Insecurity and Avoidance Behavior among Iraqi Women: The Effects of Displacement and Discrimination

Paul-Philippe Pare, Ph.D
Chair, Center for Peace and Human Security
Assistant Professor, Department of Security and Strategic Studies
American University of Kurdistan

Matthew Logan, Ph.D
Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice
Texas State University

Corresponding Author:
Paul-Philippe Pare, Ph.D
Chair, Center for Peace and Human Security
Assistant Professor, Department of Security and Strategic Studies
American University of Kurdistan
paul.philippe@auk.edu.krd

Abstract

Insecurity and fear of crime experienced by women has been studied in several developed and developing countries, including the Middle East; however, a paucity of research exists regarding predictors among Iraqi samples. In addition, few studies examined the effects of conflict-related displacement and experiences of discrimination on women insecurity. In the current study, we investigate the effects of displacement, both conflict-related and otherwise, as well as the experience of discrimination on Iraqi women's feelings of insecurity and avoidance behaviors. Based on a recent, nationally representative dataset collected by the UNICEF (the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey for Iraq, 2018), our multilevel analyses of over 30,000 adult women in more than 18,000 Iraqi households across the country suggests that Iraqi women who experienced conflict-related displacement, other forms of displacement, and discrimination were much more likely to report feelings insecure and avoiding being alone at night than women who did not have these experiences.

Key Words

INTRODUCTION

Feelings of insecurity and fear of crime have generated a great deal of criminological interest over the past several decades (Box, Hale, & Andrews, 1988; Ferraro, 1995; Fisher & Sloan, 2003; War & Stafford, 1983; Wilcox-Rountree, 1998). A substantial body of empirical research indicate that levels of fear are contingent on a score of compositional and contextual factors. From approaches regarding "risk interpretation" to those of "general opportunity" (Cook, 1986; Ferraro, 1995; Wilcox-Rountree, 1998), fear-enhancing cues about the prospect of being victimized appear to be influenced by individual measures of age, race, and gender, as well as aggregate measures of neighborhood location and disorder. These studies generally suggest that insecurity and fear of crime are higher among the elderly (Braungart, Braungart, & Hoyer, 1980; Clemente & Kleiman, 1976; Holloway & Jefferson, 1997), women (De Groof, 2008; Ferraro, 1996; Kelly & DeKeseredy, 1994), racial and ethnic minorities (Callanan, 2012; Chiricos, Hogan, & Gertz, 1997; Ortega & Myles, 1987), those of lower socioeconomic status (Madriz, 1998; Stafford, Chandola, & Marmot, 2007; Will & McGrath, 1995) and, relatedly, those living in areas characterized by higher levels of social disorganization (Ferraro, 1995; LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; McGarrell, Giacomazzi, & Thurman, 1997; Skogan, 1990). Importantly, these effects are not uniform across social context, and some studies indicate that the sociocultural context of everyday life (in which individuals reside) influence fear by moderating other correlates (Wilcox et al., 2009).

Yet despite the consistency of results across a large number of studies, the majority of extant research on insecurity and fear of crime continues to be based on samples in the United States and other westernized countries, such as Great Britain or Canada (Micelo, Roccato, & Rosato, 2004; Wilcox et al., 2009). Fewer studies have focused on populations within developing countries, including those in the Middle East. This is problematic for at least three reasons. The first reason, as previously mentioned, is that many of the identified correlates—including gender, race, ethnicity, and SES—likely vary substantially according to social and cultural context. As Wilcox and colleagues (2009) caution, researchers devoted to understanding the casual mechanisms associated with insecurity and fear of crime should move "[…] away from the tradition of understanding the direct effects of sociodemographic characteristics […], with focus instead shifting toward better understanding how such

characteristics contextualize the correlates of fear" (p. 343; emphasis added). If the correlates of fear vary across different subgroups within and between populations, then it is likely to create differential sensitivity to risk (Warr, 1987).

The second reason is that sensitivity to risk might be especially high within countries that have recently faced political instability, strife, conflict, and war. For example, a number of Middle-Eastern countries, including Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, have been exposed to decades-long violence and war (particularly with members of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, in recent years) which has resulted in mass civilian casualties, ethnic cleansing (i.e., genocide) and ethnic discrimination, as well as forced geographic displacement (Banta, 2008; Benaim, 2018; Lischer, 2008). This "history of violence," both past and present, is likely to have affected perceptions of insecurity and fear among Iraqi and Iraqi-Kurdish citizens which, in turn, could produce significant variation regarding relevant predictor variables.

A third and more general reason is the need for replication of criminological studies among understudied populations and topics (Cullen, Myer, & Latessa, 2009; McNeeley & Warner, 2015). In this regard, it is important to create and contribute to—through repeated observation, over time, and across social context—a body of literature devoted to examining the unique historical and contextual experiences of individuals who reside in different countries, with the aim of informing culturally-specific policies to address the needs of those directly impacted. Presumably, some factors affecting insecurity and fear of crime in Iraq or the Middle-East are different from those in the UK or the US, while other factors may be similar and more generalizable across cultures (see, e.g., Cohen & Rotem-Mindali, 2018; Hagan et al., 2015; Wilcox et al. 2009).

