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CRIME, NEIGHBORHOOD PERCEPTIONS, AND THE UNDERCLASS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR OF CRIME AND CLASS POSITION

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ABSTRACT

Fear of crime and the underclass represent two of the more prominent topics of discussion within the realms of criminology and sociology over the past several decades. There is little research, however, tying these topics together. Recently, a call has been reissued for the further understanding of the relationship between crime and class. Such an examination is essential to the understanding of fear of crime as well. In this article, an attempt is made to meld the two seemingly divergent areas of fear of crime and the underclass in order to develop a more thorough understanding of neighborhood fear. With the use of secondary data, the extent to which this underclass offers a useful model for analysis of neighborhood issues is investigated. In particular crime, fear, and perceptions of victimization among members of the underclass are examined.

INTRODUCTION

Two of the more prominent topics of discussion within the realms of criminology and sociology over the past decade have been fear of crime and the underclass. Fear of crime as a social phenomenon became a research topic

in the late 1960s and has been emphasized by criminologists ever since (Baumer, 1985; Liska, Sanchirico, and Reed, 1988). Within the mainstream media, fear of crime has been even more pronounced over the past several years. A brief review of general periodicals found over 100 citations in major national and re-

gional print media outlets over the last two years.

Similarly, research on the underclass also gained prominence in the 1960s and resurfaced in the 1980s after a decade hiatus following the negative reaction to the Moynihan (1965) report on the Black family. Apparently, researchers shied away from this area of research to avoid being labeled as racist (Cook and Curtin, 1987; Wilson, 1986). A library citation search found over 150 references to the underclass over this same period.

There is little research, however, tying these topics together. The development of these two ostensibly separate topics has not been without some overlap; indirect and unintentional as this may have been. Due to both theoretical and methodological limitations, much of the research on fear of crime has centered around neighborhood concerns. Many of these studies center on resident reactions and fear in inner-city neighborhoods, and they frequently attempt to understand fear in light of the respondents' previous victimization or levels of crime in the neighborhood in question. Research on the underclass also centers frequently on neighborhood situations, with many of the writers examining the prevalence of crime among various subgroups within this class.

Recently, however, a call has been reissued for the further understanding of the relationship between crime and class (Hagan, 1992). Such an examination is essential to the understanding of fear of crime as well. In this article, a model that will attempt to meld the two seemingly divergent areas of fear of crime and the underclass is developed in order to form a more thorough understanding of neighborhood fear.

Review of Research on Fear of Crime

Liska, Sanchirico, and Reed (1988: 835–836) state, "Fear of crime is a very important social problem about which we know very little." As Stafford and Galle (1984) discussed, much of the research on fear of crime has pointed to a unique paradox. That is, those groups who appear most fearful of crime are

those least likely to be victimized. In particular, women and the elderly, who show the highest levels of fear of crime, appear to have the lowest levels of victimization (Baumer, 1985; Clemente and Kleiman, 1976, 1977; Lagrange and Ferraro, 1989; Akers et al., 1987).

Literature on crime fear focuses on two primary concerns. First, who is fearful and when? Second, how can we tell? In addition to women and the elderly, a variety of research projects have also focused on the effects of fear of crime on buying handguns (Bankston et al., 1990; Defronzo, 1979) and constraints on personal behavior patterns (Liska, Sanchirico, and Reed, 1988; Gates and Rohe, 1987). Results from these studies, however, are inconclusive as to explaining the overall impact of fear of crime on personal behavior. Some studies indicate that fear of crime appears to be only marginally related to actually experiencing crime (Liska, Sanchirico, and Reed, 1988), while others indicate a significant relationship between fear and victimization (Smith and Hill, 1991). Still others report contradictory findings in studies that examine neighborhood cohesion and social activity (Hartnagel, 1979; Taylor and Hale, 1986).

Several studies from the 1970s concluded that fear of crime and socioeconomic status were inversely related (Clemente and Kleiman, 1977), although more recent observers have noted that income and social class are positively related to fear of crime or are not useful in predicting fear (Moeller, 1989). Fewer recent studies, however, include a systematic analysis of the relationship of socioeconomic class and crime fear. A few do include income measures in the analysis which were significant but were not emphasized in the discussion (e.g., Liska, Sanchirico, and Reed, 1988; Baumer, 1985; Leibowitz, 1975). These findings were frequently presented in terms of neighborhood fear, with neighborhood socioeconomic makeup used as the primary descriptor (Lewis and Salem, 1986).

