

## A Sociological Approach to the Women's Perception of Fear of Crime in Urban Spaces

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**Abstract:** Fear of crime is a very prevalent issue today. It challenges the safety of cities. For this reason it has gained considerable attention among the sociologists and criminologists over the last 20 years. Whilst men experiencing relatively high rates of violence, they report their fear of crime less than women. In the contrary women have a much greater fear of crime than men, but are victimized less than men. This paper draws an original data collected from in depth interview with 50 women aged 19 to 55 in Tehran. Narratives provided by women included in this study are used throughout the paper as means of drawing the attention to the point that fear is not something that happens out of the context but is situated in the social details of individuals' circumstances and the life style. The authors of this paper organized their interview around a major theoretical and empirical divide in studies of fear of crime between approaches that see fear as a by-product of physical environment and those have emphasized on the social nature of fear. The result of research shows that the level of fear that a person holds depends on many factors including gender, age, past experience of being victimized, the location where one lives and so on. Based on the finding of this research women asserted that they are more fearful of crime than men. Whether in the marketplace, or the city, it is the fear of sexual violence and harassment from which underpins women high fear.

**Keywords:** Fear of crime, power relations, Social exclusion, victimization, violence in public space.

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### Introduction

Various studies have shown that the probability of men's crime rate is far higher than women, while women are afraid of crime three times more than men (Stanko, cited by Scott, 2003). Criminologists and sociologists in different societies have paid attention to women's fear of crime and being victimized. As deviation and crimes can cause destruction of the community and establishment of widely covert and overt irreparable effects such as reducing feeling of security, spreading distrustfulness and reducing social participation (Christian and Rogerson, 2004), fear of crime can also be equally problematic. In the early 1980s, the explanatory approaches to fear of crime focused on the inferiority's issues of women status in the political, social and economic context, particularly the women of the minority groups and elderly people. Part of this discussion emphasized on the issues such as discrimination and being gender bias against women and stated the fact that social differences have an important role in experiencing the fear of crime and its formation in women society. Persons such as Valentine (1989), Koskela (1997, 1999) and Pain (1997, 2000) mentioned the relationship between social construction, sexual identity, and the relations based on power and fear of crime. According to these theories, fear is analyzable in terms of power relations at more complicated and wider scale and through these relations there is a power that some people dominate others in different forms. Pain defines fear of crime as a wide range of feelings and the practical and emotional responses of people of the community toward the disorders and implemented crimes in the society, expressing that the fear of crime is not an individual and personal issue that is the characteristic of some people, meaning that some people have it and some do not, rather it is more transferrable and positional. In other words, all of us in the period of our life move in the shadow of fear which has been influenced by the experiences and social relations (Pain, 2000).

Although women's fear of crime is an important issue and has a direct link with the social security debate, but unfortunately in Iran it has received less attention and also the factors that can affect the fear of crime have not been considered, identified and evaluated. This paper investigates the findings and multi-dimensional data of the

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influential causes and factors on the fear of crime and challenges the attendant of the women without fear in the society. Factors such as senility, vulnerability feeling, sickness, disability, immigration, pregnancy, motherhood, and etc. along with more exclusion inspiring from gender, lack of women's social integration, and their understanding of gendered power relations that produce and reproduce constantly in contexts and spatial social relations, establishing different methods of attending of women in urban space to men.

### **The Importance of Qualitative Research in Depth Investigation of Women's Fear of Crime**

Although survey research usually provides a whole picture about fear of crime, but such research do not manifest the social and intellectual processes of the formation of fears in people and is unable to fully explain the consequences associated with fear and fear reproduction (Koskela, 1997). It seems that, therefore, qualitative research method is more suitable because it provides a ground that shows the specific nature of women's fear and it can be implied that how fear of crime can cause damages and injuries and how this issue can be interpreted in terms of the women's social and economic grounds. Because of this reason, qualitative methods were used in this study. Qualitative research is the conduction of research in the real-world which intricately and deeply identifies problems. By using this method, the complexity of social issue can be identified and distances away from artificial and unreal situations (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

Qualitative research method, rather than generalizing, reflects the unknown concepts and applies in the exploration of the new problems and points associated with the various topics and areas that have received less attention and development. Using qualitative method in relation to women's fear of crime contributes to find the multi-faceted and multi-dimensionality of the problem as well as its dynamicity (Koskela, 1999).