Taking these issues into consideration, the present study contributes to the growing literature on the correlates of insecurity and fear of crime by examining a large, nationally representative sample of Iraqi women. More specifically, we examine the effects of displacement (conflict-related or otherwise) and the experience of discrimination on the insecurity of Iraqi women. Our data also allow for the analysis of avoidance behaviors—a topic much less common in the criminological vernacular (May et al., 2010). Understanding fear of crime and insecurity among Iraqi women is also important given the consequences of fear on their everyday life. Lorenc et al. (2012) posited multiple 'pathways' regarding the consequences of fear of crime on wellbeing (see also, Shie, 2018). First, fear of crime can negatively impact mental health by generating stress and anxiety. Second, it can limit movement outside the home, leading to isolation, less social interactions, and less physical activities. For

example, Iraqi women may have fewer friends and practice fewer sports because they believe it will be safer for them to just stay at home. Third, fear of crime can have ecological effects: the community as a whole can experience decreased trust and cohesion because of fear of crime, above and beyond individual feelings of insecurity.

Displacement , Discrimination , and Fear of Crime in the Middle East

Few studies of insecurity and fear of crime exist that examine data based Middle Eastern samples. Of those that do, none are based on samples of Iraqi women. For instance, using an innovative linkage of two surveys from Baghdad, Hagan and colleagues (2015) found that the experience of threats and neighborhood-level fear of going out at night since the United States military forces invaded in 2003 were associated with a greater likelihood of (mainly Sunni Muslim) residents leaving or fleeing the city (see also Hagan and Kaiser, 2018; Hagan et al., 2016). Likewise, Wilcox and colleagues (2009) found that Turkish female students were more fearful of possible terrorist attacks relative to their male counterparts (see also Karakus et al., 2010). Using data from Israel, Fishman and Mesch (1996) observed similar patterns whereby women were more fearful of family violence, violent assault, and property crimes than men. No gender differences were reported regarding fear of fraud, however. Cohen and Rotem-Mindali (2018) also studied fear of terrorism among citizens in the West Bank and found that female drivers were more fearful of a potential terrorist attack than male drivers.

Given that most studies of insecurity and fear of crime have been conducted in Western, stable countries (Collins, 2016), there is limited research on the effect of forced displacement/migration on fear of crime levels (Christensen and Harild, 2009; Hagan et al., 2015). There is also a paucity of research on migration and fear of crime from the migrants' perspective—the majority of which is also based on U.S. samples (Andreescu 2013, 2015). For example, Brown and Benedict (2004) found that immigrant youths were more fearful of crime (including being the victim of violent assault with a weapon) than non-immigrant youths in a sample of Texas high school students near the Mexican border. Similarly, Lee and Ulmer (2000) found that Korean Americans with lower levels of English proficiency were more fearful of crime. Andreescu (2013) also found that immigrants residing in the UK were 43% more likely to be fearful of violent victimization than non-immigrants, and among the immigrant sample, those who were non-English speakers at home were

88% more likely be fearful of violent victimization than those who were English speakers at home (see also Johnson, 2005). However, Andreescu (2015) did not observe significant differences in fear of violent crime between immigrants and non-immigrants in France.

While the relationship between discrimination and insecurity/fear of crime has been examined in a few studies, it has been peripheral in focus (Collins, 2016). For example, Andreescu (2013, 2015) did not observe a significant pattern between either perceived discrimination or belonging to a discriminated group and fear of crime in her analysis of UK and French surveys. In the same way, Hagan and colleagues (2015) found that Baghdad residents were more likely to move out of the city if they experienced harassment, but the effect was fully mediated by the experience of threats. Thus, their results suggest that specific threats, and not harassment in general, produced the most fear. In their study of Arab-Americans living in the U.S., Wu and colleagues (2017) also found that respondents who perceived the police as discriminatory toward ethnic/religious groups had higher fear of crime generally and higher fear of 'hate' crime (i.e., motivated by bias).

Gender and Fear of Crime

The extent to which gender impacts feelings of insecurity and fear of crime has been studied extensively over the past three decades and suggests that women generally report higher levels of fear of crime and insecurity than men—the likes of which are especially pronounced regarding fear of sexual assault or violence (Collins, 2016; Hale, 1996; Pain, 2000). For instance, Collins' (2016) meta-analysis of 114 fear of crime studies, producing 572 effect sizes, showed that women, on average, had higher levels of fear of crime than men, including a fear of being sexually assaulted when walking alone. Furthermore, gender was the strongest predictor of fear of crime among a list of 12 predictors when control variables were omitted, and the third strongest predictors in multivariate analyses with control variables.

Women also tend to report greater concerns about threatening behaviors that may not reach the threshold of a criminal act, such as "being followed, stared at, and shouted at in the street" (Goodey, 1994, p. 197)—acts which may be especially prevalent in specific social contexts, such as university campuses (Fisher and Sloan, 2003; Kelley and DeKeseredy, 2004). In the same way, recent research indicates that women must cope with greater risks of Internet and cell phone harassment, such as

threatening or sexually explicit emails, text messages, and Facebook posts (Henry and Powell, 2015).

The Current Study

The goal of the current study is to examine the effects that indicators of displacement and discrimination have on Iraqi women with respect to reported feelings of insecurity/fear of crime and certain avoidance behaviors based on a large, nationally representative sample. In particular, we focus on why Iraqi women might feel unsafe walking alone or being home alone at night, and also why some women engage in various types of avoidance behaviors, such as never walking alone or staying home alone at night. Although it is possible that these behaviors may reflect considerations other than fear, including cultural expectations and gender-roles in Iraqi society, we submit that are at least partially influenced by fear. As we explain in subsequent paragraphs, the respondents were specifically asked about fear of crime, not cultural expectations or gender-roles. This study is also the first large-scale quantitative analysis of insecurity and fear of crime among women in Iraq. Based on a review of the current literature, we formulated three main hypotheses:

H1. Iraqi women who experienced conflict-related displacement will be more likely to report feeling unsafe and having engaged in avoidance behaviors. Conflict-related displacement is defined as relocation to flee violence, battles, the ISIS invasion and occupation of territories, or other violent conflicts.

