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Between Risk and Resistance: Gender Socialization, Equality, and Ambiguous Norms in Fear of Crime and Safekeeping

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Abstract

Gender socialization is a key factor in explaining gender differences in managing fear of crime and risks in public space. By emphasizing the continuing role of traditional norms that underline women's vulnerability and prescribe safekeeping, previous studies have ignored the role of increasing gender equality, alternative norms that prescribe women's independence and strength, and resistance to traditional norms. Based on in-depth interviews with 28 couples, this article explores women's ambivalence and resistance toward traditional norms, how talk and practice reflect mixed messages on how to "properly" do gender, and aligning as well as conflicting views and roles within couples.

Keywords

fear, gender equality, resistance, risk, socialization

Introduction

The view that women are vulnerable and should be cautious, whereas men are strong and should be fearless, appears to be dominant in shaping how women and men talk about and manage fear and victimization risks in public space. Many studies have shown that these traditional gender norms play a role in gender socialization, which, in turn, could explain why women report higher levels of fear and practice avoidance and other ways of safekeeping more often than men do (e.g., Cobbina, Miller, &

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Brunson, 2008; Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Goodey, 1997; Hollander, 2001; Jackson, 2009; Madriz, 1997; Rader, 2008; Rader & Haynes, 2011; Snedker, 2012; Sutton, Robinson, & Farrall, 2011). Although the continuing importance of traditional gender norms is evident from these studies, it is remarkable that studies on the relation between gender and fear have paid little attention to the role of increasing gender equality and changing gender norms (for exceptions, see Koskela, 1997; Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2013). Women's emancipation and increasing gender equality mean that women's lives and positions have changed and this could alter the perception of differences between women and men (Deutsch, 2007). Indeed, as research shows, women are (made) conscious of their vulnerability and (are cautioned to) practice safekeeping, but women are *also* told that they should be independent and that they are equal to men. At the very least, gender norms are ambiguous and often contradictory. An understanding of the role of gender socialization in managing fear and risks should thus take into account how socialization of gender norms has changed.

Furthermore, various initiatives around the world demonstrate that women do resist traditional norms that work to restrict their freedom of movement. For example, women have claimed their right to public space by organizing and participating in "Take Back the Night" marches since the 1970s, and in 2011, women took to the streets in various "Slut Walks" around the world to protest the idea that they should dress properly in order to avoid being harassed or raped. Various organizations aim to empower women in order to increase their safety in public space (e.g., Women in Cities International). However, such acts of resistance have been largely absent from studies that aim to explain how gender and fear are related. Including ambivalence and resistance is particularly relevant if we view discourses on fear of crime as a means of (patriarchal) social control that restricts the movement of women in public space and their interactions with (unknown) men (e.g., Hengehold, 2011; Koskela, 1997; Madriz, 1997; Pain, 1991; Stanko, 1988). If we take fear of crime as "an indicator of the power relations in which women are embedded," we can see the use of public space and resistance to (male) protection as a "test for equality" (Koskela, 1997, p. 302). If safekeeping and showing vulnerability are ways for women to demonstrate "respectable femininity" (Hollander, 2001; Stanko, 1997), demonstrating courage and boldness could be interpreted as ways to demonstrate independence (Koskela, 1997).

One reason for this gap in the literature may be that previous studies on fear and gender have focused too narrowly on the ways in which traditional gender norms—women are vulnerable, men are strong—explain differences between women and men. As a result, gender norms are often depicted in a rather static and uniform way, leaving little room for whether and how women and men *deviate* from or *challenge* traditional gender norms related to fear and risks. This is problematic, for, as Koskela (1997) argues, "if the possibility of genuine courage is excluded, research can never be truly emancipatory" (p. 305). The purpose of this article is to open up the analysis of how gender, socialization, and fear are related to the possibility of ambivalence about and resistance to traditional norms. Using in-depth interviews with 28 heterosexual couples living in the Netherlands, I explore how changing and ambiguous gender norms shape how women and men manage fear and risks. Investigating couples provides

relevant new insights into how socialization is an ongoing process and how couples negotiate fear and risks in relation to different gender norms.

Gender Socialization, Fear of Crime, and Resistance

The core argument of this article is informed by Deutsch's (2007) critique on analyses of "doing gender" which, in her reading, tends to downplay gender resistance. Deutsch reviewed publications in gender studies that build on West and Zimmerman's concept "doing gender," which is to "cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). She concludes that "doing gender has become a theory of conformity and gender conventionality" that pays little attention to "unconventional gender situations, occupations and pursuits that could potentially disrupt gender relations" (Deutsch, 2007, p. 108; also Risman, 2009). Doing gender is thus conceptualized mainly as learning and performing *conventional* gender norms that emphasize gender difference and inequality. In other words, women "do gender" when they act vulnerable and fearful, and men "do gender" when they are strong and fearless. The same picture emerges from studies on the role of gender socialization and doing gender in differences in fear of crime.

In studying gender differences in fear of crime, gender socialization has been identified as a key factor in explaining why women report higher levels of fear and practice avoidance and other ways of safekeeping more often than men do (e.g., Cobbina et al., 2008; Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Goodey, 1997; Hollander, 2001; Jackson, 2009; Madriz, 1997; Rader, 2008; Rader & Haynes, 2011; Snedker, 2012; Sutton et al., 2011). The intertwining of fear and gender led Rader and Haynes (2011) to propose to conceptually fuse the two processes into a process of "gendered fear of crime socialization." Socialization means that individuals internalize messages that they receive from various sources, including parents, peers, the media, and law enforcement officials, and subsequently act according to those internalized norms. According to this perspective, heightened fear among women and risk avoidance are the result of internalized messages during childhood and later in adulthood that reinforce the idea that women are vulnerable, ill-equipped to defend themselves, and liable to sexual assault (e.g., Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Goodey, 1997; Hollander, 2001; Madriz, 1997; Rader & Haynes, 2011; Warr & Ellison, 2000). Men internalize very different messages, for example, that they should be fearless (Goodey, 1997) and that they are able to successfully defend themselves, which could be one reason why men generally lack personal fear (Rader, 2009). Because boys and girls, and adult men and women, are told and demonstrated by role models and peers how to deal with fear and crime, they learn "appropriate" behavior that fits their sex (Goodey, 1997; Rader, 2010). Widely shared beliefs about gender-related body differences such as size, strength, and being capable to penetrate or being penetrated are taken for granted in everyday conversations: Vulnerability is inherent to femininity and dangerousness to masculinity (Hollander, 2001). The belief in gendered vulnerability may lead women to see themselves as vulnerable and to exaggerate their fear of violence (Hollander, 2001; Jackson, 2009; Madriz, 1997). These cultural messages are so strong that they may override decades

