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# Fear of Crime in an Island Paradise: Examining the Generalizability of Key Theoretical Constructs in the Maldivian Context

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## Abstract

Numerous empirical studies have examined fear of crime. Key theoretical constructs include age, gender, vulnerability, marital status, social cohesion, social incivilities, and perceptions of police. While these constructs have extensive empirical support from cross-sectional and longitudinal projects, they focused on Western liberal democratic nations. Little research exists on fear of crime and its correlates within smaller, island nation-states. The current study ( $N = 480$ ) examines (a) the prevalence of fear of crime within the Maldives and (b) the extent to which previous theoretical constructs can be generalized to other population areas. Findings demonstrate levels of fear of crime in the Maldives consistent with Western liberal democratic societies but that only certain previous theoretical constructs are associated with variations in fear of crime.

## Keywords

fear of crime, social incivility, perceptions of police, social cohesion, Maldives

Much has been written on fear of crime, exploring the correlates of fear, such as gender, age, income, and social incivilities (Hale, 1996; Lorenc et al., 2012; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981), as well as the impacts of fear of crime, such as indirect victimization and the breakdown of social cohesion (Covington & Taylor, 1991; Foster, Knuiman, Hooper, Christian, & Giles-Corti, 2014). Recently, research on this construct has emerged in non-Western contexts such as Ghana, China, and Turkey

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(Adu-Mireku, 2002; Karakus, McGarrell, & Basibuyuk, 2010; Liu, Messner, Zhang, & Zhuo, 2009). However, its construct and measurement are highly debated. While most research on fear of crime has focused on the British Crime Survey or similar forms of data collection, many question whether fear is truly captured in these measures (Lee, 2013). Critics claim that fear needs to be better operationalized, that surveys often fail to capture situational and social factors that contribute to fear, and that responses are more likely to represent general worry, a process, rather than fear, an event (Farrall, 2004; Farrall, Bannister, Ditton, & Gilchrist 1997; Hough, 2004). Attempts to correct these issues through qualitative data collection, anchoring vignettes and fear mapping, hold promise for the future of fear of crime research (Doran & Burgess, 2011; King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2004; Sutton & Farrall, 2005). However, fear of crime research also suffers from a lack of non-Western, nonglobal north, participant populations. It is useful to investigate the typically used correlates of fear of crime in these populations to determine whether additional constructs or operational issues can be identified.

This study contributes to the international literature on the fear of crime through an examination of several key risk factors associated with the fear of crime in the Republic of Maldives (Maldives). Fear of crime is particularly important to investigate in the Maldives for two reasons. First, as mentioned, most theorizing and empirical research on fear of crime has involved large liberal Western democratic societies. Therefore, it is not evident whether findings can be generalized to smaller, more rural indigenous island population locations. Second, many of the correlates of fear of crime are present in the Maldives, including a rising rate of crime and relative poverty-based social disorganization (Human Rights Commission of Maldives [HRCM], 2011). Accordingly, this study examines two interrelated issues. First, to what degree do people of the Maldives fear or worry about crime? Second, to what extent do traditional, albeit often debated, theoretical constructs, validated within larger liberal Western democratic countries, apply to smaller unique, predominantly indigenous islander populations? Fear of crime continues to be correlated with quality of life and potential negative social and physical ramifications (Lorenc et al., 2012). Thus, to improve quality of life and better guide policy, it is useful to continue research of fear of crime in new and potentially different contexts.

### ***Related Research***

Much of the literature connects fear of crime to overall quality of life, including psychological, physiological, and behavior changes (Box, Hale, & Andrews, 1988; Garofalo & Laub, 1978; Green, Gilbertson, & Grimsley, 2002; Mirrlees-Black & Allen, 1998; Møller, 2016). Fear of crime can encourage social isolation and reduce interpersonal interaction contributing to poor mental health as well as impede trust and social cohesion (Stafford, Chandola, & Marmot, 2007). Fear of crime also impedes trust and social cohesion, erodes the social fabric and connectedness of the community, and negatively affects perceptions of safety (Saville, 2009; Skogan, 1986). Furthermore, when the public believes there is a significant and uncontrolled crime problem, negative stereotypes and support for punitive crime prevention measures also emerge (Spratt, Webster, & Doob, 2013). This is important because public opinion typically determines the legislation and policy of these countries' criminal justice systems. Accordingly, fear of crime not only impacts the quality of life among individuals but also has potential negative broader policy criminal justice ramifications.

Despite extensive literature on the fear of crime construct, there is no consensus concerning its definition and operationalization (Farrall et al., 1997; Wyant, 2008). Initial studies often used a single-measure survey question to measure fear of crime, that is, "How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being alone in your neighborhood at night?" (LaGrange & Ferraro, 1987, p. 699). This question does not necessarily address fear, ignore context, and provide a static response about what is essentially a process (Farrall, 2004; Hough, 2004), resulting in capturing "formless<sup>1</sup>" fear and

overstating fear in general (Farrall et al., 1997; Ferraro, 1995; Mirrlees-Black & Allen, 1998). Additional issues include whether the measure of fear involves a specific moment or a more pervasive/general measure of worry about crime (Farrall, 2004; Gabriel & Greve, 2003; Hough, 2004; Williams, McShane, & Akers, 2000), that is, the question capturing beliefs and perceptions of anticipated fear in particular situations or worry in general (Rountree & Land, 1996; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). Recent surveys have added several additional questions regarding time of day and worry about specific types of victimization and created alternative scales to acknowledge the multidimensional construct (Killias & Clerici, 2000; Rader, 2004; Rountree & Land, 1996; Williams et al., 2000).