How one measures fear of crime has also been important in focusing this research. Lagrange and Ferraro (1989) argue that two problems plague fear of crime measures. First, the measures used are not necessarily measur-

ing fear, but rather are measuring the risk of being victimized (Lagrange and Ferraro, 1989:698). For example, asking respondents if they are likely to be a victim of a crime measures perceived risk, not fear. Second, is the concern that some of the most commonly used measures of crime are too simplistic. For example, many studies used single measures of fear of crime. They ask respondents, in one variation or another, "How safe do you feel being out alone in your neighborhood at night?" (Liska, Lawrence, and Sanchirico, 1982; Akers et al., 1987; Hartnagel, 1979) Lagrange and Ferraro (1989:699) argue that such items are inadequate because crime is only implied and, as single items, these measures are prone to error and cannot specify which crimes one fears. As a result, a number of studies following these and other recommendations, have included a battery of items concerning fear of crime to overcome single item measurement problems (cf., Lagrange and Ferraro, 1989; Warr and Stafford, 1983).

Defining the Underclass

The debate over the precise definition of class is extensive and can hardly be decided in these few pages. Some understanding of the use of the term "underclass," and the implications such use has in American society is important. As defined, underclass is a direct reference to a society with a general set of classes, including, perhaps, a working class and a land owning class. In their 1987 discussion of various approaches to defining the underclass, Cook and Curtin attempt to lay out the general outlines of various approaches for defining the underclass.

The most straightforward discussions of the underclass center on describing them as the extremely poor, such as homeless members of the population. By this definition, the underclass are those members of the population whose incomes, by official designation, fall below the poverty line and, thus, are eligible for various and varying forms of governmental assistance. Defining these conditions of poverty is not as straightforward as would be expected, however. In general, poverty as de-

fined by the government is used as a definitive indicator of the underclass. Conservative and liberal debate over exactly what should be included as income in order to qualify for inclusion in the ranks of the poor tends to cloud this indicator. For some, income should include "in kind" benefits received from the government, such as food stamps, housing subsidies, and medical assistance (e.g., Murray, 1984). Others believe that official definitions of poverty highly underestimate the effect of income deprivation, and that the minimum required income levels for poverty association are too low (Rossi and Wright, 1989; Wilson, 1989; Shapiro and Greenstein, 1988; Bergmann, 1986). Finally, some commentators see the definitional problems as less important than specifying the length of time people are poor or destitute. Cook and Curtin (1987) cite more straightforward sociological discussions (Wilson, 1989; Cook et al., 1988) of the underclass as ones that examine material well-being rather than just income levels. In one of the more visible discussions of the underclass, William J. Wilson (1987) defines the underclass as:

> . . . the most disadvantaged segments of the black urban community, that heterogeneous grouping of families and individuals who are outside the mainstream of the American Occupational System. Included in this group are individuals who lack training and skills and either experience long term spells of unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long spells of poverty and or welfare dependence. These are the populations to which we refer when we speak of the *underclass*. (Wilson, 1987:8)

From a sociological view, inclusion of demographic and quality of life characteristics, as well as general lack of income, is important for understanding the makeup of the underclass.

A number of researchers examining the underclass have focused on the presence of extreme poverty among Black Americans, and particularly the inner-city Black poor. These

studies suggest that "first, they are predomi-
nately unemployed and underemployed . . .
they are predominantly black . . . they are es-
sentially an urban population . . . and, most
importantly, they lack prospects for social mo-
bility" (Rolison, 1991:288).

In addition, Massey (1990) argues that the
indicators of membership in the underclass
should also include segregation (in particular
racial segregation) of the population from the
economic and social resources which would al-
low for full participation in society. In partic-
ular, Massey (1990:330) argues that without
racial segregation "the economic dislocations
of the 1970s would not have produced . . . a
socially and spatially isolated underclass."

Finally, a number of researchers have fo-
cused on the extent to which this underclass
represents a distinct cultural phenomenon, ex-
amining sexual behavior and family disrup-
tions among the underclass (Anderson, 1989;
Wilson, 1987), criminal and antisocial behav-
ior among members of the underclass, partic-
ularly young males (Murray, 1984; Wilson,
1987; Jenks, 1991), and the increase in unwed
mothers dependent on welfare (Wilson, 1987).
Whether explicitly stated as being a culturally
(and morally) degenerate segment of the pop-
ulation (cf., Murray, 1984) or seen as products
of the effects of, and responses to, structural
conditions (Wilson, 1987; Jenks, 1991), some
commentators are concerned that this line of
research is tantamount to "blaming the victim"
for ills that, for the most part, are beyond the
immediate remedial control of those persons
most effected and is simplistic public policy
implications (Greenstone, 1991; Jenks, 1991).