of male experiences and increase fear among male-to-female transsexuals after their choice to live as a woman (Yavorsky & Sayer, 2013).

It is questionable, however, that women are exposed only to messages that emphasize their vulnerability and that men are always and only told to be strong. Feminist movements have offered alternative messages to women and opened up space for non-conventional norms and "deviant" role models that stress equality in principle and in practice. In turn, once women start to participate in education, jobs, leadership, and leisure, this will affect people's perception of differences between men and women (Deutsch, 2007). Surely, consecutive waves of feminism and women's emancipation have not resulted in complete gender equality. Even in the most egalitarian societies, the ideal of gender equality is not fully practiced. As the equality ideal and unequal practices co-exist, cultural messages about femininity are ambiguous, not to say confusing.

The Netherlands, where couples were interviewed for this article, may serve as an example. Dutch society is often seen as highly egalitarian. In theory and by law, men and women are equal, but reality shows inequality (see also Koskela, 1997 and Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2013 on Finland and Sweden, respectively). Since the 1970s, formal barriers to female employment were resolved but legal benefits for the "breadwinner model" (men work, women stay at home) stayed in place (this tax arrangement is referred to as the "kitchen subsidy"; Ruitenberg, 2014). A variation in the traditional breadwinner model is now dominant in the Netherlands: Men work full-time and women work part-time, which is, in part, the result (and cause) of insufficient and expensive childcare arrangements (Ruitenberg, 2014). Furthermore, women get paid less for similar jobs, work part-time more often (especially women with children), are financially independent less often, and are underrepresented in top functions in business, academia, and government (CBS, 2014). The traditional situation of "harmonious inequality," in which tasks are gendered and separated, has made way for "arduous equality": Partners are entangled in often yearlong negotiations about the division of tasks and roles (SCP, 2009, p. 10). Even many "dinky's" (double income no kids) do not practice a 50–50 division of labor: Women still clean and cook more often, whereas men do administrative tasks and maintenance (SCP, 2009, p. 18). In addition, women (and men) are judged by a persistent double standard (Ruitenberg, 2014; cf. Deutsch & Saxon, 1998). "The Netherlands wishes to emancipate, but only within a traditional family structure," Hooghiemstra concluded in 2000 based on a study on attitudes of the general public: Freedom of choice for women (to do paid work or not) is very important, but as soon as couples have children, the family should be women's priority (Hooghiemstra, 2000, p. 121). Fourteen years later, little seems to have changed, as three of four women with children preferred not to work full-time (CBS, 2014).

As different discourses on gender relationships exist side-by-side, socialization into femininity and masculinity is an ambiguous process full of contradictions that it is never finished as norms and practices keep changing (Volman & ten Dam, 1998). This is relevant for interpreting how women and men talk about fear and risks. For example, Sutton and Farrall (2005, 2009) suggest that gender differences in reporting levels of fear emerge from the tendency to use socially desirable responding. When women

and men are asked to "fake" their response in order to appear favorably, women reported more fear than women who were asked to answer honestly, whereas men downplayed their fear compared with men who answered honestly (Sutton et al., 2011). When men are being honest, they find some report higher levels of fear of crime than women do. Based on these findings, Sutton and colleagues suggest that reporting fear of crime is a prescriptive gendered norm in its own right (Sutton et al., 2011). However, it is unclear why women would feel pressured to align with traditional norms only. As Sandberg and Rönnblom (2013) point out, "the dominant discourse of gender equality [in Sweden] demands specific forms of femininity" (p. 190): Women are expected to *not be afraid* and to *not depend* on men for security and protection. There might be women in Sutton and colleagues' study who downplayed their fear in order to demonstrate their independence, but the focus on differences between women and men may obscure this.

The same question could be raised when we see fear and safekeeping as ways of "doing gender." Fear of crime scholars have argued that to appear appropriately feminine or masculine, women and men must meet gender expectations about vulnerability and thus respond appropriately to risks (Hollander, 2001). For women, for example, "safekeeping"—staying away from risky situations—is "performative of respectable femininities" (Stanko, 1997, p. 489), whereas for men protecting their partner is a way of being a "good husband" (Rader, 2009). Women "do" their gender when they avoid risky situations or accept protection by others (Cops & Pleysier, 2011). However, is it possible that women wish or even feel pressured to do gender in a more gender-equal way? Exploring women's spatial confidence and "bold walk," Koskela (1997) concludes that "it is just not decent for women truly to be bold" but some women *do* resist this norm (p. 311). Similarly, Sandberg and Rönnblom (2013) find that some Swedish women are "positioned between a traditional discourse of women as vulnerable and scared, and a modern gender-equal discourse whereby women were supposed to feel self-assured" (p. 199). These women are in conflict with themselves: They are sometimes scared but they are also angry about their vulnerability. Women, and men, may indeed be inclined to conform to appropriate norms and behavior, but what is "appropriate" femininity, or masculinity, nowadays? Norms that prescribe independence, strength, and gender equality may manifest themselves in a desire for (at least some) women to present themselves as fearless, courageous, and not afraid to confront risks. The picture that emerges is that women may struggle with living up to both traditional and alternative gender norms. It is not self-evident that women would ultimately choose traditional norms; those who have invested in a modern gender-equal discourse may feel more comfortable or pressured to demonstrate that they are independent by saying that they are fearless (cf. Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2013).