Two broad and multilevel sets of correlates are often utilized concerning the fear of crime: individual and ecological. Individual-level correlates of fear of crime include gender, age, marital status, income, and unemployment. Ecological-level correlates include signs of disorder, neighborhood characteristics, and levels of crime—these correlates are often placed within the context of social disorganization theory and/or collective efficacy (Gibson, Zhao, Lovrich, & Gaffney, 2002; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Weisburd, Hinkle, Famega, & Ready, 2011).

Most of the research has consistently shown that women are more afraid of crime than men, despite a lower risk of victimization in both Western and non-Western contexts (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Cossman & Rader, 2011; Liu et al., 2009; Stanko, 1995). The standard explanation for gender differences and the fear of crime remain contentious (Schafer et al., 2006), largely because more recent research suggests that this discrepancy between fear and risk is more appropriately explained by women's greater risk of the most serious forms of domestic violence and sexualized crimes (Fox, Nobles, & Piquero, 2009). Furthermore, some qualitative research has determined that men are constrained by masculinity norms, which encourage them to respond with socially desirable answers, rather than answering survey questions honestly regarding fear (Sutton & Farrall, 2005).

The elderly, again despite having the lowest risk of crime victimization, are often found as more fearful (Greve, 1998; Killias & Clerici, 2000; Yin, 1982). Some suggest this is a result of actual vulnerability, that is, their inability to defend themselves resulting from age-related physical vulnerabilities in particular situations, such as walking alone at night, encountering groups of youth in public places, and experiencing a crime, especially unarmed robbery, sexual crime, and an assault (Greve, 1998). In addition, the elderly's disproportionate fear of crime may be related to their distance from the community, particularly their physical isolation (Farrall et al., 1997; Fattah & Sacco, 1989). However, these findings have been debated too. Chadee and Ditton (2003), in a replication study of Ferraro and LaGrange (1992), found that in Trinidad, age was not associated with fear of crime, and the elderly were the least afraid. Debate around the correlation between age and fear of crime may also be a result of the interdependency between social and physical vulnerability (Rader, Cossman, & Porter, 2012).

Vulnerability is not merely physical (age and gender) but also social. Individuals with a lower income have higher fear of crime, as living in less secure areas increases vulnerability to certain criminal events, and physical or financial loss can be more damaging (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Hale, 1996). Individuals living in poverty are unable to pay to protect their property, often cannot afford insurance, are more reliant on public services such as public transit that can put them in harm's way, and cannot afford to move out of high crime areas (Pantazis, 2000). Partnership status can also be considered a form of vulnerability whether an individual is isolated. Partnered or married individuals report fear of crime less often, likely because an additional adult present can potentially offer physical protective assistance (Baumer, 1978; Mesch, 2000). However, recent research has examined the role of fear of victimization within an intimate partner relationship that could counter this narrative (Broll, 2014; Rader, 2009).

Ecological variables, including social capital and policing policies (Perkins & Taylor, 2002), can have mediating effects on key individual-level variables (Scarborough, Like-Haislip, Novak, Lucas,

& Alarid, 2010). For example, Brunton-Smith and Sturgis (2011) compared perception data with other “objective” data sources and found that signs of disorder, neighborhood structural characteristics, and amount of police-recorded crime directly and independently effect individual-level variables related to the fear of crime. Accordingly, ecological correlates of fear of crime include whether crime in the neighborhood is perceived as increasing, the level of neighborhood cohesion, the presence of incivilities, and whether the police are not helpful and/or effective.

Social disorganization theory associates neighborhood crime rates with the sociodemographics of these neighborhoods and has been central to most studies focused on the ecological correlates of fear of crime (LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; Markowitz, Bellair, Liska, & Liu, 2001; Robinson, Lawton, Taylor, & Perkins, 2003; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Taylor, 2001; Wyant, 2008). When key stabilizing community goals, especially safety, are not addressed, other stabilizing social structures (e.g., schools, parks/recreation, and businesses) deteriorate. Once incivilities or signs of physical and social disorder become common place, residents experience persistently higher levels of fear of crime (Coleman, 1990). More specifically, social (such as teenagers loitering in an area) and physical (such as litter and graffiti) incivilities can lead residents to believe that “no one cares,” thereby increasing feelings of vulnerability to criminal victimization and consequent reactive social isolation. The latter then perpetuates a feedback loop, reinforcing the fear of crime both individually and collectively within the neighborhood (Kelling & Coles, 1997; Link, Kelly, Pitts, Waltman-Spreha, & Taylor, 2014; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). However, in Trinidad, no major differences were found in fear of crime between high crime and disorder areas and low crime areas (Chadee & Ditton, 1999). Thus, disorder levels and fear of crime in non-Western contexts still require exploring.