H2. Iraqi women who experienced displacement for other reasons will be more likely to report feeling unsafe and having engaged in avoidance behaviors, but the patterns should be weaker than for conflict-related displacement.

H3. Iraqi women who experienced discrimination will be more likely to report feeling unsafe and having engaged in avoidance behaviors.

METHODS

Our analyses are based on data from the Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018 (UNICEF, 2019). The Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) sampled 20,214 households, 30,660 women (age 15-49), and the main caretakers (typically the mother) for 16,623 children under 5-year-old and 15,595 children between the age of 5 and 17. The data collection was completed in 2018 by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and the Kurdistan Region Statistical Office (KRSO) in collaboration with Ministry of Health, and as part of the Global MICS Program. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the project. Developed by UNICEF in the 1990s, the Iraq MICS 2018 is part of an established tradition of survey data collection based on the Global MICS Program. It serves as an international multi-purpose household survey program to support countries in collecting internationally comparable data on a wide range of indicators on the situation of children and women. MICS surveys measure key indicators that allow countries to generate data for use in policies, programs, and national development plans. More recently, the MICS has also been used to monitor progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other internationally agreed upon commitments.

Our study focuses exclusively on the adult women and household sections of the survey. The sample size for the number of households is 18,650 because not all households included adult women. There were very few missing data (less than 1%) and these cases were coded as a negative answer for the specific questions. For example, if respondents did not know whether or not they experienced discrimination, they were coded as not experiencing discrimination. This is based on the assumption that even if the respondent experienced some discrimination, it was not significant enough to be reported to the survey interviewer. Although this approach to missing data may lead to minor measurement error, very few cases were missing, and it has the advantage of maintaining a consistent analytical sample across all models. In addition, our sample is very large and our results are strong and consistent—the patterns of which cannot be attributed to minor measurement error.

Measurement

We created two categorical dependent variables that tap feelings of insecurity and avoidance behavior of Iraqi women. The first dependent variable, *walking alone at*

night, is based on how safe the respondents felt walking alone at night. Women who reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe walking alone at night were categorized as "unsafe"; women who reported that they never walk alone at night were categorized as "never"; and women who reported feeling safe or very safe walking alone at night were categorized as "safe" (the reference category). Similarly, the second dependent variable, *home alone at night,* is based on the extent to which women reported feeling safe while being home alone at night. Women who reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe while home alone at night were categorized as "unsafe"; women who reported that they never stayed home alone at night were categorized as "never"; and women who reported feeling safe or very safe while being home alone at night were categorized as "safe" (the reference category).

Our primary independent variables include measures of displacement and discrimination. *Conflict-related displacement* is a binary variable based on whether the household in which the woman lived had to relocate to a different location to flee violence, battles, the ISIS invasion and occupation of territories, or other violent conflicts (1= yes). We also note that those women who reported fleeing violence from the Iraqi military or affiliated militias is coded as 1, since it is a conflict-related displacement. *Other displacement* is also a binary variable based on whether the household in which the woman lived had to relocate to a different location for reasons not related to violent conflicts, including employment and economic opportunities, moving to a bigger city, or moving to get married or reunite with family members (1 = yes). *Discrimination* is a binary variable based on whether the respondent personally experienced harassment or negative comments during the last year because of her gender, age, religion, ethnic membership, or if she felt discriminated against for any other reason (1 = yes).

Congruent with other fear of crime studies (Collins, 2016; Hale, 1996), our analyses also include control variables measuring the respondents' socio-economic and demographic characteristics, past experiences of victimization, and media use. We created three binary variables to measure the respondents' media usage: *traditional media usage,* for women who reported watching the news on TV, listening to the news on radio, and/or reading the newspapers regularly (1 = yes); *Internet usage,* for women who use the Internet regularly (1 = yes); and social media usage, for women who regularly use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (1 = yes). Interestingly, media use could have two opposite effects. According to the Cultivation hypothesis, fear of crime is cultivated by the media (Shi, 2018). Most people do not have direct contact with criminals or the criminal justice system, so

their understanding of crime is based on media coverage and framing. Crime stories are framed to be more violent and dramatic than the majority of actual crimes being committed. Thus, those who rely on the media to understand crime and the risks to their own safety will tend to overestimate the levels of violence in society. In the current context, Iraqi women who use traditional and online media more frequently may feel more insecure if the news they are exposed to are predominantly negative: ISIS attacks, 'honor' killings, gender-based violence, kidnappings, etc. On the other hand, the media also report positive news that can make people feel safer: reporting on ISIS defeats, criminals being arrested, government spending on security initiatives, etc. Therefore, the effects of the media on Iraqi women insecurity could be either positive or negative, depending on the types of news they are exposed to. *Prior victimization* is measured using two binary variables: (1) whether the respondents reported experiencing one or more physical assault(s) during the last three years and (2) whether they reported experiencing one or more robberies during the last three years. Unfortunately, the survey did not ask questions about sexual victimization, possibly for cultural reasons in a conservative country like Iraq. It is possible, however, that some women reported a sexual assault on the physical assault question.

