization processes (Ryle 2012) to such an extent that Crespi (2003) states that the family is a “gender relation”, as it provides the first experience of the relationship with men and women. How

1 fathers and mothers fear for their sons and daughters can expand our knowledge
2 about the gendered nature of parenting. This is relevant due to the consequences
3 that specific-by-gender parental behaviors and practices might have on their
4 children.
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7 Parental fear, as a part of the parenting role, could influence children's fears. De
8 Groof (2008) studies the fear of crime in adolescent boys and girls in Belgium,
9 finding that the level of supervision (especially that of the father) is associated
10 with more experiences of fear in adolescents, both boys and girls. But marked
11 differences appeared in the adolescent girls' fear, which was higher compared to
12 boys. This result is interpreted in terms of socialization: the girls are socialized as
13 vulnerable and needing to be careful. However, this is not clearly reflected in the
14 levels of parental supervision considered in her study: the girls would not be more
15 supervised, but they would feel more supervised.
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18 In light of the cited literature, it seems relevant to corroborate if differences by
19 gender of the parent are found in cultures that only recently have begun to walk
20 along the path of equality (as it is the case in Spain). Establishing if the gender of
21 the children, and also the type of crime considered, influences parental fears will
22 expand our understanding of parenting roles and possible transmissions of gender
23 beliefs. Also, knowing if fears correspond to specific and objective threats by
24 gender will help to open new lines of study in parental behaviors for protecting
25 their daughters and sons.
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28 **Objectives and hypotheses of the present research**

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30 Our aim was to analyze the relation that the gender of the parents and of the
31 children have with the fear parents feel for their children, considering the crime
32 type (robbery, physical aggression/harassment, kidnapping and sexual abuse). In
33 Spain there is no previous work that has explored the parental fears, but according
34 to studies that replicate international findings of women expressing higher levels
35 of fear of crime (San-Juan et al. 2012; Vozmediano 2010) and having into
36 consideration that gender-roles stereotypes underline the role of the affective
37 caring mother, we could expect that women expressed more fear for their
38 children. Since international findings have shown that parents fear more for their
39 daughters (Warr and Ellison, 2000) and considering the work carried out in our
40 country that found interactions between the gender of the parents and of the
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1 children in other aspects of parenting (Garaigordobil and Aliri 2011), we expect a
2 possible interaction between the gender of the parent and that of the children, with
3 *caregiver* mothers fearing more frequently for their daughters. Finally, it seems
4 unavoidable to include the type of crime considered -when expressing the fear for
5 the children- in the study of the parental fears. Literature has shown since
6 Ferraro's work (1995) that different crimes elicit different levels of fear.
7 Moreover, when studying the gendered nature of crime fears, the threat of sexual
8 crimes plays a major role for understanding women's fear, according to the
9 literature reviewed above. Regarding to the objective crime risks, the
10 victimization rates for adult women and men in Spain, and the reduced evidence
11 found about underaged victims of different crimes in the Basque Country and
12 Spain, point to gendered patterns with girls more susceptible of suffering sexual
13 abuse and boys more susceptible of being victims of a crime against property. In
14 light of this reflections and findings, interactions between the gender of the
15 children and the type of crime considered are also expected.

16 In light of the previously described, the objective of the study is to analyze how
17 the gender of the parent, the gender of the children and the type of crime
18 considered will influence the experienced fears. And more specifically, taking into
19 account these possible sources of variation, we expect to find that:

- 20 1. Mothers will experience more fear for their daughters in relation to the fear of
21 sexual abuse.
- 22 2. Mothers will experience to more fear for their sons in relation to crimes against
23 property.

24 Having into consideration that previous victimization of a member of the
25 household could increase fear for others, as increases personal fear, according to a
26 study carried out in our region (San-Juan et al., 2012), this variable was
27 considered as covariate in order to control for its influence.

