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Fear of Crime or Fear of Life? Public Insecurities in Chile[1]

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Chile is regarded as one of the safest countries in Latin America. Crime rates are extremely low when compared to the rest of the region, and the police are widely considered to be efficient and trustworthy. Despite these objective trends, fear of crime is widespread throughout Chile. Why are Chileans so fearful when their country is so safe? We argue that fear of crime in Chile does not reflect fear of criminal acts per se, but is rather a manifestation of a wide range of daily insecurities. That is, fear of crime is rooted in other economic, social, and political insecurities featuring prominently in Chilean life today. To substantiate this argument, we test the ability of these "other" insecurities to predict fear of crime using a recent survey conducted by the International Labor Organization in 2001. We test our hypothesis alongside counterhypotheses prominent in the literature: social identity characteristics, victimization, trust in the media, urbanization, and community participation. We find that political, social, and economic insecurities best predict fear of crime; however, victimization, urbanization, and trust in the media are also significant. Our results suggest that scholars should study fear of crime not only as it relates to victimization and criminalization, but also in a context of insecurities generated by increasing rates of unemployment and poverty.

Keywords: public opinion, public insecurities, Chile, Latin America, fear of crime.

To be fearful is to approach and interpret the world in particular ways. To this extent, it is rarely fully accurate to speak of fear as having been "caused" even by a specific precipitating event; nor is it

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> *always appropriate to interpret fearfulness solely in terms of the objects to which it ostensibly attaches. (Sparks, 1992).*

In the last decade, fear of crime has increased steadily throughout Latin America. Even in countries such as Chile, frequently regarded as the "safest" in Latin America (Ward, 2001, Ayres, 1998), public insecurity dominates political and social discourse. However, while citizens and politicians have become increasingly preoccupied with fear of crime, scholars of the region for the most part have not.[2] Growing public insecurity has not coincided with theoretical and empirical academic research on the topic in Latin America. Indeed, empirical data on public fear of crime are scarce, and the data that do exist are frequently not available to the public or to scholars. Nevertheless, public fear of crime has received extensive scrutiny from North American academics, and scholars of Latin America have begun to build upon this research to analyze public insecurity in the region (Caldeira, 2000; Rotker, 1999). There are four primary perspectives characterizing approaches to fear of crime thus far. The first focuses on the relationship between fear and social identity characteristics, such as age and gender (Pain, 2000; Walkate, 2001). The second highlights the importance of structural factors in accounting for fear of crime, namely the physical layout of cities, urban design features and the urbanization process (Caldeira, 2000; SUR, 2000; Oviedo, 2000). The third emphasizes the importance of the media (Chiricos, Padgett, Gertz, 2000; ÓConnell, 1999). Finally, there is a growing recognition that informal control networks help to consolidate community relations, laying the groundwork for more trust and less fear (Crawford, 1996).

While these approaches cover important dimensions of fear of crime, we believe they overlook one crucial factor. We relate fear of crime not only to individual characteristics or structural ones, but to "other" insecurities as well. There is a growing understanding that fear of crime encompasses not only fear of criminal acts per se, but rather is a manifestation of a wide range of daily insecurities, including those related to economic, political, and social issues. Moreover, we believe that such insecurities are behind this increasing fear of crime because it allows the public to name the potential enemy: *the fearsome stranger, the excluded*. However the *criminalization of the other* (Garland, 1996) obscures the real nature of fear of crime and diminishes the importance of other insecurities in citizens' lives. In that sense, crime becomes a tangible scapegoat for all types of insecurities.

This article aims to shed light on this relationship by testing the hypothesis that fear of crime is rooted in other economic, social, and political insecurities in Chilean life today. To this end, we test this hypothesis alongside other variables featuring prominently in the four perspectives briefly described above. Our

2 There are of course notable exceptions to this trend. For example, the University of Pittsburgh Latin American Public Opinion Project has increasingly incorporated questions pertaining to fear of crime in their surveys. The Latinbarometer Surveys have also incorporated topics related to fear of crime, as have numerous surveys conducted by governments; however these data are not widely available to scholars.

objective is twofold. First, we aim to open up academic debate in Chile, as well as throughout Latin America, on the importance of academic research on fear of crime. More specifically, we argue that scholars should study this social problem not only as it relates to victimization and criminalization, but also in the context of insecurities generated by high rates of unemployment and poverty. Secondly, we aim to generate a deeper debate in the policy-making arena, specifically related to crime prevention. Through a better understanding of the underlying factors that are driving fear of crime, policy makers might find that their crime control policies are not directed towards the principal factors that drive fear of crime.

This article consists of four sections. The first section concentrates on the main theoretical approaches to the study of fear of crime. Specifically, we focus on the importance of analyzing fear of crime as it relates to other insecurities, an issue that thus far has not been of mainstream theoretical interest. The second section describes the current situation in Chile and the importance that public insecurity has on the political agenda. It is important to remember that Chile has one of the lowest rates of victimization in the region, yet fear of crime has emerged as an issue of primary concern to the public (together with unemployment) in the last five years. The third section presents alternative perspectives to analyzing fear of crime to those that feature prominently in the literature. These perspectives include factors such as: social identity variables, victimization, trust in the media, and informal crime fighting networks. In each case we briefly analyze each perspective's main ideas, and follow with an empirical test of their propositions. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for future academic and public policy debates.

Our empirical analysis is based upon data recently collected by the International Labor Organization (ILO). This database was collected through a public opinion survey conducted during the first semester of 2001 in the three largest Chilean cities: Santiago, Valparaiso and Concepción. It contains 1,188 surveys: 423 in Santiago, 385 in Valparaiso and 380 in Concepción. Even though the survey was designed to analyze topics related to the situation of workers in Chile, it also included many questions related to fear of crime. This database is one of the most recent surveys conducted in Chile, and has not been previously used in academic studies.