Socioeconomic status is based on measures of both wealth and education. The *income/wealth index* is a quintile-based measure (1-5) that provides an overall level of economic resources of the households, considering both the urban and rural measurement of economic resources. For example, an urban household can score high on the index because the head of the household has a high salary and the family owns a house, while a rural household can also score high even if the head of the household has a lower salary, but owns a lot of land and farm animals. Importantly, the index was created by UNICEF in collaboration with local experts from Iraq and Kurdistan. Education is based on the level of education obtained by the respondent and is coded as (1) 'less than secondary education' (the reference category), (2) 'secondary education', (3) 'diploma' (two-year college-level education but less than a bachelor's degree), or (4) 'university education' (a bachelor's degree or higher). Because the survey did not collect data on the exact *age* of the respondents, our measure of age is based on a seven-category ordinal variable whereby higher categories correspond with older age groups. We also include a binary measure of *functional disability* based on whether the respondents reported having health problems that limited their ability to accomplish daily regular activities (1 = yes).

Our measure of *region* is based on the 18 governorates sampled across Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, which includes urban and rural samples (rural = 1). The variable

Iraqi Kurdistan Region measures the geographic location of the households and is coded 1 if the household is located in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan and 0 if located anywhere else in Iraq (often referred to as Iraq Prime). Finally, we omitted the respondents' religion as a covariate because 97% of the sample reported being Muslims. In addition, if women are more insecure because they feel persecuted or discriminated against because of their religion, the effect should be captured by our measure of discrimination (religious discrimination is included in the measurement).

Analysis

Our analyses are based on multilevel multinomial logistic regression, because the survey is based on multiple women sampled from the same household (i.e., women [level 1] are clustered in households [level 2]). Our models therefore account for the possibility that women from the same household are more similar with respect to feelings of insecurity and avoidance behaviors than random women across different households (see, e.g., Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). The estimates are based on uncentered variables with robust standard errors, as we are only controlling for clustering. Although there is no variance inflation factor (VIF) test for multilevel multinomial logistic regression, we examined possible multicollinearity issues with a correlation matrix between all the predictors used in this study (results not presented in Table). The strongest correlations were between Internet media and social media usage ($r = .69$; $p < .01$), the income/wealth index and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region ($r = .45$; $p < .01$), and the income/wealth index and rural settings ($r = -.44$; $p < .01$). Given our large sample size, these correlations do not indicate that the variables are measuring the same statistical information that would cause problematic levels of multicollinearity. In addition, none of the stronger correlations involve our main independent variables of displacement and discrimination.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 30,660 Women in 18,650 Households)

	%
Dependent Variables (Level 1)	
Walking Alone at Night	
- Safe (Ref.)	49.5%
- Unsafe	13.3%
- Never Walk Alone at Night	37.2%
Home Alone at Night	
- Safe (Ref.)	63.7%
- Unsafe	11.2%
- Never Home Alone at Night	25.1%
Predictors (Level 2)	
Displaced - Conflict	10.2%
Displaced – Other	46.9%
Rural	33.3%
Wealth Index (Mean)	2.9
Iraqi Kurdistan Region	13.5%
Predictors (Level 1)	
Discrimination	12.2%
Physical Assault	1.7%
Robbery	1.9%
Traditional Media User	90.5%
Internet User	34.9%
Social Media User	24.4%
Age Group (Mean)	3.5
Less than Secondary Education (Ref.)	71.3%
Secondary Education	13.1%
Diploma	4.7%
University Education	10.9%
Functional Disability	4.4%

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Approximately half (49.5%) of the respondents reported feeling safe walking alone at night while nearly two-thirds reported feeling safe while home alone at night. In contrast, 13% of women reported feeling unsafe walking alone at night and 37% reported that they never walk alone at night, while 11% of women reported feeling unsafe being home alone at night and 25% reported that they never stay home alone at night. Approximately 10% of households experienced a conflict-related displacement while nearly half (46.9%) of households were also displaced for other reasons. About 12% of respondents reported

having experienced discrimination. Interestingly, physical and robbery victimizations were uncommon among respondents, with less than 2% reporting such incidents.

Table 2. Multilevel Multinomial Logistic Regression with Robust Standard Errors Predicting Feelings of Insecurity and Avoidance Behavior (Coefficients are Odds Ratios; N = 30,660 Women in 18,650 Households)

	Model 1: Walking Alone at Night		Model 2: Home Alone at Night	
	Unsafe	Never Alone	Unsafe	Never Alone
Level 2 - Households				
Displaced - Conflict	1.52**	1.41**	1.72**	1.50**
Displaced - Other	1.29**	1.77**	1.21**	1.36**
Rural (Ref = Urban)	.84**	.69**	.87**	.85**
Wealth Index	.95**	.85**	.87**	.89**
Iraqi Kurdistan (Ref = Iraq)	.13**	.30**	.22**	.38**
Level 1 - Individuals				
Discrimination	2.33**	1.60**	1.96**	1.65**
Physical Assault	1.56**	1.54**	1.32*	.80
Robbery	1.76*	1.32*	2.10**	1.65**
Traditional Media User	.89**	1.31**	.86*	1.09
Internet User	1.22**	1.37**	1.07	.86**
Social Media User	.89*	.90*	.92	1.15**
Age Group	.85**	.78**	.85**	.77**
Secondary Education	.88*	1.01	.90	1.03
Diploma	.88	.86*	.89	.89
University Education	.86*	.88**	.75**	.94
Functional Disability	1.24*	1.29**	1.40**	1.25**
Explained Variance (Reduction in Variance Component)	.03	.06	.03	.08