28 **Method**

29 This study is framed within a broader study on the subjective safety and quality of
30 life in the city of Bilbao, the tenth city in Spain by number of inhabitants and the
31 first in the Basque Country, according to the database of the National Statistics
32 Institute of Spain (2013).

Participants

The sample was composed of 290 people with under-age children in their care, of which 159 were mothers (55%) and 131 fathers (45%). This sample of parents was interviewed in the frame of a broader study with a representative sample of residents in the city, which is described in the procedure section. During the collection of the data, all participants were asked if he/she had under aged sons and/or daughters living with him/her in the household. If this was the case, the participant answered to a series of additional questions regarding his/her fears about their sons and daughters being victims of crimes, and he/she was included as a part of the sample used in this study. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 58 years, with a mean age of 41.94 years ($SD=7.44$). 95% of the sample was born in Spain. Descriptive statistics for the demographic variables are shown in table 1, considering the six groups created by the gender of the parent (women or men) and the gender of the children (only girls, only boys, both girls and boys), in order to test if differences would appear in the main demographic variables of the study. For the continuous variables, the multivariate effect was not statistically significant $F(6,538)=0.76, p=.597$; therefore, no statistically significant differences were found in the age of the participant, the number of sons and/or daughters or the number of people living in the household. For the categorical variables, according to the chi square tests carried out, there were not statistically significant differences regarding to the level of studies, $\chi^2(2)=1.84, p=.399$; economic level, $\chi^2(2)=1.86, p=.394$; and type of employment, $\chi^2(2)=71.83, p=.399$. Therefore, the groups that will be considered in the hypotheses testing are not biased by socio-demographic variables.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Procedure

As previously stated, data for this study was gathered in the frame of a broader study with a representative sample of residents in the city. In the main study, with a sample of 1700 interviewees and a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error was limited to $\pm 2.4\%$. Probabilistic and stratified sampling was performed by district -with the number of interviewees in each one proportional to its population-, gender and age -setting quotas to assure the adequate representation

1 of all the age segments in the sample (see San-Juan et al. 2012 for more details
2 about the sampling procedure).

3 The interviews were carried out by telephone. This task was performed by
4 professional interviewers from a company specializing in telephonic interviewing
5 (Teyser XXI) who received training and specific instructions in the use of the
6 survey. Based on the city census, and using the procedure of probabilistic and
7 stratified sampling by district, gender and age, the interviewers telephoned the
8 homes that were randomly selected in the selected geographic units (districts).
9 The research announcement stated that the researchers were personnel of the
10 public university of the Basque Country, describing the objective of the study: to
11 gather the opinions and feelings of the residents in Bilbao about the level of
12 security and the quality of life in the city. All the interviewees were offered the
13 possibility of verifying the identity of the interviewer, as well as the truthfulness
14 of the data provided about the entity responsible for the study and its objective.
15 The anonymity of the data was guaranteed because no personal details that could
16 identify the participant were collected, and thus no researcher has access to any
17 participant. All interviewees gave their consent for participation. Only after
18 making sure that each participant who agreed to participate in the study resided in
19 the district of interest, was over 18 years of age and stated that he/she had
20 underaged children in their care and was willing to answer the questions related to
21 fear of crime for their children, the interviewer went on to interview the
22 participant.
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41 **Measures**

42 The instrument used was designed *ad hoc* by the research team. In most cases,
43 closed questions were chosen that would be answered on a Likert-type scale. The
44 reliability and validity of the first version of the instrument was tested by means
45 of a pilot study, with sample of 60 participants (see San-Juan et al. 2012). In the
46 following, the main variables of the study are described.
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54 *Parental fear of crime for their children*