One important way to uncover ambivalence about or resistance to traditional norms is to pay more attention to variations *among* women and to measure and take seriously ambivalence and deviations in responding to questions about fear. Some studies have aimed to uncover variations among women. In a sympathetic attempt to "rescue women—and men—from the condescension of stereotypography," Gilchrist, Bannister, Ditton, and Farrall (1998) focus on why some women are not fearful and

some men are fearful. Although they find differences among women and among men, they interpret these as related to individual experiences (see also Snedker, 2012). However, we could also interpret individual variations in relation to variations in cultural messages that people receive. Rader and Haynes (2011) have usefully proposed to adapt Akers's social learning theory to emphasize the role of differential association and differential reinforcement in explaining the socialization of fear. They argue that fear is different not just between but also *among* women and among men, although in their article they focus exclusively on explaining difference between men and women. This article builds on this idea that women and men receive differentiating messages because both femininity and masculinity are changing in concordance with the ideal of gender equality and new divisions of labor among women and men.

Whether women and men are socialized to conform to or to resist conventional norms depends on the messages they receive from significant others surrounding them—not just in childhood, but throughout the entire adult life, "individuals go through the social learning process again and again" (Rader & Haynes, 2011, p. 302). For example, male partners play a role in women's decisions to work full-time or stay home to take care of their children (Ruitenberg, 2014) and they may also influence how women manage fear and risks. This could work out in different ways. On the one hand, in a heterosexual relationship, egalitarian ideologies may downplay gender differences in the division of labor (Ruitenberg, 2014) and subsequently in practices of protection and safekeeping. Related to fear and risk management, households may be "truly egalitarian" in how they share concern for each other and mutual concern for their children (Warr & Ellison, 2000, p. 555). On the other hand, gender divisions may become more pronounced as men and women are confronted with decisions about the division of labor and care, and thus become more conventional, despite egalitarian ideologies (Ruitenberg, 2014; Usdansky, 2011). Warr and Ellison (2000) found no "purely egalitarian or reciprocal arrangement[s]" in the organization of fear (p. 574). For example, husbands worry about their wives more than the other way around (Snedker, 2006; Warr & Ellison, 2000). In a study among married and divorced wives, Rader (2008) found that women required their husbands to do "fear work" for them: to lock doors, escort them to public places, and take care of their safety. Being a good husband means being responsible for your partner's safety (Rader, 2009), whereas being a good mother (and wife?) means protecting one's children (Stanko, 1997). In this way, a heterosexual love relationship not merely reproduces but also *creates* gender and gendered fear (Fox, 2001; Rader, 2009).

Investigating couple dynamics also requires a different look at the role of class. Research has shown that underprivileged women and men feel more vulnerable to crime risks and restrict their movement more than affluent women and men do (Pantazis, 2000; Rader, Cossman, & Porter, 2012). This aligns with the finding that lower educated men and women tend to have less egalitarian views on gender (Kraaykamp, 2012; Ruitenberg, 2014). However, Usdansky (2011) suggests that class and household divisions of labor are related inversely, because it is not just ideology but also practical circumstances that shape people's actions. For example, higher educated women may be more inclined to support gender equality, but there is less need

for them to work when their highly educated male partner works. This inverse relation may also hold for class and divisions of labor in safekeeping and protecting. Previous studies have not examined couple dynamics in relation to changing gender norms and the ideal of gender equality, and it is therefore worth reviewing the "division of labour" in managing fear and risks again in a different context.

Data and Method

The data are qualitative interviews with 28 heterosexual couples living in the Netherlands. The purpose of this research is to explore certain themes that emerge from the literature and to make a theoretical contribution to the existing literature. The research design does not allow for generalization to a wider population. Its value is in gaining in-depth insight into perceptions, attitudes, and views and theorizing possible new and understudied connections between fear and gender.

Four advanced criminology students selected respondents and each interviewed seven couples. The students gathered the data as part of their thesis project, which I supervised. The project started with a literature review, to make sure that the students had more than just basic knowledge on the subject before doing the interviews. They were instructed to select and design interview questions based on previous studies. Together with the students, I designed the questionnaire, after which all students did a test interview with one couple (not included in the final data). Subsequently, we discussed the interview process in detail and I finalized the questionnaire. Students wrote a memo for each interview describing the interview process and the setting, which gave insight into the quality of the interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed as well. Before the interview, students informed respondents about the purpose of the interview, asked permission to record the interview, guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, and explained that the interviews were used for their theses as well as an academic publication written by their supervisor. Students explained that the interview covered sensitive topics such as victimization and that respondents were not obliged to answer and could stop with the interview at any time. The students gave explicit permission to me to use all interviews for an article.

Women and men were interviewed separately, which resulted in 56 interviews. Students were instructed to find respondents to whom they were separated by two degrees, so as to broaden the pool of potential respondents. They asked friends, family members, and fellow students to put them in touch with potential respondents. All interviews were held in March and April 2013. The average duration of the interviews was 55 min. The mean age of respondents is 40 years (range 21-65 years); the mean for women is 38 years and for men 41 years. Half (54%) of the couples have children below age 18 years living at home, and 64% live in an urban area. Based on their own descriptions of their neighborhoods, we know that most couples live in relatively safe neighborhoods. Most respondents have a part-time or full-time paid job: 79% of all women and 96% of all men. Most respondents completed some form of tertiary education (88%, including a few students); 61% are higher educated (higher vocational or academic training).