** (p < .01); * (p < .05)

Results of our multilevel multinomial logistic regressions predicting insecurity and avoidance behavior are presented in Table 2. Women who experienced a conflict-related displacement were 52% more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night, 41% more likely to never walk alone at night, 72% more likely to feel unsafe staying home alone at night, and 50% more likely to never stay home alone at night. The patterns are not limited to conflict-related displacement, however. Women who were displaced for other reasons were 29% more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night, 77% more likely to never walk alone at night, 21% more likely to feel unsafe staying home alone at night, and 36% more likely to never stay home alone at night. Results from Table 2 also show strong effects of discrimination. Women who reported experiencing

discrimination were 2.3 times more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night, 60% more likely to never walk alone at night, 96% more likely to feel unsafe staying home alone at night, and 65% more likely to never stay home alone at night.

Regarding our covariates, women living in rural settings felt safer than women living in larger urban settings and were less likely to report never walking alone or staying home alone at night. Women from wealthier households also felt safer than women from poorer households and were less likely to report never walking alone or staying home alone at night. We also observed a very strong pattern for women living in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region: Relative to respondents living in the Iraq Prime Region, they were 87% less likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night, 70% less likely to never walk alone at night, 78% less likely to feel unsafe staying home alone at night, and 62% less likely to never stay home alone at night.

Women who experienced physical or robbery victimization were also much more likely to feel unsafe, to never walk alone, or to stay home alone at night (with the exception of physical assault). The effects for media usage were mixed, with a combination of positive patterns, negative patterns, and null effects. Interestingly, older women were less likely than younger women to report feeling unsafe and never walking alone or staying home alone at night. This may suggest a cohort effect or the presence of strong cultural norms protecting older women. However, we cannot investigate these hypotheses with the current data. The effects for education are mostly mixed and non-significant, with one exception: University-educated women tended to feel safer than women with less than a secondary education. Finally, women who lived with functional disabilities affecting their daily activities were more likely to report feeling unsafe and never walking alone or staying home alone at night.

DISCUSSION

The goal of the current study was to examine the effects of displacement and discrimination on Iraqi women with respect to insecurity, fear of crime, and various avoidance behaviors. This study was also the first large-scale quantitative analysis of insecurity and fear of crime among Iraqi women. Our results suggest that the experience of conflict-related displacement, other forms of displacement, and discrimination are robust predictors of insecurity and avoidance behaviors among Iraqi women. We now discuss these results in greater detail, based on our hypotheses and the prior literature on insecurity and fear of crime.

The Impact of Displacement and Discrimination

We observed strong support for the hypothesis that the respondents' experience of conflicted-related displacement corresponds with higher levels of insecurity and engagement in avoidance behaviors—the likes of which were consistent across all outcomes and comport with past literature regarding the effects that state violence has on feelings of safety among individuals (cf. Clemente & Kleiman, 1977; Koonings, 1999). Indeed, research on samples of refugees suggests that the process of displacement may be life-threatening and is often accompanied by events such as assaults, robbery, and overcrowded living situations, and have been previously linked to higher rates of stress and psychological disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Hodes, 2000; Jaycox et al., 2002; Sack, Him, & Dickason, 1999). Given that Iraqi citizens have been constantly exposed to a "history of violence," characterized by decades of political instability and civil war resulting in mass casualties and forced displacement, it is perhaps unsurprising that conflict-related displacement significantly contributes to variation in fear of crime and accompanying avoidance behaviors. However, with respect to our sample, it could be that Iraqi women are particularly affected by conflicted-related displacements because of the culturally defined social roles that characterize many Middle Eastern countries.

Research indicates that divisions of labor may be especially pronounced in Middle Eastern societies, where expectations regarding parenting and workforce participation are clearly delineated among males and females (Read, 2003; Sikdar & Mitra, 2012). The patterns observed among our sample are partially supportive of this. For example, of the respondents who reported both having children and serving as their primary caretaker, 99.5% identified as women. As some recent studies suggest (Feldman, Vengrober, Eidelman-Rothman, & Zagoory-Sharon, 2013; van Ee, Kleber, & Mooren, 2012), it could be that the added responsibility of caring for children (and ensuring their safety by extension) exacerbates the already stressful process of having to relocate due to political violence.

In the same way, the Iraqi armed forces tasked with responding to terrorism and violence against the State continue to be overwhelmingly male. While this trend is uniform across many societies, disparities in enrolment and participation (specifically, combat-related positions) are becoming less pronounced among Westernized countries, such as Canada and the United States (CBC News, 2006). To the extent that Iraqi (and other Middle-Eastern) women are relegated to peripheral, non-combative roles—such as administrative- or logistic-based positions—that reaffirm the status

quo (Gonzalez-Perez, 2008), it could be that they are more fearful of crime and more likely to engage in avoidance behaviors because they have been restricted from training and lack the necessary skills to respond to violent situations.