55 To date, there have been no validated scales to measure the fear that fathers and
56 mothers feel for their children, neither in relation to its intensity nor to its
57 frequency. Thus, parents' reports of their fear for their children were assessed via
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1 a four-item set of questions developed for this study (see Appendix). Following
2 the recommendations by Ferraro (1995) –who recommends considering different
3 types of crime that could elicit different levels of fear- mothers and fathers
4 reported how often they feel fear that their sons and daughters will be victims of
5 four types of crimes, with the response options being: (0) Never; (1) Once or
6 twice in the last year; (2) Once or twice in the last six months; (3) Once or twice
7 in the last month; (4) Every week; (5) Every day. The crimes considered were
8 robbery, physical aggression/harassment, kidnapping and sexual abuse.
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10 *Victimization in the past year*

11 Prior experience with crime was evaluated by means of a question on which the
12 interviewee indicated whether any member of the household had been the victim
13 of a crime in the past year. For households in which someone been a victim,
14 details about the incident were collected, such as the type of crime.
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16 *Socio-demographic variables*

17 Questions were included for collecting data related to gender, age, district of
18 residence, number of people living in the household, number of children, gender
19 of the children, economic level, level of education and employment.
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Results

Descriptive analyses

The results of the descriptive analyses carried out for the variables that would be included in the hypothesis testing are shown in table 2. We considered the six groups created by the gender of the parent (women or men) and the gender of the children (only girls, only boys, both girls and boys), offering means for the quantitative variables and percentages for the categorical ones, and testing for differences through analysis of variance for the former and chi square tests for the latter. As it shown in table 2, no statistically significant differences were found in the distribution of the gender of the children between the groups of mothers and fathers, $\chi^2(2)=1.87, p=.397$. Neither were found in the percentage of people having experienced a victimization across the six groups, $\chi^2(2)=2.09, p=.351$, or in the fear for their children related to any of the crime types considered in the study.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Fear for the sons and daughters in each type of crime

Our hypotheses predicted a second order interaction between the gender of the parent, the gender of the children and the crime type. In the first one, we stated that mothers would experience more frequent fear for their daughters when considering the threat of sexual abuse; whereas in the second one we predicted more fear for their sons when considering crimes against property, again higher among mothers than fathers. In order to test these hypotheses, a mixed-design ANOVA analysis was carried out, where the gender of the parent interviewed, the gender of the children and the type of crime were included as predictors, and the previous victimization was included as covariate.

The results provided only partial confirmation of the first hypothesis. Mothers did not experience more fear than parents: there was no statistically significant main effect of the gender of the parent $F(1,256)=0.38, p=.540$; nor was there an interaction between the parents' gender and that of the children, $F(2,256)=2.17, p=.117$, and therefore we cannot establish any difference between fathers' and mothers' fears for their children. Continuing with the first hypothesis, fear for

1 daughters was indeed higher when considering the threat of sexual abuse,
2 according to the statistically significant interaction effect between the type of
3 crime and the gender of the children, $F(5.22,667.87)=3.23,p=.006$, and the results
4 shown in table 3, where the mean scores in the parental fear based on these
5 variables, the pairwise comparisons and their effect sizes are reported. These
6 pairwise comparisons were performed using the calculation procedure for partially
7 repeated measures designs (Toothaker, 1991).
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15 TABLE 3 AROUND HERE.
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17 Families with daughters or both daughters and sons –thus, families with at least
18 one daughter- showed a higher frequency of fear to sexual abuse. If we consider
19 both types of families, the difference between them and parents who only have
20 sons is statistically significant; furthermore, we found large effect sizes for these
21 comparisons, $d=1.4$ and $d=1.6$ respectively.
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27 The greater difference when considering sexual threats is the key of the
28 interaction effect found between the type of crime and the gender of the children.
29 Families with at least one girl among their children experience more fear to every
30 crime, in comparison to parents who only have sons, but the difference is higher
31 when considering the sexual abuse. Effect sizes reported in table 3 illustrate this
32 interaction effect: differences when considering robbery, harassment or
33 kidnapping are medium to high, but the effect size is higher in the sexual abuse.
34 In light of these results, the second hypothesis had to be rejected. We expected
35 that mothers would experience more fear for their sons in relation to crimes
36 against property. Again, as described in relation to the first hypothesis, there was
37 no difference between mothers and fathers; and when considering the crime types
38 and the gender of the children, the fear was never higher for boys (see table 3). It
39 would be advisable to remember that all findings presented in this section were
40 found after controlling for the effect of the previous victimization.
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54 Discussion