1. Theoretical framework

Our hypothesis that fear of crime can be explained by other social, political, and economic insecurities is not entirely new. Extant literature in the field of political psychology has documented that individuals threatened by various social and economic insecurities register higher levels of support for punitive policies (Doty, Peterson, and Winter 1991, Jorgenson, 1975; McCann and Stewin, 1984, 1987; Padgett and Jorgenson, 1982). Sales's (1973) seminal work identified several indicators to measure the presence of social and economic insecurities: high

unemployment, low disposable income, inflation, civil disorder, and strikes. Through his macro level study, he linked these economic and social insecurities with punitive policy measures, such as greater police expenditures and increases in executions and lengths of sentences.[3] While these studies have linked economic and social insecurities with punitive policy preferences, we find that this linkage is also useful for understanding not fear of crime as well. This support for punitive policies could very well be a manifestation of fear of crime. Thus, we aim to refine the theoretical linkage between insecurities and punitive policy preferences. In this study, we focus not on the linkage between insecurities and support for punitive policy, but between insecurities and fear of crime.

In contemporary Chile, academics and public officials have also begun to associate fear of crime with other insecurities. Most notably, the United Nations Program for Development in Chile (UNPD) has stressed that fear of crime is the product of a wide array of other economic, social, and political insecurities (UNPD, 1998). Specifically this analysis describes seven dimensions of human security that are threatened by the current model of development: economic, alimentary, health, environmental, personal, societal and political.[4]

The UNPD argues that the current preoccupation with crime in Chile is the result of numerous insecurities rooted in economic, social, and political upheaval (UNPD, 1998). Thus, crime has become a convenient scapegoat for citizens. Citizens can channel all their insecurities into fear of crime, as crime is a more tangible phenomenon than are other economic, political, and social insecurities. Therefore, insecurity due to crime is a manifestation of all the insecurities Chileans are increasingly facing.

Despite this powerful conclusion, little empirical work has been conducted to confirm or disregard this thesis. While there is recognition that "fear of crime is a more widespread problem than crime itself" (Bannister and Fyfe, 2001), to our knowledge, this correlation between insecurities and fear of crime has not been substantiated empirically in the literature. Thus we aim to demonstrate quantitatively that other insecurities trigger fear of crime. This insight into the theoretical linkage between fear of crime and other insecurities is particularly poignant in Chile today (SUR, 2001).

As mentioned, there is a long theoretical history of linking economic, social, and political insecurities with support for harsher penalties for criminals. In this study, we aim to refine and expand upon this linkage by demonstrating that those insecurities[5] also predict fear of crime. In this study, we empirically test this

3 Many of the authors cited use support for punitive policies as an indicator of authoritarianism. While we do not dispute their equation, the focus of our research is not on authoritarianism; rather we aim to focus specifically on the theoretical linkage between insecurities and fear of crime.

4 It also develops a *Human Security Index* in which variables of each type of security are included.

5 To measure these insecurities, we rely upon a series of survey items. Respondents were asked, "*Do you and your family feel secure or insecure in terms of … employment?*" This question was then repeated for each of the following items:

hypothesis, focusing primarily on insecurities due to employment, education for children, quality of life, economic stability, and human rights. Given the high degree of inter-correlation among these items, we combined these "other insecurities" into an insecurity scale.[6] In simple terms, we needed to combine these six insecurities into a single variable because they are highly related to each other. Since all of these insecurities are highly correlated, we could not use them separately in our model, as our results would be statistically inaccurate. Thus, we follow a common practice in survey research, and merge these six insecurities into an insecurity scale, which ranges from one (very secure) through five (very insecure).[7]

Fear of Crime

The definition of fear of crime is a topic of academic debate in itself (Pain, 2000; Williams, et. al. 2000; Rountree, 1998; Roundtree and Land, 1996). There is growing recognition that fear of crime must be defined more specifically. Although we agree with Hough (1995) that fear is not merely a single, unitary concept but instead a very complex set of attitudes and feelings, practical limitations frequently prevail in fear of crime studies. While authors have called for measuring fear of crime with multiple indicators to enhance reliability and validity, practical limitations abound in North American studies, where researchers occasionally rely upon post hoc analysis of surveys that may have less than ideal question wording.[8] Within the context of Latin America, these practical limitations are compounded enormously. In Latin America, fear of crime has only recently been recognized as an issue worthy of study (Caldeira, 2000; Oviedo, 2000; SUR, 2001), and there is also a severe lack of reliable data to

educational opportunities for children; possibility of maintaining the quality of life; economic stability; political stability; and *human rights*. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of security *(1) very secure; (2) secure; (3) neither secure nor insecure; (4) insecure; (5) very insecure* for each of these items.

6 We constructed our insecurity scale according to a means formula, by which respondents' mean score on these six items was recorded as their level of insecurity. Respondents who answered a minimum of four of the six questions were included in the analysis. If respondents did not answer two of the questions in this series, their insecurity value is based upon their answers to the remaining four questions.

7 The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .85. A Cronbach's alpha is a measure of inter-item correlation. That is, it measures the degree to which the various insecurities are related to each other. For example, it determines whether respondents who express high levels of economic and political insecurity frequently also maintain high levels of insecurity due to employment, education for children, maintenance of quality of life, and human rights. Since Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, a score of .85 is quite high. This high score indicates that the proper way to include these "other" insecurities into our analysis is by combining them into a scale. If we were to enter these insecurities separately into the model, our statistical model would be highly flawed.