We also found that support for the hypothesis that respondents who were displaced for other reasons would be more likely to report higher levels of insecurity and avoidance behaviors, but not to the same extent as those whose displacement was the result of conflict (with the exception of never walking alone at night). It is possible that conflict-related displacements have more of a traumatizing effect on respondents, who may have fled an area or region because the situation with which they were faced presented an immediate threat to their lives and those of their children. Conversely, those who were displaced for other reasons, such as employment opportunities, may not have had to act with the same degree of immediacy. We return to this point in our discussion of the current study's limitations.

More generally, it could also be that other forms of displacement foster greater feelings of insecurity and fear simply because the respondents are unfamiliar with their immediate surroundings. As some research suggests, relocation represents a major life event and a change to one's environment can generate anxiety, discomfort, and "[…] coping resources far beyond those evoked by familiar routines" (Thomasma, Yeaworth, and McCabe 1990; p.18). Thus, the degree to which Iraqi women feel uncomfortable as a result of moving to a new area could manifest in the form of coping mechanisms that are reflective of feeling insecure or involve adopting various avoidance behaviors.

Finally, we observed strong and consistent support for the hypothesis that the experience of discrimination corresponds with higher levels of fear and avoidance behaviors among Iraqi women—a pattern that is also consistent with some research regarding the discrimination-fear of crime nexus (Chiricos, Hogan, and Gertz, 1997; Herda, 2016). Our measure of discrimination, which includes whether the respondent personally experienced harassment or negative comments during the last year because of her gender, age, religion, ethnic membership, is considered a criminal act in and of itself in many countries (Clements-Nolle, Marx, and Katz, 2006; Green, McFalls, and Smith, 2001; Perry, 2009). Thus, if Iraqi women equate past discrimination to a form of formal or informal victimization, we would expect similar effects to other victimization variables on feelings of insecurity, fear, and accompanying avoidance behaviors. Alternatively, even if Iraqi women do not perceive discrimination as a form of victimization, they may still interpret it as a signal of general hostility form others, which should also lead to greater insecurity and avoidance behaviors.

Although our results may have policy implications, it is unclear whether such policies could be implemented successfully in Iraq, given the current political instability, lack of basic services, and corruption. One policy would be to promote gender equality and women's rights in an effort to reduce discrimination against women. This could be implemented through the education system, awareness campaigns in the media, and advocacy groups. Another policy would be to increase the social integration of displaced families in their new community and offer counseling programs for those in needs.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study produced several important findings and has contributed to a better understanding regarding the impact that displacement and discrimination have on Iraqi women, it is not without limitations. To begin, we could not investigate fear of sexual assault as a dependent variable or prior experience of sexual assault as a predictor of insecurity because no question about sexual assault were asked in the MICS. Second, it was also not possible to compare the experience of insecurity between women and men, because the survey only sampled adult women. Third, the concept of insecurity and fear of crime can be multifaceted and could include many other measurements, such as fear of family violence, fear of ISIS, fear for the safety of children, fear of property crimes— especially since Iraq is a 'cash' economy and many people carry large amounts of currency on their person or keep money in their home. Thus, we are only measuring some dimensions of fear of crime. Fourth, because the study is cross-sectional, we must be prudent with the interpretation of the temporal order of relationships. Some patterns may reflect bi-directional effects or possible reversed causality. For example, perhaps some respondents were already fearful before they experienced displacement, and their high level of fear after displacement is the continuation of their original insecurity from the past. Finally, our measure of discrimination does not allow us to differentiate between threatening and non-threatening discriminatory experiences (i.e. when a direct threat to the safety of the person is included in the discriminatory comments).

Therefore, future research on insecurity in Iraq should develop new data on the experience and fear of sexual assault and other inappropriate sexual behaviors (e.g. sexual harassment, stalking of a sexual nature, unwanted online or cell phone sexual communication). It should also develop comparative data for women and men, so that the experience of insecurity and fear of crime among men can also be

understood. Future studies should also measure insecurity with multiple variables that include many types of crime and situations. Finally, subsequent research should include a longitudinal component, so that answers for the same respondents can be compared across different points in time and the temporal order of relationships can be uncovered.

Conclusion

In conclusion, although many studies have been published on insecurity and on women insecurity across several countries, there are comparatively fewer studies with respect to samples based on respondents who reside in the Middle East. This gap in the research is significant, given the amount of turmoil and violent conflicts in this region of the world. To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the insecurity of Iraqi women using a large, nationally representative sample and to focus on the effects of displacement and discrimination. We found that displacement, both conflict-related and for other reasons, and the experience of discrimination are strong predictors of women's insecurity and avoidance behaviors. We maintain that many more insecurity studies (and criminological studies more generally) need to be conducted in Iraq and in the Middle East as a means of better understanding the unique challenges and barriers that respondents in this region of the world continue to face.

References

Andresscu, V. (2013). Fear of Violent Victimization among the Foreign-Born. *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies,* 7: 69-94.

Andresscu, V. (2015). Concerns about Violent Crime in France: Does Immigrant Status Make a Difference in Public Perception of Safety? *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies,* 9: 49-68.

Banta, B. R. (2008). Just war theory and the 2003 Iraq war forced displacement. *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 21: 261-284.

Benaim, D. (2018). *Kurdistan's new moment: After defeating the Islamic State and losing Kirkuk, what comes next for Iraq's Kurdistan region.* Center for American Progress.

Box, S., Hale, C., and Andrews, G. (1988). Explaining fear of crime. *British Journal of Criminology,* 28: 340-356.

Braungart, M. M., Braungart, R. G., & Hoyer, W. J. (1980). Age, sex, and social factors in fear of crime. *Sociological Focus,* 13: 55-66.