A neighborhood with high collective efficacy may reduce social disorganization, increase social cohesion, and increase the likelihood that residents will intervene on behalf of the common good and the belief that others will reciprocate (Sampson et al., 1997). In effect, high levels of neighborhood trust and cohesion enhance the expectation that the neighborhood/community collective network will act to positively affect the goals of the members regarding crime (Portes, 1998). Socially organized neighborhoods are usually characterized by high levels of collective efficacy, which, in turn, are related to residents’ higher levels of social capital, that is, personal connections and group networks among people who promote norms of trust and reciprocity and act as a protective factor for fear of crime (Putnam, 2000; Sacco & Nakhaie, 2007).

A related neighborhood risk factor for fear of crime is negative perceptions of police. Lack of confidence in the police role has been associated with higher fear of crime (Mesko & Klemencic, 2007). Recent changes in police policies (e.g., a shift away from foot patrols/community policing to far less frequent and visible police squad car patrols) contribute to explaining this negative relationship (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). In effect, traditional policing most commonly emphasizes operational strategies, patrolling areas, responding to calls for assistance, and solving crime; while in many major urban and metropolitan areas, policing resources are shifting to highly specialized units such as organized crime, emergency response teams, white-collar crime, and, more recently, anti-terrorism (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Murray, 2005; Tankebe, 2013). This all contributes to some communities feeling less served by their police services, susceptible to fear of and worry about crime.

The study takes place in the Maldives, and thus it is important to understand that Maldivian context. The Maldives is an island nation comprised of approximately 1,200 coral islands crossing the Equator in the Indian Ocean, approximately 750 km to the southwest of India and Sri Lanka—188 of these islands are officially populated. According to the latest census in 2014, the total population was an estimated 344,000 people (Ministry of Health, 2016). Because one third of the country’s population live in the capital city of Malé, the country’s resources are centralized within the capital city. The land area of Malé is approximately 1.95 km<sup>2</sup> (Statistical Yearbook, 2016). The

country is largely an Islamic republic, and its economy depends primarily on tourism (BBC News, 2016). In recent years, the Maldives have suffered increases in illegal drug use and trafficking, political unrest, and terrorism (Burke & Rasheed, 2015).

In 2015, the crime rate in the Maldives was 3,985 crimes per 100,000 population. This is down from 5,111 per 100,000 population in 2013, the year the data were collected (Statistical Yearbook, 2016).<sup>2</sup> The property<sup>3</sup> and violent<sup>4</sup> crime rates for the Maldives in 2013 were 2,183 and 813 crimes per 100,000 population, respectively (Statistical Yearbook, 2016). Consequently, the Maldives is demonstrating a reduction in the crime rate like that of the rest of the Western world in recent years (Farrell, Tilley, & Tseloni, 2014). Moreover, the overall crime rate for the Maldives is less than the United Kingdom in 2015, at 6,864 per 100,000 population<sup>5</sup> (Flatley, 2016).<sup>6</sup> However, changes may emerge in Maldives, as more illegal drugs enter the country and the proportion of youth increases resulting from a declining infant mortality rate (Ministry of Health, 2016).

## Data and Method

The present study is based on a survey conducted in 2013. It involved a purposive convenience sample with a target population of residents of the Maldives. The survey was designed to investigate both the prevalence and the correlates of fear of crime within this unique population.<sup>7</sup> Key geographic regions of the Maldives were selected in order to collect a wide demographic sample. Malé was selected from the capital (Central) region. The islands of Seenu, Hithadhoo, and Gaaf Alif, Kolamaafushi, were selected from the Southern region and Raa, and Meedhoo were selected from the Northern region. The selection of islands was based on the availability of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who volunteered to distribute and administer the research questionnaire. Within each of the three Maldivian islands, NGOs associated with the research project visited every household and provided each resident(s) with the opportunity to participate in the study. No incentives were provided for their participation. Questionnaires were administered by face-to-face interviews and lasted approximately 20 min.<sup>8</sup> The total sample consists of 480 participants, with 216 participants from Malé, 115 from Gaaf Alif, 99 from Seenu, and 50 from Gaa—see the Appendix for details regarding the sample participants.

## Outcome Variables

The outcome variables in the current study relate to both the fear of crime and the worry about crime. Fear of crime was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*) considering the three following statements:

1. I feel safe to walk alone in this area after dark,
2. I feel safe to walk alone in this area during the day, and
3. I feel safe when I am alone in my own home at night.<sup>9</sup>

These three statements were then reverse coded to capture fear of crime in a dichotomous manner: *disagree and strongly disagree* were coded to 1, whereas *strongly agree, agree, and neither agree nor disagree* were coded to 0. Additionally, a composite fear of crime variable (ordinal  $\alpha = .89$ ) was generated by adding the values of the three base fear of crime variables together.

Worry about crime was measured on the same 5-point Likert-type scale considering the six following worry-specific statements:

1. I'm worried about my home being broken into,
2. I'm worried about being robbed when I'm in my neighborhood,

3. I'm worried that someone might steal my vehicle (motorbike/cycle),
4. I'm worried about being raped,
5. I'm worried about being physically attacked, and
6. I'm worried about being insulted or pestered in the neighborhood.

Similar to the fear of crime variables, these six statements were dichotomized such that *strongly agree* and *agree* were coded as 1 and *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, and *neither agree nor disagree* were coded as 0. A composite worry about of crime variable was generated (ordinal  $\alpha = .94$ ) by adding the values of the three base fear of crime variables together.