8 For critiques and reviews of measurement issues, see Chiricos, et. al., 1997 and Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987.

serve as the basis of sophisticated analyses (Dammert and Malone, 2001; Gaviria and Pages, 1998). While in the last decade several governmental and international agencies have developed public opinion and victimization surveys covering crime, victimization, perception and fear of crime, many of these databases are not available to the public or academic analysis.

Given such practical limitations, we still believe that the best way to advance studies of fear of crime in Latin America is to utilize the data that *are* available to stimulate public and academic debate on the topic. The data of our study permit two operationalizations of fear of crime: *fear of general violence*[9] and *fear of assault or robbery*.[10] The first measure, fear of general violence, is clearly more of an overall societal theme that includes not only crime but also other forms of violence that many times go unaddressed, such as sexual harassment. This measure includes broad societal features, such as fear of violence generated by governmental forces, the fragility of civil society organizations, and socioeconomic discrimination, all of which are prominent in most Latin American countries.

Our second measure targets crime more specifically. With this operationalization, we focus on insecurities caused specifically by crime. However, given that some crimes may generate more fears than others (Williams, et. al. 2000) a more detailed measurement would be ideal, in which respondents reported their levels of insecurities due to burglary and/or other types of less violent property crime. The two measures we employ here fall under the category of *affective* fear of crime, a fear of criminal acts in general. Unfortunately our data do not contain questions allowing us to measure *cognitive* fear of crime, which is fear of future victimization. While our measurement is not as complete as we would like, the crimes included in assault and robbery do account for more than 50 percent of all reported crimes and are given extensive public exposure by the media in Chile (Sunkel, 1992, Ramos and Guzman, 2000).[11]

2. Setting: Chile

Contemporary Chile provides a good setting to explore the connections between fear of crime and other social, economic, and political insecurities. There are four main reasons for our focus on Chile. First, Chile is frequently regarded as the success story in Latin America as far as economic development is concerned. Second, this economic success has not come without a price, as economic growth

9 Respondents were asked, "Do you and your family feel secure or insecure in terms of violence? (1) very secure; (2) secure (3) neither secure nor insecure; (4) insecure; (5) very insecure."

10 The ILO survey asks respondents, "*Do you and your family feel secure or insecure in terms of assault or robbery? (1) very secure; (2) secure (3) neither secure nor insecure; (4) insecure; (5) very insecure.*"

11 Even though we measure two types of fear (fear of violence and fear of assault and robbery), frequently in the paper we refer to both of these as fear of crime.

has coincided with increasing unemployment rates, increasing poverty and socioeconomic segregation. Third, it has one of the lowest levels of victimization in the region, but higher levels of fear of crime. Finally, trust in the police is higher than in other Latin American countries, and current crime control policies aim to foster this trust further through policies aimed to improve community-police relations (discussed more fully below).

The opportunity to study the underlining influences of fear of crime in a country considered the *safest* in Latin America (Ward, 2001, Ayres, 1998) could shed light on the situation of other countries in the region, such as Argentina and Uruguay. Chile is regarded as the success story of Latin America because of its macroeconomic performance and its social indicators. During the 1990s, Chile had stable economic growth averaging 7.6 percent a year and succeeded in lowering its poverty rates. However, a closer look at the Chilean situation reveals a more complex and troublesome side. Regarding the first two indicators—macroeconomic performance and social indicators—several authors have indicated that these are not equally distributed among the population, paving the way for societal discontent (Dockemdorff, 2000, Oviedo, 2000; Oviedo and Rodriguez, 1999). For instance, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) recognized in a recent publication that urban unemployment rates have grown in the last decade, up to 9.2 in the year 2000. Also in the same year, the top 10% of the population received 40.3 percent of the national income—the richest in the country received income 19 times higher than the poorest (ECLAC, 2001). Thus, while Chile has been regarded as a success story, there is substantial evidence that this success has left many Chileans behind, leading them to become insecure about their economic and social livelihood.

In addition, Chile's relatively low levels of victimization (it currently has the second lowest homicide rate in the continent, 3.3 per every one hundred thousand people) contrast with its higher levels of fear of crime. As indicated by the graph below, throughout the 1990s, on average Chile has had the lowest homicide rate in Latin America:[12]

Nevertheless, fear of crime prevails in much of the population. For instance, in a 1999 study financed by the Pan-American Health Organization, 68.7 percent of the people surveyed were afraid of being in downtown Santiago, and 64 percent were afraid of being in the public transportation system (Oviedo, 2000). This increasing fear of crime can be traced to the beginnings of the 1990s, years that also marked the return to democracy. Paradoxically after 17 years of dictatorship and the continued use of force against the population, the return to democracy meant the consolidation of public perception of criminal insecurity (UNDP, 1998;

12 These data are from the Pan American Health Organization (*www.paho.org/images/hcp/hcn/vio/homicides*). While the Pan American Health Organization has the most comprehensive cross-national data on homicides for this time frame, as the graph indicates it does not have homicide rates for all countries of South America. Still, the data that are available provide a good indication of how Chile compares to other countries in the region in terms of homicide.