The interview focused on fear and crime in public space and thus on "stranger danger" (Scott, 2003) and not domestic violence (see for a discussion Stanko, 1988). The interviews were designed to capture multiple aspects of "fear of crime" through asking about affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects (cf. Vanderveen, 2006). We have translated Warr and Ellison's (2000) suggestion to interview multiple household members, to ask respondents for whom protective and precautionary measures are intended, and to investigate whether household members know of each other's concerns and precautionary measures, into research questions. We started by asking respondents to score how safe they felt in their neighborhood and to estimate their victimization risk (overall and for various offenses) on a scale from 1 to 10 and asked them to elaborate on their scores. We also asked them to estimate what scores they think their partner would give for himself or herself. We were less interested in the scores as such (hence I do not report them) but rather in whether respondents would score their partners differently and whether they would relate this to gender differences. The focus of the interview was on strategies of safekeeping and protection. We asked general questions about managing fear and risk (what do you do to protect yourself or your partner, what does your partner do to protect himself or herself or you?) and we asked specifically about various behaviors and situations such as escorting and warning each other, talking about unsafe situations, avoiding places, securing the house, locking doors, answering the door at 10 p.m., and making decisions together about home security systems or locking doors at night. In this way, we have information about how men and women deal with crime together, the ways in which they influence each other, the extent to which they fulfilled different roles or tasks in managing safety, and how they see each other's roles. For each theme, we asked respondents to compare their own behavior to the behavior of their partner, as to understand whether and how respondents view gender differences in general and in their relationship. Halfway through the interview, we asked respondents about their views more generally by asking, (a) "Sometimes it is said that women are more vulnerable and that they should be more cautious than men, or that men should protect women—what do you think?" and (b) "Do you think men in general feel safer?" These questions measured general attitudes and views on women and men so that we could contrast these with their actual (as reported) behavior and feelings. We did not ask respondents explicitly about their views on or practices of gender equality.

A first reading of the interviews confirmed our expectation that respondents, female and male, varied in the extent to which they answered in line with conventional gender norms and that there were many inconsistencies within individual interviews and within couples. Further in-depth analysis aimed to uncover various patterns in how gender relates to fear and risk management and in couple dynamics. I used Atlas.ti software to code (mainly through open coding and additional coding by word search) and retrieve interview fragments by code. I first coded all relevant interview segments. Codes emerged from the transcripts through open and "in vivo" coding and from concepts in the literature. Important codes are as follows: fear, fearless, alert, avoidance (time, place), safekeeping, protecting, escorting, vulnerability, strength, spousal fear, socialization, conventional, independence, resistance, and equality. Through reviewing and

categorizing codes, I searched for commonalities and differences in responses. Subsequently, I summarized the transcripts for each couple, highlighting (in)consistencies in their individual and joint stories. The final analytical step was ordering all female respondents along a continuum ranging from "talk and behaves in line with traditional gender norms" to "talks and behaves contrary to traditional gender norms." In positioning all women on this continuum, I specifically examined what factors defined their position and distinguished respondents from each other. I present the results in order of this continuum, which reveals the range of positions as well as the different ways in which managing fear and risks are ambiguous or contradictory. The advantage of a continuum instead of categories is that it does not exaggerate differences between respondents but rather points at nuanced differences.

From Vulnerable Women to Independent Women

Vulnerable Women, Strong Men

At the "traditional" end of the continuum, I found couples who performed conventional gender norms together through the ways in which they both deal with, mostly, *her* safety (cf. Warr & Ellison, 2000). Respondents agree with the general statement that women are more vulnerable and should be more cautious than men. Women say that they feel more vulnerable, which for them is related to differences in physical strength and to the risk or fear of sexual harassment or rape, and that they feel safer because of (living with) their male partner. They explain how they avoid risky situations (e.g., not answering the door late at night) and unsafe places and arrange being escorted to and from places if needed. Their male partners' narratives line up with theirs and they tend to take up a protective role. This woman (age 21 years, Couple 22), for example, says,

> I feel safer when he's around, it's always safer than being on your own. When I'm somewhere where I'm not familiar I call him up, to let people around me know that I'm on the phone. It's different I think when you're a girl. You're more vulnerable. Because I can't defend myself as good when something happens, and I think that girls, just, often [girls] are approached . . . That can frighten you.

Her partner (age 24 years) says he worries about her when she comes home at night and feels more comfortable escorting her or knowing where she is. His fears or risks are not at issue.

Many of the interviews confirmed findings of other studies: Men worry about their partner more than the other way around (e.g., Snedker, 2006; Warr & Ellison, 2000), women do more safekeeping than men, and male protection is one way of safekeeping (e.g., Rader, 2009; Stanko, 1997). Physical strength and the threat of sexual violence by strangers played a role in how differences in fear and risk levels between women and men were explained by respondents (e.g., Hollander, 2001; Scott, 2003; Snedker, 2012). Half of the respondents agreed with the proposition that women are more

vulnerable and should be more cautious than men. Furthermore, only four couples had widely differing views on these subjects, whereas most partners mostly agreed with each other and seemed to perform conventional gender norms in agreement. It is apparent, as previous studies have shown, that traditional gender norms still influence how women and men talk about fear and risks and how they manage risks together. However, further investigation shows many inconsistencies and doubts, which suggests ambivalence and—sometimes—resistance toward such norms.

High Risks and Safekeeping

While repeating the idea that women are more vulnerable, some respondents do recognize that the victimization risk is higher, or equally high, for men. Nonetheless, in their relationship they act according to conventional gender norms of safekeeping and protection. One of the couples explains how their views are influenced by the fact that they live above the bar that he owns. "He looks out for me," she says (21 years, Couple 17). He (27 years) confirms that he worries about her and does not want her to clean the terrace on her own after closing time. He agrees with her that women are physically more vulnerable: "Women avoid places, but if something happens then they are lost." He is not sure whether men feel safer, because men do get into risky situations. Their experiences are colored by their confrontation with drunk and rowdy people late at night, mostly men. She says,

> Women are approached more often and raped etcetera. Well or not that extreme but you know what I mean. But on the other hand men are [confronted] with violence more often . . . so whether women should be more alert I don't know. But if something happens, you're more capable as a man.