The frequencies for the various outcome variables are shown in Table 1. In general, just under one third of those surveyed had no fear of crime, a further one third had 1 item related to fear (most often fear of walking during the night), and the final third of those surveyed were fearful of two or all of the contexts relating to fear and safety in their neighborhood. With regard to worry, just under 20% of those surveyed had no worries with regard to the six forms of victimization. However, more than 40% of those surveyed were worried about five or six of the forms of victimization. As such, levels of worry about crime are notably greater than actual fear.

With regard to the specific forms of fear and worry, one half of those surveyed reported fear walking alone at night, one quarter reported fear walking alone during the day, and just over one third reported fear being home alone at night. For worry about crime, 60% or more of those surveyed worried about burglary, robbery, stolen vehicles, rape (for women), and assault. Just over 50% of those surveyed reported being worried about being pestered in their neighborhood.

### Predictor Variables

In order to identify any predictable relationships for the presence of fear of and worry about crime, we use a set of individual-level and ecological-level variables based on the related research discussed earlier.<sup>10</sup> The individual-level variables relate to gender, age, marital status, low income, and unemployment. Gender is measured in a dichotomous fashion (*female* = 1), age and age-squared are included to account for any potential changes in the effect of age on fear of and worry about crime, marital status is measured in a dichotomous fashion (*married* = 1), as is unemployment (*unemployed* = 1), and low income is measured dichotomously, defined as those living with a monthly wage less the 10,000 Maldivian rufiyaa, the average income in the Maldives. Length of time in current neighborhood is a control and measured dichotomously (*less than 1 year* = 1). With reference to Table 2, it can be seen that 46% of the sample is female, with an average age of 31 years. Of those surveyed, 62% are married, 95% have lived in their neighborhood for more than 1 year, only 8% are unemployed, but 75% make less than average income.

The ecological-level variables include crime is increasing in my neighborhood, neighborhood cohesion, the presence of incivilities, and the police are not helpful and/or effective. Crime is increasing is measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*), dichotomized such that *strongly agree* or *agree* equals 1. Neighborhood cohesion is measured using the following three components:

1. How often do you talk with your neighbors;
2. When I do a favor for a neighbor, I trust my neighbor to return the favor; and
3. The area I live in feels like a "real home."

The first component is measured as daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, less than once a month, and never; this variable was dichotomized with daily and weekly equaling 1. The latter two components were measured using the above-mentioned 5-point Likert-type scale, dichotomized such that *strongly agree* or *agree* equals 1. A neighborhood cohesion composite variable was then

**Table 1.** Frequencies, Outcome Variables.

Dependent Variables	Value	Percentage of Cases
Fear, general	0	32.9
	1	32.5
	2	26.9
	3	7.7
Worry, general	0	19.6
	1	4.4
	2	7.7
	3	11.9
	4	14.4
	5	29.0
	6	13.1
Fear, walking during night	Agree/strongly agree	49.8
Fear, walking during day	Agree/strongly agree	24.8
Fear, home alone	Agree/strongly agree	34.8
Worry, burglary	Agree/strongly agree	67.5
Worry, robbery	Agree/strongly agree	65.4
Worry, stolen vehicle	Agree/strongly agree	61.5
Worry, rape (women)	Agree/strongly agree	27.5 (59.2)
Worry, assault	Agree/strongly agree	63.5
Worry, pestered	Agree/strongly agree	51.0

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics, Predictor Variables.

Independent Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Gender	0	1	0.46
Age	18	70	31.13
Married	0	1	0.62
Neighborhood, <1 year	0	1	0.05
Low income	0	1	0.75
Unemployed	0	1	0.08
Crime increasing	0	1	0.59
Neighborhood cohesion	0	3	1.95
Incivilities	0	8	4.49
Police not helpful/effective	0	2	1.14

calculated by summing these three dichotomous variables. Incivilities was measured considering eight dichotomous variables summed into a composite incivilities variable that considered the presence of (*strongly agree* or *agree*) noisy neighbors, problem teenagers, rubbish, vandalism, graffiti, people using drugs, people dealing drugs, and drunks. And finally, police are not helpful and/or effective was the composite of two dichotomous variables (*strongly agree* or *agree*): I believe the police in my area is doing a good job in controlling crime and I believe the police do everything they can to help people.

As shown in Table 2, 59% of those surveyed believe that crime is increasing, and there are more than four incivilities present, on average. Neighborhood cohesion is moderately high, on average, as is the belief that the police are not helpful or effective. The Spearman's (nonparametric) correlations are presented in Table 3. Although there are many statistically significant correlations, none are greater than .50, leaving no a priori concern for multicollinearity in the subsequent analyses.

**Table 3.** Nonparametric (Spearman's) Correlations, Predictor Variables.

Independent Variables	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10
Gender, X1	1	-.02	.12*	.02	.19**	-.07	-.09*	-.05	.11*	-.07
Age, X2		1	.48**	.07	-.17**	-.12**	-.09*	.06	.11*	-.06
Married, X3			1	-.08	-.13**	-.17**	-.20**	.095	.17**	-.19**
Neighborhood, <1 year, X4				1	-.20**	.10*	.07	-.12*	.02	-.03
Low income, X5					1	.05	-.04	.17**	-.01	.13**
Unemployed, X6						1	.12**	-.04	.01	.05
Crime increasing, X7							1	-.28**	-.16**	.38**
Neighborhood cohesion, X8								1	.05	-.09
Incivilities, X9									1	-.30**
Police not helpful/effective, X10										1

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Analytic Strategy

Because of the nature of the outcome variables, discrete choice models are estimated in all cases. For the composite variables representing fear of crime and worry about crime, we estimate multinomial logistic regression models. For both cases, the values of zero (no fear or worry) are the baseline values such that the models shown predict some level of fear of crime or worry about crime relative to that baseline. With regard to the specific forms of fear of crime and worry about crime, binary logistic regression models are estimated because of the dichotomous nature of the outcome variables. All estimated parameters, shown subsequently are odds ratios for ease of interpretation.