### **Data Collection**

The subjects of the study were the women of Tehran city whom their ages ranged between 19 to 55 years. The selection of this age group was done with the assumption that this group usually shuttle more than any other groups in the urban space. The studied sample in the qualitative research is not usually clearly identified and predetermined and the sample size is severely correlated with saturation level. However, the sample of this study was selected based on the characteristics such as marital status, education, employment, being housekeeper, and living area. A degree of flexibility was taken into account in this respect; because it is possible that other variables in terms of the importance also come into research after starting the investigation. The data of this study was based on conduction of in-depth interviews with 50 women in different parts of Tehran city who were selected randomly in public places, and each interview lasted between 45 to 90 minutes.

The interviewed women were in the 19 to 55 years old age group. Thirty two of them were married, fifteen were single, one was divorced, and two were widow. In terms of education, 10 women had under high school diploma, 14 (diploma), one (Associate degree), 16 (Bachelor of Arts), 9 (Master of Arts and above). Out of this group, twenty four people were employed, twenty two were housekeepers and four were students and among employed people, six people worked in the public sector and the rest worked in the <sup>1</sup>private sector. Three of the interviewed women were in the disabled group because of their physical disability and eight interviewed women were the member of religious minorities. Forty two women did not have vehicle and used public transportation for commuting. Thirty six women were native to Tehran and fourteen have moved to Tehran in recent years. The interviewed people were selected from different regions. The necessary data for this study was gathered through conduction of in-depth interviews and empathic dialogue. And semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim that women express their experiences in their own language. Although the questions in this kind of interview are planned about related issues, it has certain flexibility and usually interviews started with general questions, then specific questions were asked about the women's fear, the influential factors on them, and how women confront this kind of fear.

The researchers did not follow any particular hypothesis due to the exploratory nature of the study, but they rather sought to reveal women's experiences about fear of crime and social security in the urban areas based on their own narration. In this study, the researchers made an attempt to provide an analysis of how women perceived fear of crime and its impact on their daily life. And how their perception of fear formed or controlled their behavior. This study had special significance because it followed to hear different voices of women and their narration towards the experience of fear above the statistics.

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## **Research Objectives**

The overall objective of this study was the description, interpretation and women's understanding of the fear of being victimized in the urban areas. In-depth interviews were conducted with the intention to achieve the following goals:

1. The understanding of women's experiences of the fear in the urban spaces
2. The recognition of the factors that lead to the fear among women
3. The method of women's confrontation with fear in urban spaces

## **Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, there is a reciprocal relationship between data collection and data analysis. The presented results in this section are based on the data analysis of in-depth interviews' results. The results of data analysis of the qualitative in-depth interviews indicated that factors like situations and spatial-social domains, crime experience, violence and sexual harassment, relations based on the gendered power and lack of social integration, social isolation, production and reproduction of fear in the community and etc. are effective in increasing women's fear of crime and being victimized. Furthermore, the present study showed that women chose different personal and structural preparations based on situations and various conditions which they encountered for the emancipation and decreasing of their fear.

## **Research Findings**

### **1 - Socio-spatial sphere and fear of crime**

The most obvious aspect of women's fear of crime manifests in the form of the fears and socio-spatial avoidances. In order to reduce the fear and avoid frightening situations, women usually try to choose safe places and times for attending in urban spaces. Accordingly, both locating and timing situations are the women's selection criteria for commuting in the urban spaces which they are effective in increasing or reducing women's fear of crime.

Mahtab, 32 years old, having MA degree, and employed says: "I do not go in the park at night, and also do not use the overpass ... when it gets dark, I try not to pass from quiet places and an area where buildings are dilapidated or unfinished, and whenever possible, I would take a taxi even for a very short distance because of fear."