Although this discussion of the various ap-
proaches examining the characteristics of the
underclass is only skeletal, the influence of
some of these positions on the overall debate
has caused some concern (Rolison, 1991).
These various theoretical positions are open
for, and are engaged in, extensive debate. For
the purposes of this study, however, there is
more concern with an overlap between fear of
crime and class position. The underclass in this
study represents the segment of the population
that falls significantly below the poverty line,

with special considerations of the affect of
race and inner-city location on fear of crime.

SOME GENERAL HYPOTHESES

Given the unexamined overlap discussed
above among the research on fear and the un-
derclass, it is believed that important under-
standing of the mechanisms of fear is lacking.
This study is an exploratory attempt to address
the issue of the relationship between underclass
membership and fear of crime. In general,
none of the previous fear of crime research ad-
dresses how fear impacts upon the underclass
or the extent to which underlying factors facing
this group exacerbates such fear. In this study,
several general hypotheses will be examined.

1. As with previous research findings, women,
   the elderly, and inner-city residents are more
   likely to indicate higher levels of fear of crime
   than men, the young, and residents of non-
   city locales.
2. Persons classified as the underclass — in par-
   ticular, those persons who fall below the pov-
   erty line, minorities, and those who have
   experienced periods of unemployment — will
   show increased levels of fear of crime regard-
   less of gender, age, city size, or other factors.
   Being poor, particularly extremely poor, in-
   creases the likelihood of neighborhood fear.
3. Those persons who see the need for increased
   funding for neighborhood police presence,
   assisting big cities with dealing with prob-
   lems, and increased support for welfare pro-
   grams will show increased levels of fear
   because of their concern that not enough is
   being done to protect them.
4. Poor persons are less likely to show confi-
   dence in their government and business lead-
   ers. This lack of confidence is associated with
   increasing levels of neighborhood fear.

DATA AND MEASURES

The use of secondary data is not always op-
timal for developing alternative approaches to
studying anything. Using such data requires
one to accept the shortcomings of the mea-

surement vehicles produced by the authors of the original data. The goal of this study is to provide an exploratory framework for the development of a more useful theory of fear of crime with regard to the underclass. The optimal data set would include: a variety of measures of fear of crime, precise measures of the underclass, a coordinated set of items addressing the social and structural concerns facing members of the underclass (and society at large), as well as the requisite related demographic characteristics most frequently associated with fear of crime research. Unfortunately, such a detailed and comprehensive data set is not available. An exploratory study using secondary data analysis provides for approximate measures which adequately address these concerns.

To this end, this study utilizes data from the 1987 General Social Survey to explore the extent to which neighborhood fear and the underclass are complimentary areas of research. It is believed that, given previous research which utilized this data set (as well as ones using a similar measure), it is instructive to see the interaction between fear and the underclass discussed above. Once this relationship is established, future research will warrant more inclusive measures of both fear of crime and the underclass.

Neighborhood Fear

As noted, accurate and appropriate measures of fear of crime are not easily devised or agreed upon. The same could easily be said about the definition of neighborhood. Exactly what constitutes one's neighborhood is variable, often delineated only in unwritten and/or unspoken understanding among members of that community. A former writer for the *New York Post* preferred the definition of neighborhood as offered by a Puerto Rican laborer: "A neighborhood is where, when you go out of it, you get beat up." Given this definition, it would follow that neighborhood fear constitutes being afraid, even within one's neighborhood, of being beat up.[1] Although it is not the optimal definition of neighborhood,

in this study, neighborhood is defined as the general area in which one lives.

Various researchers have addressed concerns about how to assess fear of crime. The 1987 General Social Survey included one item which addresses this issue of neighborhood fear of crime. The item asked respondents, "Is there any area right around here where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?" A similar item was used by Baumer (1985), Garofalo (1979), and Clemente and Kleiman (1976). A multiple indicator model of neighborhood fear is preferable; however, the widespread use of this question offers some consistency in comparing results to other research.