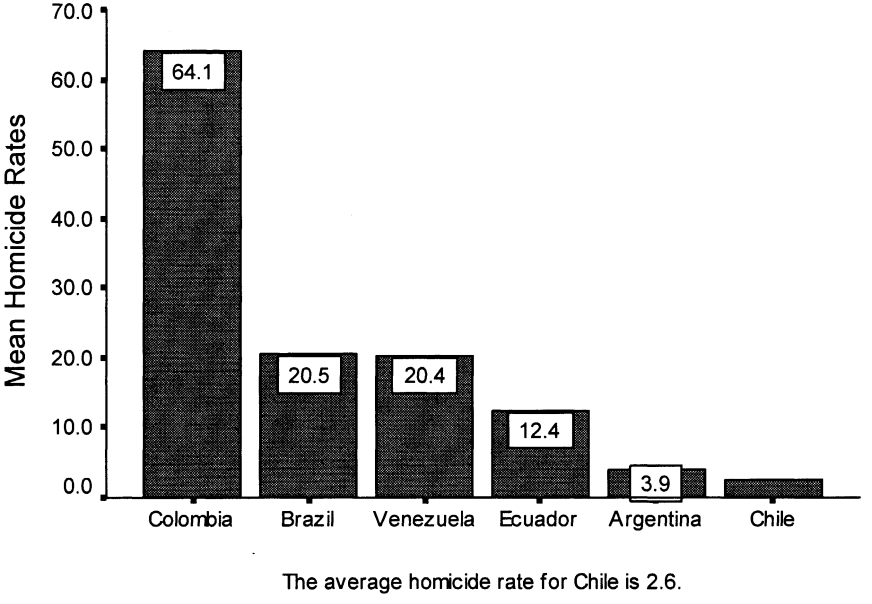

Figure 1 Average Homicide Rates 1990–2000 (per 100,000 inhabitants)

Oviedo, 1999). This increased fear of crime can be also attributed to the mediás role in portraying acts that were not part of the news during the previous regime (Oviedo, 2000). Also, at the end of the year 2000 Fundación Paz Ciudadana, a conservative Chilean think tank which has created an *index of fear*, found that 66. 3 percent of the people surveyed felt "medium" levels of fear of crime while 12 percent felt "high" levels (Paz Ciudadana, 2000).

Finally, the Chilean case has two other characteristics that differentiate it from neighboring countries: public trust in police forces (Frühling, 2001; Sandoval, 2001) and community policing programs (Dammert, 2002). While the police were involved in the previous military government (1973–1990), the general public regards them as well-trained, efficient, and generally non-corrupt. This situation is unique, as most Latin American police forces are typically considered corrupt and abusive, particularly in countries such as Argentina and Brazil. Current information shows that the evaluation of the police, or Carabineros, is the highest amongst public institutions related to crime prevention. For example, at the end of the year 2000 Carabineros scored a 5.2 (on a scale from 1 to 7) while local authorities, judicial police (Investigaciones) and the judicial system were evaluated with lower scores (Paz Ciudadana, 2000). Also, an official victimization survey shows that 23.3% of Chilean respondents expressed "a lot" of trust while 39% trust Carabineros "somewhat" (Dammert, forthcoming).

In addition to higher levels of trust in police, the Chilean case is also notably distinct in its crime fighting policies. The government has made a clear decision to assuage the public's fear of crime through policies of community participation

in crime prevention (Dammert, 2002), as well as through alterations of the police's operational strategies. For example, the latest operational strategy, "*Plan Cuadrante,*"[13] determines new patrol sectors and the amount of policing needed in each sector or *cuadrante,* as well as develops measures to control human and material resources and individual performance in the institution (Ward, 2001). As many scholars have documented, these efforts are aimed to diminish the public's fear of crime in the short run through community participation, while also (hopefully) lowering the rates of victimization (Ward, 2001; Frühling, 2001; Sandoval, 2001). Paradoxically, while the Chilean police are viewed favorably and the government has engaged in a concerted effort to reassure public fears, Chileans still register high levels of fear of crime. Why have government crime-fighting attempts failed to diminish public insecurity in Chile? Our study aims to shed light on this question, by testing the hypothesis that fear of crime is rooted in other insecurities that feature prominently in Chilean life.

3. Alternative Hypotheses on Fear of Crime

In order to provide a robust test of our hypothesis regarding other insecurities, we test this hypothesis alongside others that feature prominently in the literature. As mentioned previously, there are four main theoretical perspectives on fear of crime, which highlight the importance of factors such as: social identity variables, victimization, trust in the media, and informal crime fighting networks. We turn now to discuss each of these perspectives in more detail, as well as our means of empirically testing their abilities to explain fear of crime.

Social Identity Variables

Particularly in the field of psychology, scholars have noted that individual-level characteristics correlate strongly with fear of crime (Pantazis, 2000; Tulloch, 2000; Mesch, 2000; Hraba, et. al. , 1999; Saldivar, Ramos, Saltijeral, 1998). Specifically, two dimensions have been studied in their relationship to fear of crime: Social identity characteristics (Pain, 2001) such as gender, age, education or income; and urban-related variables.

The relationship between fear of crime and social identity characteristics has an important and contradictory body of literature.[14] While women, the elderly and the poor are seen as more fearful, scholars have not yet explained conclusively *why* they are more fearful.[15] Even though it is not clear why social

13 The Plan Cuadrante was first tested in Santiago's South precinct during the year 1999. After an internal review of the process in the year 2000 the institution decided to implement it in Metropolitan Santiago. Full national implementation is expected by 2003.

14 Studies have ranged from the central question of "who is more afraid?" and "who is most likely to be victimized?" to explaining the "irrationality" of some people's fear. For example, women, the elderly and lower class people are seen as fearful and

identity characteristics influence fear, the empirical evidence is impossible to ignore. Numerous studies have found that social identity characteristics do have an impact on fear of crime (Walkate, 2001; Pain, 2000). We include control variables for: sex, age, education, and income.[16] By doing so, we demonstrate that our results our equally valid for men and women of all ages, at all levels of income and education.