Therefore, women refrain from attending unfamiliar places especially at night times. Sometimes feeling of security for women in places where other women are present, is more than other places and conversely they avoid the places where population of men is great.

Zainab, 27 years old, single, having BA degree, and employed says: "we are getting away from places like a big market, where there are many guys and I do not want to go there."

### **2 – The effect of crime experience and violence on the fear**

It seems that the women's experience of violence is associated with the increasing of their fear of crime. Though most violence against women occurs in the private sphere, but women believe that they are threatened by a stranger men in the public sphere (Pain, 1997., and Valentine, 1992). Perhaps this hypothesis can be posed that women probably generalize the results and fear of the private sphere to the public sphere.

Mahsa, 32 years old, married, having MA degree, and employed says: "women are being hurt almost equally in public and private spheres ... some of them have fear of men's behavior because they are beaten by their husbands at home."

Women usually consider rape and sexual harassment as the most serious violence in the public spheres, and they are severely terrified of this issue.

#### **2-1 Rape and sexual harassment**

The results of in-depth interviews showed that the experiences of violence and sexual harassment can cause panic in the women and affect their lifestyle. According to the study, women who have experienced violence in the streets have excess fear, compared to the time before the attack. The consequences of this issue are often spatial. For some women, fear increases in relation to a location; it means that there is a fear of certain places that reminds them of an especial event.

Nassim, 35 years old, married, having MA degree, teacher says: "Last year, two motorbike riders dragged and stole the necklace of my six years old daughter in the crowded street near my house. Until then I thought when some kids' items were stolen, it was due to their carelessness or the kid was left unattended ... after this incident,

my daughter and I fear severely. When a motorbike passes by me, I hold my purse tightly. My daughter also fears severely of motorbikes and hides herself behind me.”

It may seem natural that the experience of violence leads to fear of violence, yet it is important to note that the rape and sexual harassment have the same effect. Even minor invasions can be along with the recalling of vulnerability and the possibility of being victimized (Stanko, 1990).

## **2-2 - Fear of rape: the root of women’s fear:**

One of the most important crimes that women were afraid of, is rape and sexual harassment. Fear of rape is common among women in various social groups, with different educations, whether married or single, and with different conditions. With regard to the consequences that this problem has on the familial and societal life and also the look that the community and its members have about raped women, many women were more afraid of this issue. Many respondents stated:

"If you are raped, you are considered as a guilty whether among family members or police and judicial system’s perspective and they say that you have certainly done something that you’ve been kidnapped and raped”.

Women’s fear of rape and or sexual harassment can be classified into two major categories:

### **2-2-1 - Fear of pornography and being blamed:**

Ziba, 33 years old, a housekeeper, says: “When I go shopping, I do not say whatever I hear to my husband. Because he becomes suspicious quickly and mistrusts me and puts up a fight”.

However, deviation labeling has consequences for social participation and the most important consequence is the occurrence of severe change in the general identity of individuals. Labeling puts person in a new place and introduces him in such a way that he is another person and is different from what he has been (Robington and Weinberg, 2003).

### **2-2-2 Fear of familial disintegration**

Also this problem is exactly in the shadow of the first problem and the familial suspicion look that the members of the society have towards women. Man in the case of rape, fear of familial disintegration and women exclusion by men has an effect on the familial women’s life that generally more than any other thing they fear of rape. The rejection of raped women as a victim and the lack of legal, familial, social and judiciary supports are effective factors in increasing women’s fear. Because of this, many women acknowledged that they refrain from going out at the night, getting on personal passenger cars and attending unknown places.

Hearing news about rape is effective in increasing women’s fear, although this fear may have no relationship with the number of victims of rape and the frequency of this problem in the society. There is no exact statistics in the country in connection with the rape; so, there is a strong possibility that many cases are not reported. There are several reasons that cause women to remain more silent about sexual harassment against themselves.