## Results

### Multinomial Results

The multinomial logistic regression results for fear of crime are reported in Table 4. Immediately evident is the relative lack of individual-level variables that are statistically significant for predicting various levels of fear of crime. As expected, gender is statistically significant for all levels of fear of crime, increasing as the levels of fear increase. Age and age-squared are only statistically significant for the presence of one type of fear: Initially as people age, there is a decrease in fear, but fear begins to increase with successive years. Although marriage does reduce the various levels of fear in all cases, as expected, it is only statistically significant when individuals are fearful in all three contexts: walking during the night, walking during the day, and being home alone. All other individual-level variables are not statistically significant.

The ecological-level variables all have their expected positive or negative effect and are statistically significant in most cases. When crime is perceived to be increasing in one's area, this increases the expected outcome of fear of crime, the increased presence of neighborhood cohesion reduces the fear of crime, increases in the presence of incivilities increases fear, and increases in the belief that police are either not helpful and/or effective increases fear. Moreover, when statistically significant, the magnitude of the odds ratios increase as the level of fear increases, similar to gender, as would be expected. And finally, the regional dummy variables indicate that Ga has lower levels of fear than the capital region whereas Seenu and, particularly, Raa have greater levels of fear.

The multinomial logistic regression results for worry about crime are presented in Table 5. Although each level of the worry about crime retains at least three statistically significant variables, far fewer of the predictor variables are statistically significant when compared to the fear of crime model. Gender is statistically significant for four of the six categories—there were no females who worried about all six crime types, hence the n/a value in that cell. Being married increased the

**Table 4.** General Fear of Crime, Multinomial Regression Results.

Independent Variables	1	2	3
Gender	2.21***	5.83***	7.46***
Age	0.88*	0.99	0.86
Age-squared	1.01*	1.00	1.00
Married	0.90	0.95	0.29**
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.07	0.59	1.88
Low income	1.00	0.68	0.97
Unemployed	0.67	1.14	0.97
Crime increasing	1.99**	2.74***	2.48
Neighborhood cohesion	0.82	0.51***	0.77
Incivilities	1.12**	1.204***	1.25**
Police not helpful/effective	1.23	1.919***	3.87***
Ga	0.35***	0.73	0.06***
Seenu	1.30	4.666***	1.07
Raa	21.36***	49.08***	n/a

Note. Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .434$ .

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

**Table 5.** General Worry About Crime, Multinomial Regression Results.

Independent Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	1.05	4.73***	6.59***	6.12***	4.06***	n/a
Age	0.92	0.92	0.97	1.05	0.91	0.83
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Married	4.62**	0.73	0.65	0.90	1.23	0.81
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.06	0.36	0.43	0.70	0.95	0.76
Low income	1.36	0.67	1.38	2.51*	2.61**	1.11
Unemployed	2.07	0.80	0.99	0.15**	0.41	0.37
Crime increasing	2.06	0.99	1.80	0.63	0.45**	0.70
Neighborhood cohesion	1.45	1.10	1.30	0.95	1.30	1.01
Incivilities	0.94	1.00	1.09	1.28***	1.31***	1.64***
Police not helpful/effective	0.78	0.89	1.25	1.23	0.95	1.19
Ga	0.24**	0.10***	0.29**	0.09***	0.05***	0.94
Seenu	1.29	1.28	2.50	2.57	1.44	9.50***
Raa	0.11**	0.01***	0.02***	0.012***	0.001***	0.13*

Note. Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .651$ .

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

probability worrying about one type of crime; although initially counterintuitive, this result indicates that being married is associated with a low level of worry (only one crime type), most often a property-related crime. The presence of low income increases worry about crime, as expected, but when unemployment is statistically significant, it reduces the probability of worry about crime. As such, in this model, individual-level variables as a whole, when statistically significant, do not correspond well with theoretical expectations.

Turning to the ecological-level variables, it is curious that the belief that crime is increasing reduces the worry about crime. However, increased levels of incivilities only become statistically significant when the level of worry about crime becomes high. Neither neighborhood cohesion nor police helpful/effective are statistically significant for worry about crime. And finally, aside from the highest level of fear in Seenu, levels of the worry about crime are greater in the capital region of Maldives.

## **Binomial Results**

The binomial logistic regression results for the individual fear of crime responses are shown in Table 6. Generally speaking, the results are consistent with the composite variable for the fear of crime, including the relative lack of individual-level predictors, but there are some notable results. As with the composite results, gender is statistically significant, so women are more fearful of crime than men. Interesting is the magnitude of the odds ratios for the different types of fear. As would be expected, gender is a stronger predictor of fear walking alone at night than during the day, but it has its greatest impact on the fear of being home alone. Being married only has a statistically significant effect (decreasing fear) regarding walking alone during the day. Low income and being unemployed only have statistically significant effects for being home alone, decreasing and increasing fear of crime, respectively.