The argument that urban life is now characterized by loose social bonds, anonymity and violence has served as a cornerstone for most urban studies on fear and crime (Pain, 2000; Walkate, 2001, Caldeira, 2000). Specifically in Latin America, it has been empirically substantiated that victimization and fear of crime increase as the city of residence of the respondent increases in size (Gaviria and Páges, 1999).[17] To address this growing academic attention to space and fear of crime, we include dummy variables for respondents' city residence: *Santiago, Valparaiso,* and *Concepción.*[18]

Do other insecurities drive fear of crime, even when social identity characteristics and city residence are taken into account? We find that they do.[19] We use ordinary least squares regression to measure the impact of insecurities, social identity

passive. Nevertheless, there is a growing literature that recognizes the need for a more comprehensive exploration of such relationships (Walkate, 2001; Pain, 2000).

15 Moreover it has been clearly stated that these indicators should be examined in a broader framework that includes other micro and macro level variables.

16 All of these variables are measured by respondents' self-reporting. We have coded sex so that a value of one represents men, and a zero women. Age is measured by respondents' age in years. We measure education categorically, so that: (1) no formal education; (2) primary incomplete; (3) primary complete; (4) secondary incomplete; (5) secondary complete; (6) tertiary incomplete; (7) tertiary complete; (8) post-graduate studies. For ease of interpretation, we measure income in units of one hundred thousand Chilean pesos (calculated by respondents' self-reported income divided by 100,000).

17 This connection between fear of crime and urbanization is particularly important for Chile. In Chile, as well as other Latin American countries, fear of crime is heavily concentrated in urban areas. To explain this connection, studies have pointed to the misuse of public space in urban areas (SUR, 2000; Oviedo, 2000). Thus, fear is "related to the abandonment of public spaces as well as with the refuge in private ones" (Oviedo and Rodriguez, 1999). Those studies conclude with the paradox that the very interventions implemented, such as gated communities, to diminish fear have had the opposite result. In that sense there is a similarity to the questions raised by Marcuse (1997) "Do walls in the city provide security or do they create fear" (Marcuse, 1997). Unfortunately, there are no indicators of public space availability or its quality and use, which has prevented us from including these critical dimensions in our analysis.

18 Our regression model includes dummy variables for Valparaiso and Concepción, which leaves Santiago as the reference category. When using dummy variables (as we do here for cities), one must always omit one variable from the regression equation to serve as a reference category. Since Santiago is our reference category, the variables Valparaiso and Concepción measure differences between residents of these cities and residents of Santiago.

19 The exact results of our findings are included in the Appendix. For purposes of presentation, we report and interpret only the significant findings in the text. For

characteristics, and city residence on fear of crime. Our findings demonstrate that other insecurities play a large role in predicting fear of crime and violence, even when controlling for other factors. Thus, as respondents exhibit greater social, political, and economic insecurities, they are more likely to fear crime and violence. To be more precise, our results show that for every one-unit increase in our insecurities scale, fear of violence increases by .44, and fear of assault or robbery increases by .43.

Despite their importance in the literature, the social identity variables do not prove reliable predictors of fear of violence or crime. In our models, sex, age, and education are never significant predictors of fear of violence or crime. That is, we do not find differences between men and women, nor among different ages or educational levels. All are equally likely to fear violence or crime to the same extent. The impact of income, while significant, is extremely minor. We can conclude that wealthier respondents are not that much more fearful than their poorer counterparts. City residence does prove to have an impact on fear of violence and crime. The results showed that, consistent with the literature, cities that are more densely populated and growing more quickly have higher levels of fear of crime.

Thus, our first analysis supports our hypothesis—other insecurities play a large role in determining fear of crime. However, there are additional theories concerning fear of crime. We turn now to address the theories concerning victimization and media exposure, and demonstrate that even when controlling for the effects of these factors, other insecurities still best explain fear of crime.

Victimization and Trust in the Press

Intuitively, it seems logical to expect that personal experiences of victimization would make citizens more fearful of crime. This intuitive finding has been quantitatively demonstrated in the literature (Mesch, 2000; Hraba, et. al. , 1999; Myers SL, Chung CJ, 1998), with studies reporting that the experience of victimization leads citizens to fear crime more. We control for the effects of victimization to provide a more robust test for our hypothesis: for victims as well as non-victims, other insecurities will still predict fear of crime and violence.[20]

Traditionally, no study of fear of crime is complete without controlling for media exposure. Extant literature has found that the media over-emphasizes the problem of crime, leading the public to perceive crime rates to be much higher than they actually are. Not surprisingly, scholars have identified media exposure as a key explanatory variable of public fear of crime (Chiricos, Padgett, Gertz, 2000; O'Connell, 1999, Altheide, 1997; Chiricos, Eschholz, Gertz, 1997; Lira, Saltijeral, Saldivar, 1995). Since the media disproportionately focuses on violent

readers more interested in the exact numerical results of our statistical analyses, please see Table 2 in the Appendix.

20 Victimization is coded dichotomously, with a value of one representing victimization and zero no victimization.

crime (epitomized by the media adage, "if it bleeds, it leads") the public becomes more fearful of violent crime, even when objective crime rates decrease. Several Chilean scholars have pointed to the important role that the media plays on the political agenda, specifically after 1990 with the return of new democratic governments (Sunkel, 1992; Ramos and Guzman, 2000; Oviedo and Rodriguez, 1999). Throughout the last decade the media has sensationalized crime, to the point that the media enjoys a "significant political role in constructing violence as a key topic during the transition period and for that reason, they have had *surprising success* in telling us what to think during a period that was characterized by the relatively vanishing of macroconflicts" (Sunkel, 1992 translated from Spanish). More recently, Ramos and Guzmán (2000) analyzed the political and economic forces behind the media, concluding that although the crime rates have been on the rise during the last decade, the media has played a central role in defining fear of crime and specifically fear of certain types of places and even people in Chile (Ramos and Guzman, 2000).