The Underclass

Although some concerns have been expressed about the quality and quantity of data on the poor (particularly the extremely poor) that are obtained through standard survey research methods (Beeghley, 1989), the General Social Survey (GSS) represents one of the more thorough and comprehensive research efforts. Additionally, the GSS contains a number of measures of respondent socioeconomic conditions which allow for a variety of composite measures. The primary measure of underclass used here is a postinterview constructed item which indicated whether the respondent's household would be considered poor (with household income below approximately 80 percent of the poverty line), borderline poor (ranging from approximately 80 percent to 112 percent of the poverty line), or not poor (above the borderline cutoff of approximately 112 percent of the poverty line).[2]

Sociodemographic Characteristics

In addition to the respondent's poverty status, demographic characteristics including respondent race, age, gender, unemployment status, city size, and marital status are included in the analysis. Race, age, gender, employment status, and city size are common demographic measures used in fear of crime research and studies on the underclass. Mari-

tal status and number of children were included as proxy measures for family structure and stability in order to examine how personal attachment to others is related to neighborhood fear. Also, respondent victimization measures, such as being shot at with a gun, being hit, being robbed, and having a burglary of one's home were included. A number of studies have examined the impact of victimization on levels of fear with mixed results. Although these measures are subjective, and the extent of their impact on the respondent is not known, such victimization measures do provide some measure of the impact of the direct experience of crime on fear.

Social/Structural Measures

In order to examine the extent to which the relationship between neighborhood fear and the underclass might be related to issues which respondents have concerning more broadly defined social or structural constraints, a number of items are also examined which address the relationship between neighborhood fear and respondents' perceptions of government spending on dealing with social problems, confidence in government, overall satisfaction levels with one's life and/or community situation, and perceptions of overall levels of conflict within the society. These variables are loosely considered structural in that they represent factors which are, for the most part, beyond

the basic control of the individuals — particularly members of the underclass.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the response distributions for neighborhood fear and the measure of poverty — the two primary variables examined in this study. As can be seen in this table, four out of ten respondents indicated that he or she did not feel comfortable walking the area right around where he or she lived.

Table 1 also presents the distribution of the poverty line measure as constructed in the General Social Survey. The poor and imputed poor categories were combined and labeled the poor. The borderline and imputed categories were combined to form the borderline group, and the nonpoor and imputed nonpoor were combined in similar fashion. In all, slightly less than 16 percent of respondents were considered to be poor, while an additional 2.6 percent bordered on the poverty line. This represents slightly more than the official poverty rate for 1987 as set by the U.S. government. Approximately 85 percent of the GSS respondents were classified as not poor.

Of particular concern for this study is the extent to which being a member of the underclass affects levels of neighborhood fear. That is, do members of the underclass show elevated levels of fear of crime? If so, is this the case across a number of other predictors of

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO FEAR AND UNDERCLASS ITEMS

	Response	N	%
Fear: "Is there any area right around here where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?"	Yes	721	40.0
	No	1,083	60.0
	Valid N	1,804	100.0
	Category	N	%
Measure of poverty	Poor	281	15.6
	Borderline	46	2.6
	Not poor	1,472	84.8
	Valid N	1,799	100.0

fear of crime? In Table 2, the comparison of levels of fear of crime for respondent demographic characteristics and levels of fear for these groups by poverty status is presented.

As found in many of the previous studies which examined fear of crime, women are much more likely to indicate fear of walking at night in their neighborhood. In all, over 56 percent of the women in the GSS sample indicated this fear, while only 18.4 percent of the men indicated such fear. As can be seen in Table 2, however, the proportion of women who are poor, and particularly borderline poor, who experience their fear of crime is significantly higher than nonpoor women who are fearful in their neighborhoods ($p < .05$). Similarly, although only 18 percent of nonpoor men indicate neighborhood fear, this proportion

increases to almost 30 percent for the poor, and over 46 percent of the borderline poor.[3]

A number of studies also found that fear levels differed according to age. For presentation purposes, respondent age was divided into three categories in Table 2; less than thirty years of age, thirty to fifty years, and over fifty (note that subsequent analysis used age in its original continuous form). As can be seen in this table, the actual fear levels for these age groups fluctuates in the overall distribution. Forty percent of both the youngest and oldest cohorts were afraid to venture into their neighborhood at night, while slightly over 35 percent of the midlevel cohort so responded. Again, note that there are significant differences in level of fear for these cohorts between the poor and the nonpoor. Indeed,