Turning to the ecological-level variables, when statistically significant, they all have their expected relationship. Areas with crime perceived to be increasing have greater of fear, neighborhood cohesion decreases fear, incivilities increase fear, and police not being helpful and/or effective also increase fear. With regard to incivilities, this predictor is only statistically significant for walking alone during the night or day; this makes sense given that incivilities, by definition, occur outside of the home. The regional variables show that Ga still has lower levels of fear than the capital region, with Seenu and Raa generally having more fear than the capital region as well.

The final set of results refers to the specific worry about crime logistic regression models (Table 7). Overall, each model has more statistically significant variables with varying effects for the different types of worry. This provides strong support for not considering “worry about crime” as a general category but being specific with regard to the various types of worry—the disaggregate results for fear of crime were generally consistent with the composite variable but also showed more instructive disaggregate results.

For the individual-level variables, gender and low income were the most consistently statistically significant. Gender was statistically significant for all crime types except for vehicle theft, with the greatest impact being for assault—the model for rape only included females so gender was not included as a variable in this model. Low income was statistically significant for all crime types except for pestering and rape, increasing worry about crime. Age and age-squared were only statistically significant for rape with an initial decrease in worry followed by a moderate increase in subsequent years. And being unemployed led to decreased worry about assault; this may be because the unemployed are expected to spend more time in the relatively protective environment of the home (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

With regard to the ecological-level variables, perceived increases in an area’s crime unexpectedly leads to decreases in the worry about burglary, stolen vehicle, and pestering. Neighborhood cohesion increases the worry about pestering but decreases the worry about rape. This former result is unexpected with no obvious explanation. Incivilities, as expected, increase the probability of worry about all crime types aside from rape. The helpfulness and/or effectiveness of the police has no statistically significant effect on worry about crime. And aside from rape, those who live in Gaa and Raa are generally less worried about crime than those who live in the capital region, whereas those who live in Seenu are more worried about burglary and stolen vehicle than those who live in the capital region.

## **Discussion**

The study intended to answer two main research questions. What is the amount of fear of crime in the Maldives, and do the correlates of fear of crime in Western and developed countries also exist in different cultural and social climates? The amount of fear of crime in the Maldives is generally

**Table 6.** Fear of Crime, Binary Logistic Regression Results.

Independent Variables	Dark	Day	Home
Gender	2.81***	1.65*	4.06***
Age	0.96	0.96	1.03
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00
Married	0.96	0.56*	0.74
Neighborhood, <1 year	0.98	1.00	1.17
Low income	1.25	0.85	0.53**
Unemployed	0.73	0.81	2.43**
Crime increasing	1.69**	1.90*	1.91***
Neighborhood cohesion	0.65***	0.92	0.75**
Incivilities	1.20***	1.10*	1.05
Police not helpful/effective	1.35**	2.09***	1.80***
Ga	0.49***	0.10***	1.48
Seenu	2.64***	0.30***	3.46***
Raa	0.15**	24.74***	3.24***
Nagelkerke pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.356	.441	.306

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

**Table 7.** Worry About Crime, Binary Logistic Regression Results.

Independent Variables	Burglary	Robbery	Steal Vehicle	Assault	Pester	Rape
Gender	2.07***	2.48***	1.14	3.52***	2.18***	
Age	1.03	0.96	0.92	0.99	1.03	0.72***
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.01***
Married	1.09	0.98	1.00	0.85	0.80	1.24
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.68	1.13	0.56	1.09	1.65	1.30
Low income	1.76**	2.22***	2.08**	1.64*	1.23	0.62
Unemployed	0.52	0.55	0.78	0.42**	0.77	1.69
Crime increasing	0.56**	0.66	0.56**	0.82	0.47***	0.74
Neighborhood cohesion	1.17	0.87	0.86	1.13	1.23*	0.61***
Incivilities	1.19***	1.19***	1.2***	1.29***	1.24***	1.11
Police not helpful/effective	1.11	1.16	1.18	0.91	0.81	1.10
Ga	0.49***	0.30***	0.60**	0.18***	0.54**	2.00
Seenu	3.59***	1.07	2.38***	0.99	1.11	0.89
Raa	0.07***	0.05***	0.09***	0.05***	0.14***	1.00
Nagelkerke pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.386	.37	.306	.435	.339	.251

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

consistent with other findings. The consistency of fear of crime could be a result of similar crime problems in the Maldives (HRCM, 2011). It could also reflect an issue with the operationalization of the question that instead captures “formless fear” and overestimating fear, although efforts were made to reduce this issue.

The second question, regarding the consistency of fear of crime correlates, resulted in some interesting findings. Being female remains as a significant correlate. This finding is not surprising, as it is the most consistent finding across the fear of crime literature (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Stanko, 1995) and in non-Western studies (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Karakus et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2009). Although some research has investigated the social desirability of fear of crime respondents (Sutton & Farrall, 2005), the consistency of concern found across crime types may be reflective of a

genuine gender difference. In the Maldives, which rank 95th of 135 countries in gender equality for women, this fear could also be a product of the current rank of women in this area (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Although the Maldives is making great strides to increase women's equality in education and the workforce, more work needs to bridge the gender gap to reduce victimization as well as fear of crime for women. Furthermore, more research is necessary into analyzing social desirability issues in these contexts.