While our dataset does not allow us to test for media exposure per se, it does contain a suitable proxy: trust in the press.[21] We use trust in the press to stand as a proxy for media exposure, arguing that respondents who trust the press more will be more fearful of crime, given that the press stresses and sensationalizes the occurrence of crime. While our measure differs from the indicators of media exposure traditionally utilized in fear of crime studies, recent work suggests that our measure is more than appropriate. In a seminal study, Miller and Krosnick (2000) find that trust in the media, not media exposure, has a greater impact on citizens' evaluations. The authors find that when people consider the media to be a trustworthy, credible source of information, they place greater emphasis on the issues prominent in media discourse. Thus, we maintain that respondents who consider the media to be trustworthy will lend greater credence to the media's portrayal of crime, leading them to become more fearful of crime as the Chilean media portrays crime as pervasive and threatening.

For this model we again use ordinary least squares regression to test our hypothesis concerning insecurities, holding the effects of victimization and trust in press constant.[22] The results once again confirm our hypothesis that insecurities are highly significant predictors of fear of violence and fear of assault or robbery. For every one-unit increase in our insecurity scale, fear of violence increases by .44, and fear of assault or robbery by .43. Again, we find that the social identity variables are not reliable predictors of fear of crime, although income is a statistically significant predictor of fear of assault or robbery. While significant, the impact of income is still very small.

While we find support for our insecurities hypothesis even after controlling for the effects of victimization and trust in the press, it is worth noting that these two

21 We operationalize trust in the media through the following item: "Which of these institutions do you consider trustworthy ... the press? (1) trustworthy; (0) untrustworthy."

22 Once again, we include the exact results of this analysis in the Appendix (Table 3).

variables are highly significant. Those who trust the press are .26 more fearful of violence, and .22 more fearful of robbery or assault, than are those who do not trust the press. This indicates that the press does have a strong impact on fear of crime. The sensationalization of crime in the media leads the public to become more fearful. This finding has a heightened importance in Chile, given that the media commands one of the highest levels of trust (Ramos and Guzman, 2000; Sunkel, 1992). Also, given that numerous studies have found that the press cultivates fear of crime, our results are consistent with a significant amount of research in the field.

In addition, we find that victims are more fearful than non-victims. Victims of crime are .36 more fearful of violence, and .34 more fearful of assault or robbery, than are non-victims. Not surprisingly, the experience of crime first-hand leads people to become more fearful. However, while victimization and trust in the press have important ramifications for fear of crime, the affects of these two variables is not nearly as strong as that of other insecurities.

So far we have demonstrated that our insecurity scale best explains fear of crime, even when we include measures of rival hypotheses concerning social identity, city residence, victimization, and trust in the press. There is however one additional counter hypothesis that we must address to substantiate our claim that other insecurities drive fear of crime in Chile today. This hypothesis concerns informal crime-fighting networks, which some scholars have linked to fear of crime (Crawford, 1997; Reiss, 1987; Sampson, 1987). We turn now to discuss this last counter hypothesis, and how we measure and test for its impact on fear of crime.

Informal Crime-Fighting Networks

According to this theory, informal crime control networks can diminish fear of crime through community participation (Crawford, 1997). If citizens *participate in civil society institutions*, they should register lower levels of fear of crime since their participation draws them into greater contact with their neighbors, enhancing feelings of interpersonal trust.[23] Active participation in civil society has not only been cited as promoting interpersonal trust (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000), it also serves as the infrastructure of these informal networks. The

23 Originally we also included variables measuring trust in *formal* crime-fighting networks: the courts and police, as such trust has been found to reduce fear of crime (Burianek, 1997; Chanley, Dammert and Malone, 2001; Hraba J, Bao, Lorenz, Pechacova, 1998; Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn, 2000; Vlassis, 2000). Intuitively, it is appealing to point to fear of crime as the result of the failure of the government to control crime. According to this logic, if citizens cannot trust the institution responsible for protecting them from crime, they will fear crime more. However, we did not find any significant correlation between fear of crime and trust in police and courts. Once again, our findings could be due to the fact that we rely upon affective measures of fear of crime. Given that cognitive measures focus more on actual

importance of participation of civil society[24] is magnified in the case of Chile, where the government has actively promoted policies that emphasized the importance of citizen participation in crime prevention as an effective means of diminishing public fear of crime (Dammert, 2002; Sandoval, 2001; Oviedo, 2000; SUR, 2000).

Thus, we test the ability of community participation to reduce fear of crime. To do so, we again rely upon ordinary least squares regression analysis. In addition to variables measuring community participation, we also include the other variables that have proven significant in our analysis thus far: insecurities, city residence, trust in press, income, and victimization. The results substantiate our insecurities hypothesis; however they disconfirm that of informal networks.[25] Contrary to prominent theories in the literature, our findings indicate that participation in any civil society organization has *no* significant effect on fear of crime.[26] This runs counter to many prominent theories regarding participation, and even more importantly, counter to predominant public policy measures of public involvement in crime prevention, especially in Chile. Given that the Chilean government has made citizens' community participation a hallmark of its crime-fighting policy, the lack of significance of these variables is striking. Based upon these results, it appears that contrary to public policy initiatives, community participation will not deter public fear of crime. While our results are based upon a single country and only upon affective measures of fear of crime, they still point to the need to reexamine not only theories regarding citizens' participation, but government policy as well. Our results also point to the need to conduct additional research in other countries, using cognitive measures of fear of crime to further test this hypothesis on civil society participation.[27]

Throughout our analysis, we have found consistent support for our theory that the political, economic, and social insecurities entrenched in contemporary

victimization, it could be that trust in formal and informal crime-control networks is more related to fear of future victimization than to our affective measures of fear of violence and fear of assault and robbery. It seems likely that if people are asked about future victimization, they might be more inclined to take considerations of trust in police and justice into account; however, this is a venue for future research.