TABLE 2

PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING NEIGHBORHOOD FEAR[a] FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Overall (N = 1,799)	Poor (N = 281)	Borderline (N = 46)	Not Poor (N = 1,472)
Overall	40.2%	51.8	65.2	37.2
Sex				
Male	18.4	28.2	46.2	16.6
Female	56.6	62.3	72.7	54.6
Age				
< 30	41.4	58.8	72.7	35.9
30–50	35.8	47.9	62.5	33.5
> 60	44.7	50.0	63.6	42.7
Race				
White	36.4	51.8	66.7	34.3
Non-White	48.1	51.8	64.3	45.3
Location				
City > 50g	53.4	59.4	76.2	51.0
Suburbs	35.1	51.3	69.2	32.4
Small town/rural	31.3	43.3	41.7	27.9
Marital status				
Never married	41.3	53.9	66.7	36.6
Not married now	49.4	55.8	76.2	45.8
Married	34.7	43.8	40.0	33.5
Household member unemployed last 5 years				
No	40.0	52.3	68.8	37.3
Yes	40.7	51.0	57.1	36.9
Children				
None	41.7	53.2	58.3	39.5
1–3	39.2	55.5	70.4	35.3
4+	40.7	44.2	57.1	39.1
Crime victim				
No	43.5	55.0	63.0	41.2
Yes	35.7	49.3	66.7	32.1

[a] Represents respondents answering yes to the question: "Is there any area right around here where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?"

over 60 percent of the borderline poor respondents showed neighborhood fear, as is the case for over 70 percent of the youngest cohorts. Almost 60 percent of the youngest cohorts who were poor showed neighborhood fear. On the other hand, only 35 percent of the nonpoor youths said they were afraid in their neighborhood. Again, for each of these age cohorts, differences in levels of fear by relation to the poverty line were significant ($p < .001$ for lowest cohorts; $p < .1$ for elderly).

When Table 2 is examined for the effect of city size on levels of neighborhood fear, previous research is again supported overall. Over half of the GSS respondents who live in cities with fifty thousand or more residents indicated that they are afraid to walk in their neighborhood at night. Only about one-third of the residents of suburbs or small towns and rural areas indicated that they were fearful.

When this fear is examined in relation to class position, however, it is found that residents in all areas who are poor show much higher levels of neighborhood fear than do nonpoor residents. In large cities, almost 60 percent of the poor and over three-fourths of the borderline poor indicate that they are afraid to walk around their neighborhood at night. For nonpoor residents of big cities, one-half of the residents indicated this fear. This is a high proportion, yet significantly lower than for poor residents ($p < .05$). Differences in levels of neighborhood fear were even greater when comparing poor and nonpoor in the suburbs ($p < .001$) and small towns and rural areas ($p < .01$).

It should be noted that for some of these demographic variables, the cells in the borderline poor column contain a limited number of cases. It can be seen throughout Table 2 that there is a drastic difference between the pro-

TABLE

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR NEIGHBORHOOD

	Fear	Underclass[c]	Confidence Variables[a]			Spending Variables[b]		
			Leg.	Fed.	Business	Crime	Welfare	City
Fear	1.0							
Underclass	.131**	1.0						
Legislature	−.023	−.006	1.0					
Federal	.025	.004	.364**	1.0				
Business	.038	.095**	.265**	.291**	1.0			
Crime	−.079**	.007	−.006	−.009	−.017	1.0		
Welfare	−.062**	−.095**	.037	−.083**	−.060*	−.021	1.0	
City	−.072**	−.035	.041	−.140**	−.066*	.182**	.114**	1.0
Race	−.068**	−.119**	.039	−.120**	−.117**	.088**	.265**	.363**
Black	.105**	.267**	.006	.132**	.161**	−.012	−.209**	−.247**
Sex	−.384**	−.118**	.019	−.015	−.017	.040	.048*	.030
Age	.048*	.022	.004	−.008	−.015	−.057*	.046	.059*
Marital	.114**	.214**	−.031	.042	.029	.046	−.131**	−.161**
City size	−.176**	−.004	−.051*	−.077**	−.111**	.028	.085**	.252**
Unemployment	.006	.118**	.006	.055*	.055*	.013	−.080**	−.053*
Children	−.008	.121**	−.002	.007	.018	−.015	−.004	−.054*
Victim[h]	−.080**	.043	.086**	.086**	.035	.031	−.059*	−.045
Mean	.386	.160	2.024	2.129	1.797	1.466	1.636	1.911
SD	(.487)	(.367)	(.591)	(.681)	(.588)	(.615)	(.784)	(.786)