Income also often emerged as a significant variable. Less than 1% of the population in the Maldives lives in absolute poverty, and while there still are income disparities, this may not translate into the isolation and fear that is commonly found for poor individuals in Western countries (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2012). However, it may contribute to perceived vulnerability and increased concern about property crime.

Other individual-level variables do not consistently emerge as statistically significant in this analysis. Marital status decreases or has no statistically significant relationship with fear or worry about crime except for one instance. In this latter case, being married increases the probability of being worried about one crime type: property-related crime. However, as stated earlier, this initially counterintuitive result is consistent with the literature because it states that married persons are more likely to only be worried about this crime type (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Age was insignificant, a finding consistent with other non-Western fear of crime research (Karakus et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2009). This research could contribute to the growing body of Western and non-Western fear of crime literature demonstrating that individual-level fear of crime variable may not be useful.

Alternatively, theoretical ecological variables (perceptions of police, social incivilities, and neighborhood cohesion) were significantly associated with fear of crime when controlling for individual characteristics. This would suggest that the role of ecological variables is robust, a consistent finding in the literature (Gainey, Alper, & Chappell, 2011; Ross & Jang, 2000). When social disorganization theory is applied to the conditions in the Maldives, high levels of disorganization could be considered present. Due to the inequitable distribution of resources between the capital city and the rest of the Maldives, relative poverty, gender inequality, and unemployment, the crime rate is higher in the capital city relative to the other areas (Department of National Planning & Ministry of Finance and Treasury, 2011; UNDP, 2012). This is consistent with the Western literature though differs from some non-Western literature (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Hwang, 2006) and demonstrates the importance of addressing community cohesion and relationships with the policing when addressing fear of crime in the Maldives. Furthermore, perceptions of increasing crime were associated with decreases in fear. Furthermore, some residents in some locations are more fearful than others. Thus, research needs to consider not only the type of crime individuals perceive as increasing to help explain this anomaly but also types of crime prevalent in certain areas that could be contributing to different levels of fear. These findings would suggest that ecological-level variables continue to be significant contributors to fear of crime and quality of life, and further investigation into these variables, as well as better operationalization, in Western and non-Western contexts is a useful direction for fear of crime research.

### **Limitations**

The findings of the current study need to be interpreted within the context of their limitations. First, issues of generalizability to other non-Western populations are raised, given the use of a convenience sample on a geographically dispersed population (i.e., the Maldives consists of over 200 islands). However, the sampling method is the result of the challenges of collecting data in this kind of geographic location, and the large sample size does allow adequate statistical power to examine the unique social structure in the different island populations of the Maldives. Second, the operationalization of the questions for fear and worry of crime are problematic, considering recent research in this area. However, these measures are still reflective of the British Crime Survey and

allow for an analysis of fear of crime in the Maldives that is consistent with other measures. Third, not all variables that have been tested for fear of crime were available for testing in this study. Fourth, and finally, the research was initiated by a member of the police services. While there are concerns with the validity of data collection connected with persons in power, all attempts were made to ensure confidentiality and include nonpolice partners. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the realities of collecting data in a non-Western location, and that issues of power and surveillance could also be a problem with government run crime surveys.

## Conclusion

The effects of fear of crime on individuals and the community are real and are often similar if not the same as criminal victimization. Thus, it is important to continue to measure fear of crime in new areas and to determine whether the same variables that explain fear of crime in Western or developed countries can be generalized to different social and cultural settings. In the case of the Maldives, the amount of fear of crime is generally consistent with other nations. Furthermore, gender and income emerge as significant individual-level variables. Interestingly, ecological variables are consistently significant in the findings. This could have implications for policy and future fear of crime research. Perhaps, considering the issues with measurement of individual-level variables, more investigation is needed into ensuring accurate capture of ecological-level variables and exploring these correlates as the best possible routes for addressing fear of crime and in turn quality of life.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Descriptive Statistics for the Survey Data.

Variables	Malé	Seenu	Gaaf	Raa	Total	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>						
18–24 years	37	29	52	30	148	30.8
25–44 years	155	52	52	17	276	57.5
45 years and above	24	18	11	3	56	11.7
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	111	51	65	30	257	53.5
Female	105	48	50	20	223	46.5
<b>Marital status</b>						
Single/divorced/separated	61	51	47	25	184	38.3
Married	155	48	68	25	296	61.7
<b>Residential stability</b>						
<1 year	14	8	4	0	26	5.4
1 year to <5 years	36	5	11	0	52	10.8
5 years to <10 years	17	15	7	0	39	8.1
10 years+	149	71	93	50	363	75.6
<b>Employment status</b>						
Working	167	53	74	25	319	66.5
Not working	49	46	41	25	161	33.5
<b>Income</b>						
Less than MVR 5,000	58	52	60	39	209	43.5
MVR 5,000–9,999	91	18	37	4	150	31.3
MVR 10,000–14,999	27	18	15	1	61	12.7
MVR 15,000–29,999	40	9	3	6	46	9.6
MVR 30,000+	12	2	0	0	14	2.9

Abbreviation: MVR: Maldivian Rufiyaa.