24 To measure civil society participation, we also rely upon a series of dichotomous survey items. Respondents were asked, "*Do you form a part of any of the organizations that I am going to read?*" The organizations listed included: *religious associations, ecological groups/environmentalists, neighborhood associations, parents' associations, students' associations*, and *philanthropic associations*. Respondents indicated that they either *participated (1)* or *did not participate (0)* in these organizations. Due to low inter-item correlations, these variables are treated separately in our data analysis, as this is the most appropriate way to analyze these variables statistically.

25 Table 4 of the Appendix reports the exact results of our statistical analysis.

26 Tests for multicollinearity reveal that this is not due to a statistical artifact. Even when each of these participation variables are entered in separately, they are not significant.

27 We also conducted a less stringent test of the ability of informal networks to reduce fear of crime. Instead of measuring participation in community organizations, we

Table 1 Final Models

Independent Variables	Model 1 Fear of Violence Trimmed Model	Model 2 Fear of Assault or Robbery Trimmed Model
Constant	1.87***	1.96***
	(.12)	(.12)
Victimization	.34***	.33***
	(.06)	(.06)
Concepción Dummy	−.57***	-.46***
	(.06)	(.06)
Insecurity Scale	.48***	.47***
	(.04)	(.04)
Trust in Press	.20**	.16*
	(.06)	(.06)
Adjusted R Squared	.26	.23
N	1106	1107

Reported coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.
An F test indicated that these models are significant at the .001 level.
*significant at .05 level for a two-tailed t test;**significant at .01 level for a two-tailed t test;
***significant at .001 level for a two-tailed t test.

Chilean life drive public fear of crime. We have found support for this hypothesis even when controlling for the impact of other variables featuring prominently in the literature. In some cases, these counter hypotheses have proven correct. We find that victimization, trust in the press, city residence, and to a lesser extent income, all exert a significant effect on fear of crime. While these variables are interesting in their own right, our interest in this analysis is to isolate the effects of other insecurities. In Table 1, we present our final trimmed model, including only the variables that have proven consistently to predict both types of fear.[28]

As Table 1 illustrates, even in the trimmed model our insecurities scale is the most powerful predictor of both types of fear. Our results are consistent: the insecurity index is by far the best predictor of fear of violence and fear of assault or robbery. In Model 1, we find that controlling for all other factors, for each one-unit increase in the insecurity scale fear of violence increases .48. Thus, since our insecurity scale has a range of five, controlling for all other factors, individuals who scored a five on the insecurity scale register a level of fear of violence more than two points higher than those who scored a one on the insecurity scale. Model 2 indicates that for every one-unit increase in insecurities,

substituted a measure of how much trust respondents had in these organizations. Even with this less stringent test, we found no effect between informal networks and fear of crime. That is, trust in community organizations had no significant impact on fear of crime.

28 We also conducted regression analyses with all of our independent variables included together. The results of this analysis did not differ from the findings presented here in separate tables. We only present our findings in separate tables for clarity of presentation. Given the large number of variables we test, we found this to be the most succinct presentation of our results.

fear of assault or robbery increases .47. Holding all other factors constant, individuals that scored a five on the insecurity scale had levels of fear of assault or robbery roughly two points higher than those who scored a one on the insecurity scale. Our measure of political, social, and economic insecurities is consistently the most powerful predictor in these models, lending strong support to our hypothesis.

In addition, victimization, trust in the press, and city residence consistently perform according to expectations. In our final models, those who were victimized by crime were .34 more fearful of violence and .33 more fearful of assault or robbery than those who had not experienced victimization. Residents of Concepción registered levels of fear of violence that were .57 less than their counterparts in Santiago, and levels of fear of assault or robbery that were .46 less. Those who trusted the press were .20 more fearful of violence and .6 more fearful of assault or robbery than those who did not trust the press. Overall, our models perform quite well. With our trimmed models in Table 1, we explain 26% of the variance in fear of violence, and 23% of the variance in fear of assault or robbery.

4. Discussion

The primary aim of our research was to develop a conceptual model to predict and explain citizen fear of crime. Our analysis revealed that other insecurities—economic, social and political—provided more directional accuracy and contributed the most to explaining variations of citizen's fear of crime. In other words, the presence of general citizens' insecurities appeared to be a key dimension of fear of crime's perception.

We also found that victimization, trust in the media and city size are important determinants of fear of crime, but less so than the presence of other insecurities. To assess the relative importance of other insecurities, we sought to empirically test the hypothesis developed by the UNPD that fear of crime is an expression of other problems that are not easily identified (and solved) in public discourse (UNPD, 1998). Thus, we provide empirical verification for several qualitative analyses conducted by other Chilean researchers (UNPD, 1998; Oviedo, 2000). We believe our work provides strong support for these hypotheses. Like UNPD, we found that the insecurity scale is the best predictor for both measures of fear used.

In addition, our study greatly extends qualitative analyses by allowing us to substantiate our hypothesis while also testing other perspectives of analysis. We find support for some of them, which are key fixtures in theories of the crime-fear relationship. First, victimization has been analyzed in the literature as an important determination of fear (Mesch, 2000; Hraba et. al. 1999). Our findings corroborate these previous studies. Secondly, we find that trust in the media plays a role in explaining fear of crime. Considering the over-dramatization of crime in the news media as well as its tendency to focus on

violent crimes, there is a significant relationship between trust in media and increasing fear of crime.