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57 In this study, we analyzed fears experienced by parents in relation to the safety of
58 their children. Even when these fears are reported by inhabitants of a relatively
59 safe region and country, it would be difficult to label expressed fears as irrational
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1 or excessive, as we are talking about a sector of the population – those under 18–
2 that is more vulnerable when facing a possible crime; and we analyzed the fears of
3 another group – the fathers and mothers– whose fear is not really altruistic in the
4 sense defended by Snedker (2006); instead, their children’s well-being is closely
5 linked to their own well-being. We are also considering people who live in an
6 urban setting, a spatial, social and cultural context with greater diversity than a
7 rural setting, and thus it can be more threatening. The urban settings are not
8 exactly characterized by a design conceived on the scale of children (Simpson
9 1997). Future lines of research could investigate the relation between fear for sons
10 and daughters and the environmental quality of the settings children use.
11 Our object of interest was the gendered patterns of altruistic fear in relation to
12 specific types of crime. The results found provided a partial confirmation of
13 hypothesis 1 and rejected hypothesis 2. Contrary to our expectations, the gender
14 of the parent played no role in the dynamics of the fear for their children, and the
15 gender of the children – specifically, the fact that at least one of them is female- is
16 the only variable included in the study that establishes differences in the
17 experiences of fear, interacting with the type of crime: the fear is even more
18 frequent when considering the threat of sexual abuse against daughters.
19 In contrast to proposals like the one by Mesch (2000)–who argues that fear for
20 children can constitute an important part of the fear expressed by women- in our
21 results, the gender of the parent was irrelevant in our results. This does not mean
22 that fear for their children is not part of women’s fear, but it would be a part of the
23 fathers’ fear to the same degree. This result can be interpreted in the sense
24 expressed by Warr and Ellison (2000) and Snedker (2006), who suggest different
25 sources for the fathers’ fear- their role as *protectors*- and mothers’ fear- their role
26 as *caregivers* based on their research in the U.S.. In the study by Rader and
27 Cossman (2011), the explanatory model of fear for others worked differently for
28 men and women, although in this case they were not dealing with fear for
29 children. However, there would be an alternative explanation, perhaps better
30 fitting the principle of parsimony: the fact that differences were not found
31 between genders may mean that nowadays and in our context, there are no
32 differences between the genders in the fear for their children. Fathers and mothers
33 worry in similar ways, a fact that could imply similar levels of involvement in
34 raising their children. This interpretation would be excellent news in the search

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for equality. But we should be careful. The findings and reflections by Craig (2006) offer another explanation for the result we found: similar level of fear could mean implication at a discourse level, but without an automatic translation onto more effective sharing of parenting duties.

The lack of differences in how often fathers and mothers fear for their children could be interpreted too as an indirect confirmation of the suggestions by Sutton and Farrall (2005) about the fear of crime among men being a private experience not recognized publicly. As Rader (2010) points out, fear for themselves would not be acceptable for they masculinity, but when considering a more ‘appropriate’ fear for a man (fear for his children) they would be able to reveal it, and they do so in our study.