Brown, B. & Benedict, W. R. (2004). Bullets, Blades, and Being Afraid in Hispanic High School: An Exploratory Study of the Presence of Weapons and Fear of Weapon-Associated Victimization among High School Students in a Border Town. *Crime & Delinquency* 50: 372-394.

CBC News (2006, May 30). Women in the military - international. *CBC News Online.* Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news2/background/military-international/ Callanan, V. J. (2012). Media consumption, perceptions of crime risk and fear of crime: Examining race/ethnic differences. *Sociological Perspectives,* 55: 93-115.

Chiricos, T., Hogan, M., & Gertz, M. (1997). Racial composition of neighborhood and fear of crime. *Criminology,* 35: 107-132.

Chiricos, T., Padgett, K., & Gertz, M. (2000). Fear, TV news, and the reality of crime. *Criminology,* 38: 755-786.

Christensen, A. & Harild, N. (2009). *Forced Displacement – The Development Challenge.* World Bank Group.

Clemente, F., & Kleiman, M. B. (1977). Fear of crime in the United States: A multivariate Analysis. *Social Forces,* 56: 519-531.

Clements-Nolle, K., Marx, R., & Katz, M. (2006). Attempted suicide among transgender persons: The influence of gender-based discrimination and victimization. *Journal of Homosexuality,* 51: 53-69.

Cohen, N. & Rotem-Mindali, O. (2018). Driven by Fear? Commuting and Fear of Terrorism in the West Bank. *Geography Research Forum,* 38: 89-112.

Collins, R. E. (2016). Addressing the Inconsistencies in Fear of Crime Research: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 47: 21-31.

Cook, P. J. (1986). The demand and supply of criminal opportunities', in M. Tonry & N. Morris (Eds.), *Crime and justice: An annual review of research* (Vol. 7, pp. 1-27). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cullen, F. T., Myer, A. J., & Latessa, E. J. (2009). Eight lessons from Moneyball: The high cost of ignoring evidence-based corrections. *Victims and Offenders,* 4: 197-213.

De Groof, S. (2008). And my mama said: The (relative) parental influence on fear of crime among adolescent girls and boys. *Youth & Society,* 39: 267-293.

Feldman, R., Vengrober, A., Eidelman-Rothman, M., & Zagoory-Sharon, O. (2013). Stress reactivity in war-exposed young children with and without posttraumatic stress disorder: Relations to maternal stress hormones, parenting, and child emotionality and regulation. *Development and Psychopathology,* 25: 943-955.

Felson, R. B., & Pare, P. P. (2010). Gun cultures or honor cultures? Explaining regional and race differences in weapon carrying. *Social Forces,* 88: 1357-1378.

Ferraro, K. F. (1995). *Fear of crime: Interpreting victimization risk.* SUNY press.

Ferraro, K. F. (1996). Women's fear of victimization: Shadow of sexual assault? *Social Forces,* 75: 667-690.

Fisher, B. S., & Sloan III, J. J. (2003). Unraveling the fear of victimization among college women: Is the "shadow of sexual assault hypothesis" supported? *Justice Quarterly,* 20: 633-659.

Fishman, G., & Mesch, G. S. (1996). Fear of crime in Israel: A multidimensional approach. *Social Science Quarterly,* 77: 76-89.

Gonzalez-Perez, M. (2008). *Women and terrorism: Female activity in domestic and international terror groups.* London, UK: Routledge.

Goodey, J. (1994). Fear of Crime: What Can Children Tell Us? *International Review of Victimology,* 3: 195-210.

Green, D. P., McFalls, L. H., & Smith, J. K. (2001). Hate crime: An emergent research Agenda. *Annual Review of Sociology,* 27: 479-504.

Hagan, J. and Kaiser, J. (2018). Crimes of Terror, Counterterrorism, and the Unanticipated Consequences of Militarized Incapacitation Strategy in Iraq. *Social Forces,* 97: 309-346.

Hagan, J., Kaiser, J. & Hanson, A. (2016). The Theory of Legal Cynicism and the Sunni Insurgency in Post-Invasion Iraq. *American Sociological Review,* 81: 316-346.

Hagan, J., Kaiser, J., Hanson, A. & Parker, P. (2015). Neighborhood Sectarian Displacement and the Battle for Baghdad: A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy of Fear and Crimes Against Humanity in Iraq. *Sociological Forum,* 30: 675-697.

Hale, C. (1996). Fear of Crime: A Review of the Literature. *International Review of Victimology,* 4: 79-150.

Henry, N. & Powell, A. (2015). Beyond the 'Sext': Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence and Harassment against Adult Women. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology,* 48: 104-118.

Herda, D. (2016). The specter of discrimination: Fear of interpersonal racial discrimination among adolescents in Chicago. Social *Science Research,* 55: 48-62.

Hodes, M. (2002). Implications for psychiatric services of chronic civilian strife: Young refugees in the UK. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment,* 8: 366-374.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (1997). The risk society in an age of anxiety: situating fear of Crime. *British Journal of Sociology,* 48: 255-266.

Jaycox, L. H., Stein, B. D., Kataoka, S. H., Wong, M., Fink, A., Escudero, P., & Zaragoza, C. (2002). Violence exposure, posttraumatic stress disorder, and depressive symptoms among recent immigrant schoolchildren. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry,* 41: 1104-1110.