Thirdly, city size has shown to be a significant determinant of both measures of fear. Previous analysis have concluded that population size is a fairly strong predictor of fear of crime (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981). In our model, this variable also plays an important role in defining fear of crime. In that sense, Santiago—the capital and biggest Chilean city—has significantly different levels of fear than Concepción—third largest city in size.[29]

Our analysis also disproves key theoretical fixtures in the fear-crime relationship. In particular, we find no support for variables pertaining to community participation and socioeconomic variables (sex, age and level of education). None of these reached significance in the models presented here. One explanation of our results could be that we rely solely upon an affective measure of fear of crime. However, given the prominence these variables enjoy in the literature, it is surprising that we found no effect here.

Perhaps the most salient implication of our study concerns the use of an insecurity scale to analyze its effect on fear of crime specifically. Also, there is an important lesson on how public participation and community involvement is affecting fear of crime. Nowadays in Chile, the main crime prevention policy is based upon the assumption that public involvement in prevention programs will directly impact on fear of crime and will make it diminish (Ward, 2000, Dammert, 2002; SUR, 2000). Our results question the underlying assumptions of these policies initiatives. Since community participation variables are never significant in our models, we believe that community-based policy initiatives will fall short of their goals of reducing fear of crime. Our results indicate that fear of crime can be resolved not only by situational policies, but also by a complex set of policies aimed to deflate economic and social insecurities. Therefore, we believe that policies aimed at controlling crime and diminishing fear of crime must be part of a larger policy framework that addresses the myriad of economic, social and political problems facing Latin American countries today, such as poverty and unemployment.

Finally, our results demonstrate that economic, social and political insecurities greatly affect fear of crime. As noted above, much of the relationship between fear and the other variables is better explained through the use of the insecurity scale developed for this research. Although these findings are key to analyzing the predominant presence of fear of crime in the everyday life of Chileans, we recognize that the relationship between fear and participation and between fear and trust should be addressed in more detail in the future, and we encourage such research. Our study needs to be replicated in other countries, and with cognitive as well as affective measures of fear of crime.

29 Paradoxically, Valparaiso did not register significantly different levels of fear when compared with residents of Santiago. This result could be explained by the fact that Valparaiso part of the second largest metropolitan area in the country and its main city port—is very densely populated and shares most big city problems in a small and geographically difficult area.

Appendix

Table 2 Socioeconomic Status, Urbanization, and Insecurities

Independent Variables	Model 1 (Fear of Violence)	Model 2 (Fear of Assault or Robbery)
Constant	1.967***	2.111***
	(.221)	(.218)
Insecurity Scale	.443***	.432***
	(.045)	(.044)
Sex	−.027	−.017
	(.065)	(.064)
Age	−.0004	−.027
	(.002)	(.002)
Education	.029	.037
	(.024)	(.024)
Income	.011	.017*
	(.009)	(.008)
Valparaiso Dummy	−.003	−.009
	(.079)	(.078)
Concepción Dummy	−.538***	−.459***
	(.080)	(.079)
Adjusted R Squared	.188	.170
N	825	826

Reported coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.
An F test indicated that these models are significant at the .001 level.
*significant at .05 level for a two-tailed t test;**significant at .01 level for a two-tailed t test;
***significant at .001 level for a two-tailed t test.

Table 3 Other Insecurities, Victimization, and the Media

Independent Variables	Model 3 (Fear of Violence)	Model 4 (Fear of Assault or Robbery)
Constant	1.830***	1.995***
	(.221)	(.218)
Insecurity Scale	.439***	.427***
	(.044)	(.044)
Sex	−.051	−.034
	(.064)	(.064)
Age	−.0004	−.003
	(.002)	(.002)
Education	.021	.027
	(.024)	(.024)
Income	.012	.017*
	(.008)	(.008)
Valparaiso Dummy	.022	.005
	(.078)	(.077)
Concepción Dummy	−.526***	−.441***
	(.079)	(.078)
Trust in the Press	.264***	.215**
	(.075)	(.074)
Victimization	.357***	.341***
	(.068)	(.068)
Adjusted R Squared	.223	.199
N	814	815

Reported coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.
An F test indicated that these models are significant at the .001 level.
*significant at .05 level for a two-tailed t test;**significant at .01 level for a two-tailed t test;
***significant at .001 level for a two-tailed t test.

Table 4 Community Participation, Insecurities, Residence, Media, Income, and Victimization

Independent Variables	Model 5 (Fear of Violence)	Model 6 (Fear of Assault or Robbery)
Constant	1.888***	(.156)
2.008***	(.154)	
Insecurities	.445***	.435***
	(.045)	(.044)
Trust in Press	.261**	.225**
	(.076)	(.075)
Victimization	.353***	.345***
	(.069)	(.069)
Income	.012	.019*
	(.008)	(.008)
Valparaiso Dummy	.014	−.009
	(.079)	(.078)
Concepción Dummy	−.518***	−.440***
	(.080)	(.079)
Participation in parties	−.010	−.006
	(.152)	(.150)
Participation in Religious Associations	−.074	−.039
	(.091)	(.090)
Participation in Environmental Associations	.295	.243
	(.193)	(.191)
Participation in Neighborhood Associations	−.115	−.202
	(.102)	(.150)
Participation in Parent Associations	−.025	−.082
	(.099)	(.098)
Participation in Student Associations	.069	.141
	(.163)	(.161)
Participation in Philanthropic Associations	.050	.157
	(.178)	(.176)
Participation in NGOs	.083	.181
	(.217)	(.214)
Participation in Other Associations	−.202	−.194
	(.194)	(.192)
Adjusted R Squared	.221	.203
N	807	808

Reported coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.
An F test indicated that these models are significant at the .001 level.
*significant at .05 level for a two-tailed t test;
**significant at .01 level for a two-tailed t test;
***significant at .001 level for a two-tailed t test.

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