Finally, maybe the most interesting result is that the only variable that establishes differences in the fear for the children is the fact that at least one of the children is a girl. This result should be examined in the context of the risk of victimization that girls and boys have. With the limited amount of evidence about underaged victims of crime in our country, we could expect a higher level of fear in relation to sexual threats for girls, and in relation to crimes against property for males. But our results show that increased levels of fear related to any crime happen when at least one of the children in the family is a girl. For boys, we found less frequent fear, even in the types of crime that could affect them most. This would be coherent with the stereotype of the crime victim: a woman incapable of protecting herself, a prototypical image that is shared by women themselves (Madriz 1997). Thus, parents would not think about their sons as possible victims. As it has been done for the fear of personal crime, maybe it is appropriate to ask ourselves if the results showed that there is an increased level of fear for daughters, or a reduced level of fear for sons. In any case, what these results show is that it is necessary to consider fear of different types of crime when analyzing the fear for sons and daughters. More research is needed in order to confirm if interactions between the gender of the children and the type of crime is found in other geographical contexts, and if this happens, to establish if the fears are a reflection of a pattern of gendered risks.

At this point it should be noted that the fact that the parents fear more often for their daughters coincides with previous studies cited above. Warr and Ellison (2000) propose, as they postulated for the personal fear of adult women, that

1 sexual aggression is the great fear that underlies women's fear. In our study, we
2 found more frequent fear among those parents who have daughters for all the
3 crimes, but it may be due to the generalization of the fear of sexual aggression to
4 other crimes.
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7 8 *Limitations of the present study* 9

10 One of the limitations in our study is the lack of official data provided by
11 Institutions on the underaged victims of crime in our country. For this reason, it
12 would be interesting to replicate the work in a context where that information
13 would be available. A consideration related to measures should be done, in
14 relation to the fact that parents expressed the fear for all their children. This is not
15 an issue in families with only daughter or only sons, but in the mixed families we
16 could not know the fear for daughters and sons separately. This should be taken
17 into consideration when designing future studies on the subject, along with the
18 age of the children, another relevant variable to be included. Finally, we did not
19 gather data about the type of family structure (traditional family, single-parent,
20 homoparental...). Since it could establish differences in the fear for the daughters
21 and sons, we will include the type of family in the future.
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33 34 *Future lines of research* 35

36 If fathers and mothers today continue to fear more for their daughters than for
37 their sons, would these gender differences in the fear of crime be expected to
38 persist when these girls become adult women? The results here obtained suggest
39 that this would be a very interesting objective to address in the future. The fact
40 that men and women fear more for daughters, knowing that adult women fear
41 more for themselves, points to a learning process of fear that will have to be
42 verified through longitudinal studies. This is a plausible hypothesis in light of
43 results indicating that girls in the U.S. would be particularly susceptible to the
44 parental socialization of emotions (Denham et al. 2010). Another recent result
45 along these lines is found by Snedker (2012) in the same country. In this study,
46 gender assessment of vulnerability to crime was related to issues of socialization
47 and social learning processes. Studying the socialization of the fear from a gender
48 perspective could help us to better understand the implications of the results here
49 obtained. In these future studies it would be also advisable to contrast the fear
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1 experienced for oneself with the altruistic fears experienced by a single sample, in
2 order to establish if specific gender patterns for each type of fear happen. This
3 would also help us to understand if fears among men could remain hidden due to
4 social desirability (Sutton and Farrall, 2005) when they are personal, but would be
5 more openly revealed when it is considered socially appropriate, thus being able
6 to express fear for their children.
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10 Another interesting line for future research would relate altruistic fears and
11 protective behaviors against crime. In the U.S., Warr and Ellison (2000) propose
12 that many of the measures that we think of as *self-protection* can be motivated by
13 the fear that significant others (e.g. partner, children) could be victims of crimes.
14 In the same country, Drakulich (2008) found that this fear is relevant in the
15 decision to buy a gun for self-protection. However, he also points out that fear for
16 children is the most common fear, and it is distributed similarly in different socio-
17 demographic groups, although it appears to be less relevant in motivating
18 precautionary behaviors than personal fear or fear for the partner. More research is
19 necessary to determine whether precautionary measures could be related to
20 altruistic fear. In addition, future studies will have to consider other types of
21 behaviors that can be influenced by the parents' fear of their children being crime
22 victims, for example, the willingness to promote or limit children's activities in
23 public places. Again in the U.S., Miller et al. (2008) found that perceived safety
24 influence the adults' tendency to foment physical activity in children, which will
25 significantly affect the children's health. Kimbro and Schachter (2011) highlight
26 maternal fears about their children playing in the street, in a context where the
27 time children spend enjoying themselves by playing in the street is being reduced;
28 and an excessive parental supervision can be counter-productive, as De Groof
29 (2008) indicates. Therefore, future work will have to pay attention to these adult
30 behaviors that can have consequences for the health, the autonomy, the learning of
31 living together and the well-being of children and adolescents.
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Table 1