Vulnerability is decisive here, not actual risk of getting into violent situation. He does not escort her to and from places, but when it comes to the bar, they have a clear division of tasks related to safekeeping and protecting: He closes up, she stays inside, he answers the door late at night, she does not. Furthermore, acknowledging that risks are higher for men is not similar to saying that risks are lower for women. It could also mean that risks have increased for everyone, as this woman (27 years, Couple 2) seems to suggest,

> Yes, a woman is more vulnerable, but nowadays with those youth groups a man is equally vulnerable I think if he's alone. As a woman you should be more alert, I mean sexual violence, robbery, etcetera, that happens more often with women.

Her partner (26 years) emphasizes her risk: "I prefer her not going out alone at night . . . Regardless of the neighbourhood, I think every man would feel like that." Reference to "nowadays" is a recurrent theme in the interviews: Respondents feel that crime rates have gone up and that public space has become quite dangerous, also for men. The "crime is everywhere" refrain could be considered remarkable, as crime rates have

dropped in the Netherlands since the 1990s (van Dijk, Tseloni, & Farrell, 2012). However, there is no perfect correlation between fear and crime rates. Respondents' concerns are (also) informed by crime reports in the media: Respondents particularly refer to recent incidents with groups of young boys beating up young men, which caused much public unrest.

For these respondents, the view that streets have become unsafe overrules changing gender norms. Although we did not explicitly discuss women's emancipation with respondents, in several interviews, as we will also see later on, they brought it up. This woman (25 years, Couple 23) mentioned the women's emancipation movement in a somewhat unexpected way:

> For a long time women stood their ground, women all felt a bit like "yeah we can do it ourselves." But I really just feel comfortable when there's a man in the house. And that's not because I feel less worthy. But I'm 1.60 [meters tall] and I cannot defend myself when someone comes in. Not that that's different when my partner's here, but it just feels safer. It cannot be that a girl or woman, that we say "you're on your own." It's not possible anymore.

For this woman, asking for a man's protection does not imply being inferior to men. That she feels the need to point this out to the interviewer suggests that she is conscious that gender norms have shifted. But by saying that it is "not possible anymore" for women to walk the streets alone, she insists that women should still be more cautious.

For several women, the fact that women are at risk or vulnerable means that they need to take measures to protect themselves, for example, by driving a car and avoid walking or public transport, as this woman (51 years, Couple 5) explains,

> We have two cars, but if one is damaged he would take me or come and get me . . . He would worry if I take the train in the dark alone, but not if I take the car . . . I would not go by train alone at night.

Another woman (52 years, Couple 1) tells that she worries about her safety but that in everyday life there are not many situations that her partner needs to protect her. She drives home alone by car but not too late. "I just make sure I don't get into that kind of situations." Her partner (57 years) confirms that she is concerned for her safety and agrees that her victimization risk is higher. But he does not often protect her:

> Generally she's very independent . . . Look she's in the car and locks the thing and drives to work and sometimes she has to work at night. Not usually. But I never heard like "come and get me" or no.

These women state that they do not need their partner's (or others') protection because they take care of their own safety: They perform safekeeping (cf. Koskela, 1997; Stanko, 1997). Saying that "crime is everywhere" and performing individual strategies for safekeeping obscures the continuing role of traditional gender norms.

Women can deny that they need (male) protection because they can perform safekeeping successfully by avoiding risky situations. In effect, however, women still follow a prescribed norm of safekeeping. These women also demonstrate the importance of affluence in women's relative independence: Some couples own two cars, which makes it possible for women to move around without their partner. It is not necessary for them to ask their partner to "come and get" them because they have the means to take care of themselves. It is possible, then, to refuse the idea of protection, but there is no clear rejection of the norm of safekeeping itself. Independence then goes together with performing traditional norms.

Socialization and Male Vulnerability

Several respondents nuanced the idea of the "vulnerable woman and protective man" in the interviews by acknowledging that differences between women and men are not natural or biological but shaped by social norms. For example,

> I'm not sure that men feel safer, but they won't admit because they have to take up their role as man and be tough about the situation. (Woman, Couple 2)

> I think that's how you're raised. A man has to be stronger. (Woman, 51 years, Couple 15)

Another woman (36 years, Couple 19) comments that she has to be alert, "that's the woman, right, they have to." She tells about Polish single men drinking in public space and how she avoids those areas at night: "men stay men, macho behaviour." Her partner (45 years) agrees that men should protect women and then goes on telling about what happens when they hear noises at night when they are in bed:

> When we hear noises, [my partner] says "I hear something," so I hear something and my heart races to 200. Ah no, not a burglary. And still I go downstairs . . . She's not going no way. So I'll turn on all the lights, because I'm not going in the dark . . . I'll find nothing strange so I'll go upstairs again.

This example illustrates that behavior is shaped by gendered norms and that men may just pretend to be fearless and protective in order to act according to such norms (cf. Goodey, 1997; Sutton et al., 2011). He performs his protective role despite being fearful and thus he confirms the stereotypical male image. References to social norms suggest awareness of the social (instead of biological) nature of gender difference and the role of society in prescribing behavior.

Furthermore, this male respondent exemplifies that norms have changed for men, as well: He admits to the interviewer that he feels vulnerable. Other men felt comfortable to admit that they are afraid sometimes:

> Many men think that they should be stronger, but I think that inside they are just as afraid as women. (Man, 39 years, Couple 18)

Men, too, may receive mixed messages, which results in inconsistencies in talk and behavior. Although this man is not afraid to admit fear, he does think—agreeing with his partner—that women are physically weaker, "not all women of course, but many" and goes on to point out that men are "almost obliged to take that task [of protection] upon them." Traditional and alternative gender norms seem present simultaneously.