Among these reasons, the followings can be mentioned:

- 1 - Fear of blame and reproach.
- 2 - Fear of labeling and being a faulty person.
- 3 - Fear of divorce and familial and social exclusion.
- 4 - Fear of conflict.
- 5 - Fear of the imposition of restriction

According to the conducted interviews, it seems that the silence and forgetting strategy is a women’s dominant procedure. Even single women who live with the support of family often choose this strategy because they are afraid of being limited and/or supported with obsession.

## **3 - Gender and Exclusion**

Sexual harassment, violence and exclusion, not only increase the women’s vulnerability feeling but also strengthen the dominance of men over the space. Fear is the consequence of the women’s unequal position. But, it simultaneously contributes to the stability of gendered inequalities. Spatial constraints in women’s life are a reflection of the relations of gendered power and urban space is produced and reproduced via these gendered relations (Pian, 1997). Women often “arbitrarily” confine their relocation. Women’s inability for freely use of the space, not as mandatory restriction, but is accepted as natural conditions and they often came to this belief that the

organizing of life in this way is rather simpler. This notion that “exclusions and lack of social integration” occur commonly without most people notice, is an important dimension of the problem (Koskela, 1999).

Maryam, 33 years old, married, diploma and housekeeper says: “Being out at night is a fault for a woman, People say: she went out at the midnight. In my opinion, woman should be at home before sunset.”

It seems that fear of “certain places” and or “special times” causes that women refrain from working in that place or doing their work at those special hours. This fear increases if accompanied with exclusion and lack of social integration.

### **3-1 - Isolation and social vulnerability (based on the demographic factors)**

Fleming Balvig argues such that fear cannot be considered merely as a response to the crime rate, but it must be understood in the more general context of the life. For those people who have petty financial resources and are marginalized in society, lack of life security simply takes the form of fear. Balvig says that isolation and fear of crime are related to each other: “The more socially isolated and the more forgotten person in the society and therefore weaker’s position in the social network, they are more afraid of crime.” (Balvig, quoted by Koskela, 1999) In addition to the above mentioned factors, senility and disability also lead to the women’s isolation in the society.

#### **3-1-1 Senility and fear of crime**

Although elderly people are less prone to social problems and are less victimized, they fear of public spaces more than any other social group (Zedner, 2003). The elderly people often experience social isolation, loneliness, physical weakness and inability against the attack. Many studies have concluded that the old women have the most feeling of fear (Smith, 1987). The old women’s fear is related to the feelings of vulnerability and loneliness.

Esmat, 55 years old, diploma, and tailor says: “I became so alone since my husband died. I became depressed and I cry constantly. Two of my daughters and one of my sons live abroad and also I have two daughters who live in Iran and they rarely visit me ..... I am sick and the distance between my home and tailor shop is very far; however, because of not staying at home alone, doctor suggest me go to work ... I am so scared of sleeping alone at night.

My twenty years old grandchild came to my home in order to sleep for a while, but I have heard several times that a grandchild or young boy killed his grandmother because of money. Without he or his mother notice about this issue and since my home is far away and it is difficult for her son to come to my home, I ask him not go my home any more...now I lock the doors and put a knife under my pillow at night, however, I fear”

#### **The effect of disability and sickness on the fear of crime**

The sickness or disability can have a major effect on the fear of violence and crime. Pain’s (1994) study showed that rough crimes can have a particular effect on the spatial experiences of disabled women and intensified the restrictions that they experience. Disabled person may feel that he/she is less capable of resistance, or escaping against an invasion. The partial of this disability returns to this issue that they feel the sense of “other” person in healthy community and this feeling increases the experience of vulnerability for them. No matter how severe the disability is, the fainting in vision or asthma or epilepsy also can cause to the loneliness feeling and thus results in a wave of fear. Some women, because of their sickness or disability, cannot use public transportation, and this may cause to their fear and worry.

According to the conducted research in the West, the disabled women are more afraid of sexual violence (Pain, 1994), while the conducted in-depth interviews with disabled women in Tehran reveals a different experience. The disabled women in this study stated that due to lack of proper urban planning and lack of attention to the requirements and conditions of disabled people, they fear of accidents, and some believed that “nobody hurt us sexually”.