Descriptive statistics for the demographic variables considering the gender of the parent and of the children

	Fathers(N=131)					Mothers (N=159)					<i>p</i>																					
	Boys N=62	Girls N=46	Both N=23			Boys N=78	Girls N=62	Both N=19																								
	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>			<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>																							
Age in years	19-75	44.4 (7.0)	42.8 (7.3)	43.3 (4.7)			41.2 (7.3)	39.7 (8.6)	39.3 (5.8)			.943																				
Number of underaged children	1-5	1.3 (0.5)	1.3 (0.5)	2.1 (0.5)			1.2 (0.4)	1.2 (0.4)	2.3 (0.7)			.169																				
Number of people living in the household	1-12	3.4 (0.6)	3.5 (0.8)	4.3 (0.9)			3.5 (0.8)	3.5 (0.6)	4.8 (1.8)			.305																				
Level of studies		P	S	H	A	U	P	S	H	A	U	P	S	H	A	U	P	S	H	A	U	P	S	H	A	U	.399					
	Count	6	10	15	13	16	12	3	13	8	8	1	4	5	5	7	6	4	15	27	23	9	3	17	9	21		5	2	5	2	4
	%	10	17	25	22	27	27	7	30	18	18	5	18	23	23	32	8	5	20	36	31	15	5	29	15	36	28	11	28	11	22	
Economic level		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	.394					
	Count	0	8	39	10	1	3	0	40	1	0	3	3	11	4	1	2	7	59	7	0	2	5	44	6	1		0	4	12	2	0
	%	0	14	67	17	2	7	0	91	2	0	14	14	50	18	5	3	9	79	9	0	3	9	76	10	2	0	22	67	11	0	
Employment		S	O	U	H	R	S	O	U	H	R	S	O	U	H	R	S	O	U	H	R	S	O	U	H	R	S	O	U	H	R	.399
	Count	0	50	3	4	3	0	37	3	2	2	0	20	1	0	1	1	46	9	19	0	1	38	2	17	1	0	8	0	9	1	
	%	0	83	5	7	5	0	84	7	5	5	0	91	5	0	5	1	61	12	25	0	2	64	3	29	2	0	44	0	50	6	

Note: testing for differences was done through a MANOVA analysis for continuous variables and through chi square tests for categorical variables.

Level of studies was measured as one of these categories: P. (primary studies), S. (secondary studies), H (high school diploma), A. (advanced professional training) and U. (university studies).

Economic level was measured as one of these categories: 1 (low), 2 (medium-low), 3 (medium), 4 (medium-high) and 5 (high).

Employment was measured as one of these categories: S. (student), O (worked outside of the home), U. (unemployed), H. (stay-at-home-person) and R. (retired).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for the research variables considering the gender of the parent and of the children