Overprotection and Control

Halfway along the continuum we find women who acknowledge that women are generally more at risk or more vulnerable, but who refuse the idea that they need protection more explicitly. Some of them talked about this in relation to their overprotective partner. One woman (25 years, Couple 6) said that women should be more alert than men because of the risk of being harassed, but she also recognized the hidden social norm: "it's more an idea, like that's how it's supposed to be." She is not afraid to walk or cycle at night, but she does think that her partner—"as a man"—feels safer than she does. In their case, this also has to do with the fact that he grew up in the city and she was raised in a village. In their behavior, they seem to follow gendered norms: She does not answer the door late at night because she thinks it is not safe and he often escorts her "purely because he feels safer that I don't go alone at night on my bicycle." She feels safer when he escorts her, she says, but

> I do think sometimes that it's a bit too much . . . He warns more often, wants to escort me and I'm a pretty matter of fact, I'm not so afraid because I'm from a village. I'm raised that way, that you don't have to be afraid.

Her partner (26 years) confirms that he worries about her when she goes out, "because she's good-looking, so I do feel you [she] can be harassed . . . because of course she's a woman." He seems aware that he may be overprotective: "I would escort her but only if she wants me to, because otherwise it's a drag when you're harassed by me all night when you're out." In this case, she would perhaps travel more on her own if not for his offers to escort her.

Another woman (37 years, Couple 8) tells about how her partner influences her sense of safety: "I feel that he can physically protect me" but

> he makes me scared, like [he'll say] "you're not going through that [road] alone?!" He makes me scared because he keeps pointing it out. Before I didn't think about danger.

Her partner (39 years) agrees that he is "suspicious that something happens":

> She is as unsafe as can be . . . I always say "watch out." She comes by bicycle, doing groceries, and that is more dangerous than by car. But she doesn't drive she's afraid to . . . Nothing happens here. She'll go out and come walking from the centre to here. It's not wise for a woman but nothing ever happens.

In this case, she becomes fearful because of his protective behavior. However, she does not seem to change her behavior, she still leaves her purse unprotected and walks home at night. In this way, she rejects the norm that she should, as a woman, be more cautious. Another woman (36 years, Couple 10) indicates that she did change her behavior because their partner would have a different view on risks:

> There was a time where I would get involved, for example when a group of boys are vandalizing I'd say "Yo don't do that!," I don't now anymore because my partner said "one day you'll get hit," so I changed in that sense.

Her partner (40 years) confirms her story by pointing out that her risk of victimization is higher than his

> because she's a woman and that's for offenders a motive to choose a woman rather than a man, and because she has a big mouth. I'm like, just walk on, but she wants to get involved and that doesn't always work out well.

These women are not explicit about rejecting gender norms, but in their behavior, they do not always conform to expected behavior or the advice of their male partners either. Their narratives suggest ambivalence about what rules to follow, and in some occasions, they have let their partner's advice or fear control their behavior. They are clearly ambivalent about gender norms of safekeeping and protection. Their male partners do not always support their resistance to traditional norms, which perhaps explains why their talk and behavior are inconsistent.

Juggling Freedom and Safety

Some take seriously the warnings of others, even if they do not *want* to restrict their behavior, as this woman (49 years, Couple 26) explains,

> I won't go looking for trouble, I never go outside alone at night, it's self-protection. Men of course want to protect. But no, I don't feel that way. I don't feel that that makes me safer. In the evenings I do, then I feel safer when I'm next to my partner.

Together with her daughter she did a self-defense course. It taught her not to walk faster or hold on to her purse, "don't push yourself into a victim role. Walk slowly, head up high, like who can hurt me." Her partner protects her, but

> I don't let him control me . . . I won't avoid or, I live here, I wish to do my own thing and not be bothered . . . But at night I'm like, well as a woman you shouldn't go looking for it. So even though I don't want to, I try to avoid it. And he [partner] never does that, no matter day or night.

She is conscious about protecting herself and ways in which self-protection and protection by her partner could restrict her movement. She also knows that she has to

perform safekeeping because she is a woman. Her partner (58 years) stresses her strength and confirms that she does not restrict herself:

> She'll go by bike in the evening. Something that I don't like for my daughter. I think my partner can stand up for herself, although it's all relative. I think she feels very safe, that she's not bothered by it [feeling unsafe].

In line with such struggles about balancing safekeeping and freedom of movement, several women agree that women are more vulnerable but reject the idea that they need protection. One of the women (23 years, Couple 7) said her victimization risk is low because she always walks with the dog but that her partner's risk is even lower because "he's a boy of course," and men are stronger and thus better at defending themselves. She continues,

> Being a woman you do feel a bit more vulnerable than being a man. But that I would need extra protection, no. [Interviewer: why not?] Well . . . because I can take good care of myself (laughs).

She also answers the door late at night because "there's no reason not to." Sometimes they escort each other. "I think he's more comfortable when I go with him than when I'm in the train by myself at night." Her partner (28 years) agrees that women are physically more vulnerable, so they do need extra protection but both men and women can protect women. Another woman (37 years, Couple 21) is also ambivalent about her partner, being protective and overprotective:

> He often asks to let him know when I leave somewhere to come home . . . It does not make me feel safer, no, not really. I'm not that worried about it. Except when I'm out on foot in the evening. But by car I think "what nonsense, you'll see me when I get there" (laughs).

In her view, "everyone is responsible for themselves" and therefore she does not expect her partner to protect her. In dealing with unsafe situations, she thinks that she would stay calm whereas her partner would panic. For example, she says, she is more comfortable with letting the children being outside on their own. Her partner (40 years) thinks that women are more vulnerable because they "lack physical strength." He agrees with her that men and women should stand up for each other regardless of sex difference.