#### **3-1-2 - Biology, gender and fear of crime**

There is a conception among the members of society that men are the superior, stronger sex, and women are weak and always need the control and protection of the men. Manly dominance always highlights the biological evidence of men in order to impose their dominance and legitimize the women’s inferiority.

“Women should be at home at sunset time and night because the possibility of women’s kidnapping is more during the night time”.

Women are weak in the society (in terms of physical force) and because it is possible to be raped, they fear. But this kind of fear is less in men because they cope with each other.

### **3-2 – The large and unfamiliar spaces and fear of crime**

The foreignness and unfamiliarity with large urban spaces may decrease confidence and increase fear. Women often feel secure where they know the place very well, and an unfamiliar region simply cause to the insecurity (Friberg, quoted by Koskela, 1999). Additionally, relocation, especially when it is from a small city to a big city, means reducing the recognition ability of danger signs. Lack of adequate social skills and the weakness of social network simply make one's life to be confined to the private space. Social exclusion, alienation feeling in a community can also be converted to a spatial exclusion.

Masome, 29 years old, married, having diploma degree, housekeeper and native to North of Iran says: "the security is more in the county. Everyone knows each other there and the environment is small, if an accident happens to me, my neighbor helps me. They have each other's backs since they know each other. But nobody knows each other in Tehran. It deserves a world to me that I can speak with my own native language with my neighbors and I feel that I am not alone among them, but in Tehran nobody knows each other, I do not know who my neighbor is and there is a mixture of Kurdish, Turkish people, and etc."

### **3-3 – The minorities and fear of crime**

In many countries of the world, women of the religious minorities such as Muslims are distinguishable from other women with the veil and cover they have or they are different from each other in terms of race and dialect, while this problem is less visible in Iran due to the harmonization of the clothes. The interviewed women in this sample construed the harmonization of cover as positive because it provides the context of social integration for them. In their perspective, Islamic dress causes women to be considered as the majority and while being identified as Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian can cause to the separation and lack of social integration. This separation from their point of view can be annoying and frightening in different forms which are mentioned below:

#### **3-3-1 - Fear of being identified and men's behavior change**

One of the Zoroastrian respondents says: "as soon as men understand that we are not Muslim, they change their behavior, they think that we do not adhere to the ethical principles and their view and expectations change."

#### **3-3-2 – The fear of relations constraint and interaction with the majority**

Janet, 40 years old, married, having diploma degree said: "if our neighbors understand that we are not Muslims, their relationship towards us is not so good, and they treat with obsession and caution, since sometimes we are considered as unclean (najis)."

### **3-4 – Pregnancy; motherhood and fear of crime**

"Being a mother" and "Pregnancy" are among the factors that cause women to experience more spatial constraints during special period. In the pregnancy period, women may change their spatial behavior and they feel discomfort and loss of independence in many places and stop from going to certain places. Since pregnancy imposes limitations for them and reduces their physical abilities, sometimes it causes their detachment from the urban space as well as constraint in their activities. During pregnancy period, some women stated that they were harassed and ridiculed by the boys. Women consider this experience as frightening and viewed it as the cause of their limitation. Maternal duty and amenability towards children make mothers being sensitive about their children's safety.

For example, Aazam, 38 years old, married, having under diploma education, is a worker in the food plant. She has 20 and 22 years old daughters who work at a clothing manufacturer. She says: "... I am very worried about my children. I am so scared about them since there are full of bad guys in this city. I am so worried about my children that I am not about myself."

It seems that the mother's fear about their children is related to their age and sex. For example, a woman who has a baby is afraid of child abduction. Women who have a boy or a girl fear of bad friends.