Gender of children	Fathers (N=131)						Mothers (N=159)						<i>p.</i>
	Boys		Girls		Both		Boys		Girls		Both		
	Count												
		62	46	23			78	62	19				
	%	47.6	34.9	17.5			49.3	38.8	11.8				
Victim of a crime (covariate)	Y		N		Y		N		Y		N		<i>p.</i>
	Count												
		9	51	7	36	1	21	11	64	12	44	1	
	%	15.0	85.0	16.3	83.7	4.5	95.5	14.7	85.3	21.4	78.6	5.9	94.1
	Boys		Girls		Both		Boys		Girls		Both		
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	
Fear of robbery		1,2 (0,2)	2,4 (0,3)	1,6 (0,4)			1,1 (0,2)	1,7 (0,2)	2,0 (0,4)				.198
Fear of aggression / harassment		1,3 (0,2)	2,4 (0,3)	1,7 (0,4)			1,5 (0,2)	1,8 (0,2)	2,1 (0,4)				.166
Fear of kidnaping		0,9 (0,2)	2,2 (0,3)	1,4 (0,4)			1,2 (0,2)	1,5 (0,2)	1,6 (0,4)				.086
Fear of Sexual abuse		0,9 (0,2)	2,3 (0,3)	1,7 (0,4)			0,8 (0,2)	1,7 (0,2)	2,1 (0,4)				.204

Note: testing for differences was done through an Analysis of variance for continuous variables and through chi square tests for categorical variables.

Fear for sons/daughters was measured using questions where participants were asked from 0 (never) to 5 (every day) how often they experienced fear that their sons and/or daughters will be victims of four types of crimes; scores were averaged.

Table 3

Mean scores of fear that parents experience for children, considering the gender of the children and each type of crime separately.

	Gender of children			<i>p</i> (sons vs. both)	<i>d</i>	<i>p</i> (sons vs. daughters)	<i>d</i>
	Boys	Both	Girls				
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>				
Fear of robbery	1.12 (.16)	1.77 (.29)	2.05 (.18)	*	0.7	**	1.0
Fear of aggression / harassment	1.37 (.17)	1.88 (.30)	2.15 (.19)	*	0.5	**	0.9
Fear of kidnaping	1.04 (.16)	1.53 (.29)	1.83 (.18)	*	0.5	**	0.6
Fear of Sexual abuse	.84 (.16)	1.93 (.28)	2.03 (.18)	*	1.4	**	1.6

Note: ** indicates statistically significant differences with $p < .05$ and * with $p < 0.01$

Appendix: Spanish wording of the measures used in the study

Altruistic fear (Fear for sons and daughters)

¿Con qué frecuencia ha sentido temor o inquietud por la posibilidad de que sus(s) hijo(s) sea(n) víctima(s) de estos delitos? Responda según la escala siguiente: Nunca / Una o dos veces en el último año / Una o dos veces en los últimos seis meses / Una o dos veces en el último mes / Cada semana / Cada día.

- Robo / atraco
- Agresión / acoso
- Secuestro / rapto
- Abuso sexual

Victimization in the past year

Durante el último año, ¿Ud. o alguna de las personas que vive con Ud. ha sido víctima de algún delito? (Sí / No)

Si la respuesta es “Sí”: ¿Podría describirme brevemente lo que ocurrió? (Open-ended question)

Socio-demographic variables

Gender

Género: (Hombre / Mujer)

Age

¿Puede decirme su edad?

District of residence

¿En qué distrito de la ciudad se encuentra su casa?

Number of people living in the household

¿Cuántas personas viven en su domicilio?

Underaged children, number and gender of the children

¿Tiene Ud. hijos menores de edad a su cargo? (Sí/No)

¿Cuántos hijos menores de edad a su cargo?

¿Cuál es el sexo de los hijos?

(Sólo hijos/ sólo hijas / ambos)

Economic level

Diría que su poder adquisitivo es:

(Bajo / Medio-bajo / Medio / Medio-alto / Alto)

Level of education

¿Qué nivel de estudios ha completado?

(Educación primaria / Educación secundaria / Bachiller o FP grado medio / FP grado superior / Diplomatura o Licenciatura)

Employment

¿A qué se dedica actualmente? Sólo se recoge la actividad principal.

(Estudiante / Trabaja fuera de casa / En paro / Labores del hogar / Jubilado/a).

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