Note: ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.
[a]Variables are coded 1 = great deal, 2 = some, 3 = hardly any.
[b]Variables are coded 1 = too little, 2 = about right, 3 = too much.
[c]Poor and borderline poor respondents have been combined. 1 = underclass, 0 = not poor.
[d]For this variable, 0 = female, 1 = male.
[e]For this variable, 1 = married, 2 = not married.
[f]For city size, 1 = city 50,000+, 2 = suburbs and medium cities, 3 = small towns and rural.
[g]This variable measures unemployment experience for any adult household member within 5 years. For this variable, 0 = no experience with unemployment, 1 = experience.
[h]Represents having been a victim of any one of the following: burglary, robbery, physical attack, or having been shot at with a gun.

portion of the poor who are fearful and the nonpoor who show such fear. For the most part, these differences are significant at least at the $p < .05$ level. Exceptions to this trend are found only with regard to families with four or more children.

Thus, the traditional variables of gender, race, and age are significantly related in bivariate analysis of neighborhood fear. As Table 2 also shows, however, where one is positioned in relation to poverty has an additional impact on levels of fear. The poor (and near poor) are significantly more likely to show levels of neighborhood fear than those who are not poor.

Multivariate Analysis

In order to examine thoroughly the impact of membership in the underclass on neighbor-

hood fear, a number of multivariate models were examined. First, the Pearson correlation matrix for fear, poverty (or underclass), respondent demographic variables, as well as a number of items addressing perceptions of government action was constructed. The correlation matrix, as well as the means and standard deviations for each of these variables are presented in Table 3.

In the first column of Table 3, a number of these coefficients proved important in predicting neighborhood fear. As can be seen, a number of the variables in the matrix appear to confirm several of the hypotheses discussed above. First, as has been found in most studies, the correlations between neighborhood fear and being female, as well as being older, are particularly strong. Also, as was predicted, a very strong correlation is found between being a member of the underclass and being

3

FEAR AND PREDICTOR VARIABLES

				R is				
Race	Black	Gender[d]	Age	Marital[e]	Size[f]	Unemployment[g]	Children	Victim

1.0								
−.474**	1.0							
.061*	−.048*	1.0						
.120**	−.079**	−.046*	1.0					
−.188**	.232**	−.083**	−.035	1.0				
.241**	−.287**	−.017	.049*	−.186**	1.0			
−.055*	.079**	.024	−.348**	.120**	−.062**	1.0		
.059*	.077**	−.080**	.386**	−.207**	.087**	−.125**	1.0	
.007	.043	.329**	−.187**	.099**	−.069**	.168**	−.057*	1.0
1.737	.324	.464	42.99	1.49	1.889	2.66	1.90	.483
(.714)	(.468)	(.499)	(16.7)	(.500)	(.741)	(.442)	(1.87)	(.500)

afraid within one's neighborhood ($p < .01$). Members of the underclass are more likely to show neighborhood fear. Next, all of the co-efficients for the spending variables came out as predicted. Coefficients indicate that neigh-borhood fear is strongly correlated with re-spondents who believed too little was being spent on dealing with crime, welfare, condi-tions of Blacks, and problems facing big cit-ies. Blacks, unattached persons, those living in larger cities, and those who had been victims of crimes all showed strong and statistically significant correlations with neighborhood fear. In particular, note that the zero order re-lationship between fear and crime is negative. That is, being victimized (according to the measures utilized here) is an indication of de-creased likelihood of neighborhood fear be-ing present. Further examination of Table 3, however, suggests that this relationship is a by-product of the fact that men are most victim-ized (according to these measures) and also show the lowest levels of neighborhood fear.

Several hypothesized relationships are not supported in Table 3. None of the confidence measures proved significant in relation to levels of neighborhood fear. Similarly, having a his-tory of employment instability also is not an indicator of this fear. Note, however, that when the correlation between underclass and con-fidence in business is examined, it is found that the poor are less likely to have confidence in this group. Also, when the Pearson correlation coefficient is examined, it is found that the un-derclass are less likely to believe that additional money is needed to fight crime, although this finding is not statistically significant.

Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to examine the independent effects of these predictor variables on the poor, or-dinary least squares multiple regression was used.[4] In Table 4, three regression models are presented examining these effects. In the first model, the neighborhood fear was regressed

TABLE 4

NEIGHBORHOOD FEAR ORDINARY LEAST SQUARES REGRESSION RESULTS (STANDARDIZED COEFFICIENTS)

Variable	Overall Beta	Underclass Beta	Non-Poor Beta
Underclass	.087***	—	—
Race (1 = Black)	.004	−.058	.027
Sex (1 = male)	−.408***	−.334***	−.353***
Age	.072**	−.009	.092**
City size (1 = large city, 2 = suburb and small city, 3 = small town/rural)	−.077***	−.254***	.147***
Unemployed last 5 years	.014	−.030	.021
Marital (1 = married, 2 = not married)	.012	.081	.005
Number of children	−.105***	−.146#	−.095**
Crime victim	.059*	.041	.068#
Confidence measures			
Legislature	−.032	−.036	−.031
Federal gov	.020	−.039	.020
Business	.004	−.073	.015
Spending variables			
Crime	−.057*	−.077	−.052#
Welfare	.003	−.048	.016
Cities	−.010	−.023	−.005
Assist. Blacks	.033	.077	.026
R-square	.207	.219	.199
Adj R-square	.198	.160	.188
N	1348	216	1132

Significance Levels: # = .10; * = .05; ** = .01; *** = .001.

upon all predictor variables. In models 3 and 4, the regression was carried out separately for those respondents designed underclass and those who were nonpoor. For each of these models, standardized regression coefficients are presented in order to facilitate a discussion of the relative impact of each of the predictors.

The regression results for the overall fear of crime predictors is presented in column 2 of Table 4. The effect of gender on predicting levels of neighborhood fear proves to be the most powerful indicator of this fear. Overall, the standardized coefficient for gender is over four times the magnitude of the next closest predictor variable ($-.408$, $p < .001$). This finding is consistent with most other fear of crime research and supports the first hypothesis stated above.

In addition, age of respondent and residence also proved to be significant predictors of neighborhood fear. As hypothesized, as the city size increases, the level of neighborhood fear also increases, and older respondents are more likely to be afraid to walk in their neighborhood at night, even when controlling for sex and class position (sig, at $p < .001$ and $p < .01$, respectively).

Attachment to family appears to be a particularly strong indicator of neighborhood fear. When the effects of family attachment are examined, it is found that the fewer children one has (or having no children) significantly increases the probability that respondents are afraid to walk in their neighborhood at night (Beta $= -.105$, $p < .001$). Similarly, being unmarried also has a positive relationship to neighborhood fear, although this impact is not statistically significant. Thus, although the evidence is not consistent, it appears that neighborhood fear is more salient among those persons who are not attached with significant others.

The third most powerful predictor of neighborhood fear is being a member of the underclass. As hypothesized, underclass status strongly increases the likelihood that one is fearful of walking within his/her neighborhood, even when controlling for other influences. Note also, however, that several components

of most underclass definitions did not prove significant in predicting neighborhood fear. In particular, when including underclass in the model, the effect of respondent race on predicting fear is very small and is not statistically significant. Similarly, household experience with spells of unemployment has virtually no impact upon neighborhood fear. When examining the zero-order correlations presented in Table 3, race was strongly correlated with fear of crime (Beta $= .105$, $p < .01$), and having spells of unemployment was positively related to both being in the underclass ($p < .01$) and fear, although the latter was not significant. The effects for both race and unemployment, however, fall out when included in the multiple regression analysis.

As with previous research, a measure of victimization was included in the model to examine the effect of neighborhood fear. As discussed above, the zero-order relationships indicated that the presence of fear was inversely correlated with being a victim. As suggested above, this was a result of males being the most likely victims. When gender is controlled for in the regression equation, it is found that, indeed, female victims show higher levels of neighborhood fear than nonvictims ($p < .05$).

Finally, the hypothesized relationships between confidence measures and government spending perceptions did not materialize. Only one of these indicators – level of government spending on fighting crime – had a significant effect on neighborhood fear. For this measure, respondents who indicated that too little was being spent on crime showed significantly higher levels of neighborhood fear ($p < .05$). When controlling for other concerns, in particular class position and city size, the impact of spending concerns (city, welfare, and race issues) was very weak and statistically insignificant. Similarly, none of the confidence measures were significant at predicting neighborhood fear.

These results indicate that previous research which focused on fear of crime among women and the elderly was, in part, the correct model, but that class and family characteristics also prove to be powerful predictors of fear. These

findings did not, however, support earlier hypotheses that confidence in government and/or perceptions examined here explain neighborhood fear. Overall, approximately 20 percent of the variance for measuring neighborhood fear can be explained in this analysis.