As these interviews illustrate, women may indeed recognize that their risks are higher, but at the same time they resist the idea that they need protection let alone restrict their behavior, neither by avoiding places nor by keeping their partner informed about their whereabouts. Compared with the first couple that I presented whose narrative is more in line with conventional gender norms, the men in these couples also seem more inclined to confirm women's strength, for example, by pointing out that women may also protect other women or describing their partner as a strong woman.

Doing Gender Properly?

The above-cited responses show that women, and men, are ambivalent about the social norms. This may also have to do with the fact that managing safety is one way of doing femininity or masculinity "properly," in a way that is recognized and deemed legitimate by others. This woman's (33 years, Couple 11) story illustrates the point:

> Women want to be protected because they want to feel loved. There's a really dark road here, and a few friends of mine they're not allowed to go over it. And I cannot understand. Mine [partner] will never say that. So I say to my partner "hey, you never say to me that I'm not allowed to go there!" And then he says "the person that meets you will have a bad day!" And I think, is he not worried about me then? But he is. He's just like, "you'll be fine."

Her partner (40 years) confirms: "She'll stand her ground, and I know she's strong . . . I'd say she'll jump in front of me to give a big mouth when someone attacks me." In this couple's talk, her strength is acknowledged but apparently she feels it is necessary to stress that her husband does care about her. Indeed, as Rader (2009) has suggested, if protection is a way of being a "good husband," one may feel insecure about situations in which conventional gender norms are violated because of what it may signal to others.

This also comes up in the interviews with several female respondents who are not fearful, even though society, or their partner, tells them to be fearful. The fact that they ignore conventional gender norms can make women feel uncomfortable—in line with the above-cited case of the "good husband" who does not protect—as the following interview illustrates. This woman (48 years, Couple 28) says she is alert but not scared and that she would not avoid places or let herself be escorted. Upon asking why she answers the door late at night she says, laughing: "Because someone rings the door. Yeah, no, why not, I think rather." Her partner tells her to lock the door at night, but she forgets, also because she is not afraid. She tells about how, when she was 28 years, she was living in urban area that is known for high crime rates:

> And I thought that was really scary of course. Stories that you had to be careful, lots of ethnic minorities. So at first, I had a bicycle, no car, I think I felt unsafe. But that turned around really quickly, that I though it's not unsafe at all. I had to bike to the other side of the city and back and I was glad I was back in my neighbourhood. Nothing ever happened . . . One burglary, but they only stole an old TV (laughs), even then I didn't feel unsafe. Just bad luck . . . No I'm never afraid, nowhere, I'm not . . . no, no, is that weird?

In line with Snedker's (2012) analysis, this woman seems to have "overcome" socialization through experiencing that not all public spaces are dangerous for a woman, despite what others may have told her and what she may have learned as a child. But what is also interesting here is that she feels uncomfortable saying that she is not afraid—she checks whether the interviewer finds her response "weird." In this way, even though she acts as an independent woman, she seems aware that she is challenging conventional gender norms: Others might expect her to behave differently.

Independent Women

At the far end of the continuum, we find a number of women who are more explicit in rejecting traditional gender norms—in talk and behavior. These women stated that they could take care of themselves by stressing that they are strong and independent. This woman (32 years, Couple 13) says,

> To be honest, I don't think I need to be protected. I'm strong, I can handle anybody! I can handle anything. . . . Men think they feel safe, but they're not (laughs). [Upon asking whether she was ever a victim:] No they're all afraid for me, a big black woman.

Her partner (30 years) confirms that "times have changed. Women have become stronger. . . . But well everyone takes defence classes nowadays. I don't find women vulnerable." However, they do perform some acts of safekeeping and protection. He drives her home from work late at night, because he is "brought up with taking a woman home." In light of socially desirable responding (Sutton & Farrall, 2005; Sutton et al., 2011), independence and strength may just as well be social norms that women want to live up to, in addition to or instead of showing vulnerability or accepting male protection. This woman (32 years, Couple 12) explicates this norm:

> Women are a greater target. Agree. But do they need protection? No. As a woman you should not live in fear. Men have a physical advantage, but they're not safer, they're victims as well.

Although she admits that she is more alert when she is not with her partner, she also feels "stronger" when she is alone: "I always felt strong. I've always felt independent. Also when I was single. I think that I should take care of myself." Note that she says that women *should* not live in fear and that she *should* take care of herself—this suggests a prescribed norm. This does not mean that she does not avoid risks or that she receives no protection. Her partner (31 years) protects her by calling her up when she is out or escorting her. But for her, protection is a mutual practice: She protects him as well by walking with him or warning him when she sees a threatening situation. When they go out together at night and they see "a threatening group of men, my boyfriend wants me to stay in the car and wait for him, but two is better than one. That's how I think. So I keep him company anyway." What strikes in her case is that her partner views things differently. Her partner says she is "naïve" in responding to people approaching her on the street and that he is more "realistic" than she is because he is familiar with risky situations as he grew up in Curacao. Apparently, his views do not influence her behavior; in any case, she wants to present herself as fearless and strong.

Here we see women's independence as a social norm, although the above-cited respondent is not explicit about gender equality. In several interviews, women's emancipation did come up. One woman (43 years, Couple 3) describes youth hanging around at the playground nearby "talking, drinking beer, smoking pot or whatever" and adds, "I'm a strong woman, I can handle that (laughs). I don't feel threatened by that no." Women should stand up for themselves, provided they feel strong enough to do so. In general, she thinks that

> before, some twenty years ago, this was the case [that women need protection]. But I think nowadays, that a woman because she is more active in life, career-wise etcetera, that that has changed. I think that women dare to stand up for themselves. . . . I think that women are not so much dependent on a man anymore, or rather, [do not] feel dependent. . . . You should be able to stand up for yourself.