In fact, the mothers' fear about their children can be put in three general categories:

- 1 - Fear of accompanying with bad friends and involvement in issues such as theft, addiction and etc.
- 2 - Fear of being cheated by the opposite sex
- 3 - Fear of child abduction

### **4 – Influential factors on the production and reproduction of fear in the family and community**

Fear of crime is socially constructed in our social interactions with others that constantly produce and reproduce. Sometimes even investigations can also, with limiting the scope of their research to the security and protection issues and sheer focus on the women as the victims who have no influence on their life, have a role in the

reproduction of fear (Koskela, 1997). The production and reproduction of fear in the community may be affected by the following items:

#### **4-1 - Women's sociability and fear of crime**

Since the first year of the child's age, it is tried to nurture boys and girls based on the determined behavioral patterns in the society and thus parents, trainers and educational institutions teach and ask children to behave based on these patterns. Pattern upon which women usually are fragile, and poor beings that always should take care of their behavior, while boys were strong and brave and have the ability and power to do different things. (Giddens, 2001)

The sociability and idiomatically training differences between that of the girls and boys for attending in the society often leads to the detachment or isolation of the girls from society and acceptance of the space insecurity and thus transferring the fear to themselves. Women are fully aware of this issue that the cultural and social procedures treat them unequally.

Farnaz, 40 years old, married, employed says: "From childhood, they teach girls to move slowly. They should be submissive. They look after their children affectionately at their homes, but the situation is different for boys. If a guy is out until 10 pm, nobody asks him a thing but it is not the same for a girl if she stays out alone for a long time."

#### **4-2 – Men dominance and fear's indoctrination**

One of the factors that fuel the women's fear is indoctrination which is done by family's men like husband, father, brother. Regarding this issue, many women stated that the outdoor environment is dangerous and unsafe based on aforementioned person's views.

Elahe, 27 years old, married, having diploma degree and housekeeper said: "my husband does not even allow me to go to my mother's home without him. My husband says I believe in you but the people and community are not good, you are at home and not aware of the outdoor issues, there are bad guys and you're a woman, and it is not good for you to go out alone .... We also do not know the taxi drivers." It is mentionable that employed women mostly continue their life free of these indoctrinations. Though the fear of sexual harassment is a serious affair for them.

#### **4-3 –Media and fear of crime**

Many people are not informed of crime events without using of media while enlarging it may disturb the public minds. Therefore, the use rate of these tools can play an important role in increasing people's fear and insecurity in society.

Sharare, 40 years old, single, having bachelor degree, and employed says: "I do not read the events' page of newspapers because they badly affect my mind. I become suspicious about everyone and I'll see everyone as a criminal."

#### **5 - Strategies for dealing with the fear of crime among women:**

Many women use individual strategies and techniques to deal with the fear of crime. Such strategies are usually defined in the form of an appropriate coverage and behavioral dignity. Women see applying these strategies simple and effective. Also, they try to use public transportation, and refrain from attending public places at certain hours or in certain places. Of course, a few of them use some means of protection such as knife or spray.

The strategies and techniques that women choose for overcoming their fear are more influenced by social patterns. For example, the reason that women generally think less about instructional solutions is that they probably see it unreachable in the democratic society. The mentioned strategies can be classified into the following three types:

- 1 – The cultural-structural changes
- 2 – The change of the condition
- 3 – The changes on the basis of individual ability

#### **Conclusion**

Women are more afraid of crime in comparison with men, while they are less sacrifice of the crime to men (Carroll and Burgess, 1996). Women's fear is often because of their vulnerability towards sexual harassment and also the fear of sexual harassment leads to the fear of other crimes (Ferraro, 1996). The research conducted in Western countries indicates that the probability of sexual harassment for women is ten times more than men (Carroll and Burgess, 1996). The in-depth interviews in this study express this issue that all of the respondents have a consensus

on the fear of sexual harassment. It seems that this kind of fear varies with age. For example, young women are more afraid of sexual harassment than old women while old women are afraid of theft and accident. The feeling of the fear of crime is not a sudden affair for the women, but they become familiar with the idea that of being more vulnerable than men in the process of the socialization. Parents, the same age groups and mass media constantly highlight on this fear. The biological experience of the women reveals that how the warnings and indoctrinations of family and/or broadcasted news by the media are effective in the formation of their fear.