Johnson, H. (2005). *Crime Victimization in Australia: Key Results of the 2004 International Crime Victimization Survey.* Australian Institute of Criminology.

Karakus, O., McGarrell, E. F. & Basibuyuk, O. (2010). Fear of Crime among Citizens of Turkey. *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 38: 174-184.

Kelly, K. D., & DeKeseredy, W. S. (1994). Women's fear of crime and abuse in college and university dating relationships. *Violence and Victims,* 9: 17-30.

Kleiman, M. B., & Clemente, F. (1976). Support for the medical profession among the aged. *International Journal of Health Services,* 6: 295-299.

Koonings, K. (1999). *Societies of fear: The legacy of civil war, violence and terror in Latin America.* New York, NY: Zed Books.

LaGrange, R. L., Ferraro, K. F., & Supancic, M. (1992). Perceived risk and fear of crime: Role of social and physical incivilities. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency,* 29: 311-334.

Lee, M. S., & Ulmer, J. T. (2000). Fear of crime among Korean Americans in Chicago communities. *Criminology,* 38: 1173-1206.

Lischer, S. K. (2008). Security and displacement in Iraq: responding to the forced migration crisis. *International Security,* 33: 95-119.

Lorenc, T., Clayton, S., Neary, D., Whitehead, M., Petticrew, M., Thomson, H., Cummins, S., Sowden, A., Renton, A. (2012) Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways. *Health & Place,* 18: 757-765.

Madriz, E. I. (1998). Using focus groups with lower socioeconomic status Latina women. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 4: 114-128.

May, D. C., Rader, N. C. & Goodrum, S. (2010). A Gendered Assessment of the "Threat of Victimization": Examining Gender Differences in Fear of Crime, Perceived Risk, Avoidance and Defensive Behaviors. *Criminal Justice Review,* 35: 159-182.

McGarrell, E. F., Giacomazzi, A. L., & Thurman, Q. C. (1997). Neighborhood disorder, integration, and the fear of crime. *Justice Quarterly,* 14: 479-500.

McNeeley, S., & Warner, J. J. (2015). Replication in criminology: A necessary practice. *European Journal of Criminology,* 12: 581-597.

Medina, J., Ralphs, R. & Aldridge, J. (2012). Hidden Behind the Gunfire: Young Women's Experiences of Gang-Related Violence. *Violence Against Women,* 18: 653-661.

Miceli, R., Roccato, M., & Rosato, R. (2004). Fear of crime in Italy: Spread and determinants. *Environment and Behavior,* 36: 776-789.

Ortega, S. T., & Myles, J. L. (1987). Race and gender effects on fear of crime: An interactive model with age. *Criminology,* 25: 133-152.

Pain, R. (2000). Place, Social Relations and the Fear of Crime: A Review. *Progress in Human Geography,* 24: 365-387.

Perry, B. (2009). The sociology of hate: Theoretical approaches. *Hate Crimes,* 1: 55-76.

Raudenbush, S. W. & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical Linear Models: Applications and Data Analysis Methods, 2nd Edition.* Sage Publications.

Read, J. N. G. (2003). The sources of gender role attitudes among Christian and Muslim Arab-American women. *Sociology of Religion,* 64: 207-222.

Sack, W. H., Him, C., & Dickason, D. A. N. (1999). Twelve year follow up study of Khmer youths who suffered massive war trauma as children. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry,* 38:1173-1179.

Schafer, J. A., Huebner, B. M., & Bynum, T. S. (2006). Fear of crime and criminal victimization: Gender-based contrasts. *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 34: 285-301.

Shi, L. (2018) A neglected population: Media consumption, perceived risk, and fear of crime among international students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* Available OnlineFirst.

Sikdar, A., & Mitra, S. (2012). Gender-role stereotypes: perception and practice of leadership in the Middle East. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues,* 5: 146-162.

Skogan, W. (1990). *Disorder and decline: Crime and the spiral of decay in American cities.*

Berkeley: University of California Press Stafford, M., Chandola, T., & Marmot, M. (2007). Association between fear of crime and mental health and physical functioning. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97: 2076-2081.

Thomasma, M., Yeaworth, R. C., & McCabe, B. W. (1990). Moving day: Relocation and anxiety in institutionalized elderly. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing,* 16: 18-25.

UNICEF (2019) *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018: Survey Findings Report.*

Van Ee, E., Kleber, R. J., & Mooren, T. T. (2012). War trauma lingers on: Associations between maternal posttraumatic stress disorder, parent–child interaction, and child development. *Infant Mental Health Journal,* 33: 459-468.

Warr, M. (1987). Fear of victimization and sensitivity to risk. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology,* 3: 29-46.

Warr, M., & Stafford, M. (1983). Fear of victimization: A look at the proximate causes. *Social Forces,* 61: 1033-1043.

Wilcox, P., Ozer, M. M., Gunbeyi, M., & Gundogdu, T. (2009). Gender and fear of terrorism in Turkey. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice,* 25: 341-357.

Wilcox-Rountree, P. W. (1998). A reexamination of the crime-fear linkage. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency,* 35: 341-372.

Will, J. A., & McGrath, J. H. (1995). Crime, neighborhood perceptions, and the underclass: The relationship between fear of crime and class position. *Journal of Criminal Justice,* 23: 163-176.

Wu, Y., Klahm, C. F. & Atoui, N. (2017). Fear of Crime among Arab Americans in a Culture of Fear. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 40: 2481-2500.