She thinks that "now, in certain situations I can fend for myself . . . Let's not say that too loud before something happens to me but, as I feel now I'd almost think bring it on." Her partner (41 years) does not worry about her safety, as she is generally in safe environments. He also refers to emancipation but after thinking it through he comes to a different conclusion:

> So my first response was actually like, well come on guys, we're in an emancipated world, but in practice it is for sure that in certain parts of society, certain neighbourhoods, things are more animal-like, it is the right of the strongest. . . . as a man you should at that moment just take up your role.

The word "nowadays" came up in a number of interviews but was used in different ways. We saw before that "nowadays" referred to the perceived reality of increased crime levels which overrules women's acquired independence. In the above-cited woman's view, "nowadays" refers to the fact that women can now take care of themselves, in everyday life as well as in risky situations. Although he feels that his role is still to protect his partner, she resists her vulnerable role and his protection.

Discussion

The aim of this article is to open up the analysis of the relation between gender and fear to include ambivalence about and resistance to the socialization of traditional gender norms. The interviews challenge the way in which gender socialization has been conceptualized in explaining gender differences in fear and risk management (cf. Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). Gender socialization cannot only refer to the internalization and practice of traditional gender norms; it should also include alternative, newer norms that emphasize gender equality. Vulnerability and safekeeping are not the only ways to practice femininity, as "being gender-equal" may also be expected, particularly in societies that advocate gender equality (cf. Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2013). By emphasizing the variations and ambiguities in how women and men manage fear and risks, rather than the differences between men and women, we can better understand how women juggle traditional and new norms, and hence safety and freedom. In addition to interpreting fear and risk management as ways of "doing gender," resisting fear and protection are ways of negotiating new norms for women: of reclaiming public space and spatial mobility, resisting social control and restrictions, and of altering the meaning of femininity and masculinity.

By paying attention to different and conflicting messages, this article has worked out Rader and Haynes' (2011) proposal to incorporate differential association and differential reinforcement into the analyses of gender and fear. Quantitative studies based

on large samples have focused exclusively on differences between women and men; in addition, they should pay attention to variations among women and men in order to test whether the findings reported here hold for larger populations and for other countries. We can interpret deviations from traditional norms as valid differences that are related to differences in socialization, or as unintended measurement effects that follow from socially desirable responding (see Vanderveen, 2006, p. 231). Either way they suggest differentiating messages. In addition to measuring respondents' tendency to socially desirable responding about fear, studies could include a measure of allegiance to conventional gender norms, in order to test whether reporting fear and fearlessness are related to supporting or practicing gender equality. For some women (and men), it may be socially desirable to present themselves in a non-traditional way or to downplay gender differences. In addition to including an explicit measure of socially desirable responding in reporting fear, as Sutton and colleagues (Sutton & Farrall, 2005, 2009; Sutton et al., 2011) have done, it may be insightful to include a measure of socially desirable responding in relation to gender norms which takes into account the possibility that some women and men may wish to demonstrate gender equality.

Following a similar line of reasoning, we can take ambivalence and inconsistencies in narratives as meaningful (see Payne & Grew, 2005). Few respondents were consistent in rejecting traditional norms; it was more common that they were inconsistent throughout the interview. Qualitative studies could be more attuned to ambivalence about safekeeping and protection not just as individual variations but as reflections of inconsistencies in messages that women and men receive. Considering practices and debates on women's emancipation in the Netherlands, it is not clear how women should behave. It is not surprising, then, that women (and men) are not able to present a coherent narrative in relation to fear and risk management: They are pressured to present themselves as both vulnerable and strong. Similarly, men are allowed to show their vulnerability more than in the past, but for them, too, norms are conflicting. That there are fearless women and fearful men is not only related to individual experiences, I suggest, but also to how comfortable women and men are with deviating from traditional gender norms.

Whether women and men are confident to express alternative norms may depend on the views and practices of their partner. Some couples perform traditional norms in tandem and it may then be more difficult to deviate. However, in contrast to Warr and Ellison (2000), I also identified several egalitarian and reciprocal couples. In addition, I found couples who disagreed on how to arrange the management of fear and risks: The male partner wanted to do more protection than his partner asked for or appreciated. Male partners play different roles in women's gendered socialization of fear: In some cases, it resulted in women being more cautious; in other cases, men supported women's independence, a next category of women resisted men's overprotection, and a final group navigated between overprotection and independence. I chose to present couples on a continuum rather than to categorize them, which allowed for appreciating nuanced variations. It is possible that there are additional couple dynamics and that the continuum has more shades than I have represented here. Future research could shed more light on couple dynamics, as well as on how attitudes and practices of safekeeping

and protection develop over the course of the relationship and whether the arrangement changes when couples have children.

It has been suggested that the nature of social control has changed: Almost 20 years ago, Stanko (1997) observed that messages to women were less often about the length of the skirt and how to interact with strange men and were rather couched in the language of situational crime prevention theories that make women (and men) individually responsible, and thus to blame, for managing risks and their personal safety (also Hengehold, 2011). My study confirms that fear is mostly framed in relation to individual risk. However, reference to high crime levels for some respondents overruled women's independence, whereas it did not seem to have any impact on men's movement and behavior. Is it possible that an appeal to "crime is everywhere" has subtly replaced the disapproval of short skirts? Portraying women's risks in an individualized way resonates with the norm of gender equality and women's independence, but in effect we may find that women still need to perform safekeeping in a gendered way. Social control thus may have become less explicit due to the ideology of gender equality. To understand gendered fear and risk management, it is therefore necessary to relate narratives of fear and risks to discourses on gender equality and changing forms of femininity. Taking into account how egalitarian ideals alter gendered power relations requires a closer look at the interaction between fear, class, and the use of public space, because both ideals and everyday practices are class based. In order to fully understand the impact of gender equality and the potential for shifting power relations, and to encourage women's emancipation through policy initiatives, studies on fear and gender could benefit from more detailed data and insights that appreciate the complicated and often contradictory ways in which gender norms and managing fear and risks interact.

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