However, in this case, factors such as education and employment reflect the differences. For example, educated women are less influenced by the indoctrinations or unquestionable acceptance of the news than unemployed housewives. Of course, more studies are required to prove this point. Fear of crime impacts on women's social interactions, the use of the spaces and the life's quality. Therefore, it can be said that gender is one of the variables which reveals itself concretely in the prediction of fear. Based on in-depth interviews, women are afraid of solitary, dark and unknown places, deadlocked street, overpass, personal passenger cars, or even crowded places. Fear of crowded places is because of theft and jostling and fear of solitary places is due to sexual harassment. The factor which mostly contributes to women's fear in specific places or times is the dominance of men over urban space.

Among other factors identified in this research which seems that they are effective in the formation of women's fear, are crime experience, unfamiliarity with urban spaces, divorced or widow, disability, motherhood experience and being a member of the minority group. Each of the aforementioned factors specifically affects the formation of women's fear. For example, mothers express the most fear in the form of worrying about their children.

Divorced or widowed women are afraid of helplessness and loneliness and disabled women primarily fear of the design of urban spaces that raises the probability of accident and incident. In-depth interviews with a number of the women of religious minorities revealed new experiences that worth further investigation and thinking. These women reported the similar experiences like other women as long as they are not identified as the "minority."

They believed that the society's official cover has a positive function that put them in similar form and shape with the rest of women, but if they are identified, they experience more fear. Fear of change in view and behavior of men who sometimes think that the women of the minority group do not adhere to ethical principles. And the fear because of dominant thoughts such as being unclean, they are being treated unkindly and the isolation from the majority. Beyond these factors, it seems that fear of being victimized is a constant feature of women's social life that should be explained in the context of power and gender inequalities.

In response to the question why women fear more, there are different views. What was emphasized in this paper is the fear of crime and its reproduction that is the product of women's social status. The emphasis on the social causes of the fear and marginalized groups retell the importance of gender and different experiences of men and women. The conceptualizing of women's fear in the context of gendered inequalities and being marginalized provides the possibility that the nature of their fear is understood better.

There are at least two different levels of debate in the feminist tradition. Researchers whose thought basis lies in the critical tradition of social science and emphasize on the political and social nature of fear and believe that fear in the power relations is based on gender while the second group are those feminists who speak based on the architectural procedures and urban planning and promote the idea that built environment is the product of gendered relations. Because of the men's dominance on the architectural and planning professions, the women and their needs are marginalized in built environment, and thus, women feel fear and alienation toward public spaces.

According to this approach, it is thought that by applying a series of changes in the built environment, crime rates and fear of being victimized can reduce. The emphasis on this issue, that with the change in the environment women's fear can decrease, is based on the assumption that most crimes occur by chance. Based on the issue that fear of crime for a potential victim acts differently, it is difficult to conceptualize the fear of crime as "chance" affair. There is no conscious and subconscious about this issue that we fear in specific environment, but fear is an accumulated process that develops during time (Goodey, 1995) and it is accumulated via the collection of personal and social experiences and/or it is a response to the experiences.

As many of the differences can affect our fear, fear of crime can also affect the meaning of a place. In other words, change in the environment for reducing the fear is emphasized on a visible and immediate dimension. However, these operational solutions do not seem comprehensive, but they are further considered and used for political purposes. Reducing the fear of crime phenomenon through environmental change is achieved when the real risks of violence against women and their fear decreases. Therefore, there is doubt about this subject that how far environmental changes can reduce violence against women. Because many violence against women occur not only in public space but also in semi-private and private spaces such as houses. Therefore, the women's recognition toward the firsthand and second experiences that they have and their understanding of the men's violence probability and the lack of support that they receive from environment, all of them contribute to the formation of

fear. The concept of marginalization and lack of social integration and its effect on the social identity as basic concepts are very important in our understanding of the fear of crime among women. It is notable that emphasizing on such an approach does not put away the importance of the place totally. However, it emphasizes on this issue that women's fear of crime is not the result of environmental and situational specific features, but arises from gendered inequalities, marginalization and the inferiority of their social status and in other words, it is a manifestation of gendered relations in social spaces; discussions that had been left outside the scope of criminology.

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