The Underclass and the Nonpoor

In addition to the overall levels of neighborhood fear, this study is concerned with the underclass and this group's relationship to fear. In columns 3 and 4 of Table 4, results from separate regressions for the underclass and nonpoor respondents are presented.

Perhaps most striking when comparing the differences between the neighborhood fear models of the underclass and nonpoor is that very few of the predictor variables proved significant for predicting underclass neighborhood fear. Indeed, only city of residence (where the larger the city, the more likely one is to be afraid) and gender had strong effects on neighborhood fear (each sig $p < .001$). Only one other predictor variable, number of children, came close to significance. As seen before, the more children the respondents had, the less fearful they were, although this finding was only marginally significant (Beta = $-.146, p < .1$). City size, race, victimization, and respondent age all proved to be weak and statistically insignificant predictors of neighborhood fear. Overall, the model predicting neighborhood fear among the underclass explained 16 percent of the variance.

For the nonpoor, however, a number of other predictors proved important for understanding neighborhood fear. As with the underclass, women and those with fewer children were more likely to be afraid in their neighborhood. Additional variables also proved important for understanding fear. First, for the nonpoor, older persons were more significantly likely to be afraid to walk in their neighborhood at night ($p < .01$). Those persons who believed too little was being spent on fighting crime also were more afraid. Of particular note, however, is the effect of being a victim of a crime. Although the findings are only marginally significant, the nonpoor respondents who had

been victimized were more likely to be afraid in their neighborhood (Beta = $-.068, p < .1$). Overall, the model predicting neighborhood fear for the nonpoor explains almost 19 percent of the variance.

DISCUSSION

This article has attempted to supplement previous research examining fear of crime. In particular, this article examines how neighborhood fear impacts upon members of the underclass. Very little can be found in reviews of previous research which examines the relationship between neighborhood fear and income, let alone the underclass. Although the measures used in this study are not optimal, the implications from the findings suggest that examining class relations and fear provides an important insight into understanding the overall problem of fear of crime.

This analysis shows that, even when controlling for the more commonly examined effects of gender and age, fear among the underclass is much higher than among the nonpoor. Indeed, the Stafford and Galle (1984) suggestion that fear of crime represents a paradox in that the least victimized may be the most fearful may not be so paradoxical for the underclass. The underclass are the most victimized population, particularly with regard to street crime. They are also the most fearful, particularly underclass women. Being a resident in a large city is also strongly tied to neighborhood fear, but, regardless of location, the poor are more fearful than the nonpoor.

Neighborhood watch groups, tenant organizations, and "poor people's movements" against crime are usually portrayed in the media as anomalies in an otherwise indifferent, crime-prone, and crime-accepting segment of the population. They are seen as rarities among an underclass whose lives seem integral with the presence of crime. Indeed, gun buy-back programs and efforts of previous gang members to work in the community are often portrayed with skepticism, if not cynicism, by the media. Yet, the findings here suggest other-

wise. These findings suggest that many of the underclass are very afraid. As seen in Table 3, some in this group want the government to put resources into programs for the poor and minorities, but this group also suffers from low levels of confidence that government will do the job (although these results are not strong predictors of neighborhood fear).

Finally, the findings from this study suggest that additional research needs to be carried out that more accurately focuses on the concerns and fears of the underclass. As a number of previous studies suggested, it is important to understand which crimes drive this fear. Evidence suggests that the types of crime faced by the underclass are different than those faced by the nonpoor. Understanding how these differences are manifested would offer insights into how to deal with the problem of fear of crime, as well as perhaps dealing with the types of crime facing these groups.

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NOTES

1. Particular thanks for this definition of *neighborhood* goes to Bob Bursik, who revealed this definition in personal correspondence.

2. The approximate relationship to the poverty line as explained here can be found in the General Social Survey Codebook. This measure is constructed from government definitions of poverty status. For a full description of this measure, see the General Social Survey Methodological Report #57 (Davis and Smith, 1987).

3. Note that the number of cases in the borderline category is quite limited. This designation is maintained here primarily for heuristic purposes. Subsequent multivariate analysis combines the poor and borderline cases.

4. Recent research has concluded that logistic regression is advisable for most analysis of this order which include dichotomous dependent variables. Although the dependent variable used here is dichotomous, the overall distribution of the responses to fear is such that ordinary least squares regression is warranted. Note that logistic regression and logit analysis techniques were also performed as a check on the overall findings.

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