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## Notes

1. Not linked to a specific type of victimization.
2. These crime rates have been calculated, based on a population estimate of 344,000, from the Statistical Yearbook of Maldives. This specific crime rate does not include traffic accidents, lost items, or embezzlement which are listed in the logged cases for that year.
3. Includes theft, vandalism, counterfeit, and forgery.
4. Includes assault, domestic violence, sexual assault, and robbery.
5. Calculated on a population estimate of 64.1 million.
6. This comparison may prove difficult based on different crime collection procedures and criminal laws.
7. This Maldivian survey was based on the British Crime Survey questionnaire but translated into the Maldivian language of Dhivehi to increase its reliability within this sample.
8. The nongovernmental organization workers for the study did not collect data on those who did not participate, and thus we are unable to provide a response rate for this data set. We acknowledge this is a limitation of the study but a reality of conducting research with nonsocial science researchers as gatekeepers.
9. These questions are consistent with other research into the fear of crime construct; however, some changes have been made to its operationalization
10. Regional dummy variables are also included for Ga, Seenu, and Raa—Male is the baseline category.

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# Fear of Crime in an Island Paradise: Examining the Generalizability of Key Theoretical Constructs in the Maldivian Context

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## Abstract

Numerous empirical studies have examined fear of crime. Key theoretical constructs include age, gender, vulnerability, marital status, social cohesion, social incivilities, and perceptions of police. While these constructs have extensive empirical support from cross-sectional and longitudinal projects, they focused on Western liberal democratic nations. Little research exists on fear of crime and its correlates within smaller, island nation-states. The current study ( $N = 480$ ) examines (a) the prevalence of fear of crime within the Maldives and (b) the extent to which previous theoretical constructs can be generalized to other population areas. Findings demonstrate levels of fear of crime in the Maldives consistent with Western liberal democratic societies but that only certain previous theoretical constructs are associated with variations in fear of crime.

## Keywords

fear of crime, social incivility, perceptions of police, social cohesion, Maldives

Much has been written on fear of crime, exploring the correlates of fear, such as gender, age, income, and social incivilities (Hale, 1996; Lorenc et al., 2012; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981), as well as the impacts of fear of crime, such as indirect victimization and the breakdown of social cohesion (Covington & Taylor, 1991; Foster, Knuiman, Hooper, Christian, & Giles-Corti, 2014). Recently, research on this construct has emerged in non-Western contexts such as Ghana, China, and Turkey

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(Adu-Mireku, 2002; Karakus, McGarrell, & Basibuyuk, 2010; Liu, Messner, Zhang, & Zhuo, 2009). However, its construct and measurement are highly debated. While most research on fear of crime has focused on the British Crime Survey or similar forms of data collection, many question whether fear is truly captured in these measures (Lee, 2013). Critics claim that fear needs to be better operationalized, that surveys often fail to capture situational and social factors that contribute to fear, and that responses are more likely to represent general worry, a process, rather than fear, an event (Farrall, 2004; Farrall, Bannister, Ditton, & Gilchrist 1997; Hough, 2004). Attempts to correct these issues through qualitative data collection, anchoring vignettes and fear mapping, hold promise for the future of fear of crime research (Doran & Burgess, 2011; King, Murray, Salomon, & Tandon, 2004; Sutton & Farrall, 2005). However, fear of crime research also suffers from a lack of non-Western, nonglobal north, participant populations. It is useful to investigate the typically used correlates of fear of crime in these populations to determine whether additional constructs or operational issues can be identified.

This study contributes to the international literature on the fear of crime through an examination of several key risk factors associated with the fear of crime in the Republic of Maldives (Maldives). Fear of crime is particularly important to investigate in the Maldives for two reasons. First, as mentioned, most theorizing and empirical research on fear of crime has involved large liberal Western democratic societies. Therefore, it is not evident whether findings can be generalized to smaller, more rural indigenous island population locations. Second, many of the correlates of fear of crime are present in the Maldives, including a rising rate of crime and relative poverty-based social disorganization (Human Rights Commission of Maldives [HRCM], 2011). Accordingly, this study examines two interrelated issues. First, to what degree do people of the Maldives fear or worry about crime? Second, to what extent do traditional, albeit often debated, theoretical constructs, validated within larger liberal Western democratic countries, apply to smaller unique, predominantly indigenous islander populations? Fear of crime continues to be correlated with quality of life and potential negative social and physical ramifications (Lorenc et al., 2012). Thus, to improve quality of life and better guide policy, it is useful to continue research of fear of crime in new and potentially different contexts.

### ***Related Research***

Much of the literature connects fear of crime to overall quality of life, including psychological, physiological, and behavior changes (Box, Hale, & Andrews, 1988; Garofalo & Laub, 1978; Green, Gilbertson, & Grimsley, 2002; Mirrlees-Black & Allen, 1998; Møller, 2016). Fear of crime can encourage social isolation and reduce interpersonal interaction contributing to poor mental health as well as impede trust and social cohesion (Stafford, Chandola, & Marmot, 2007). Fear of crime also impedes trust and social cohesion, erodes the social fabric and connectedness of the community, and negatively affects perceptions of safety (Saville, 2009; Skogan, 1986). Furthermore, when the public believes there is a significant and uncontrolled crime problem, negative stereotypes and support for punitive crime prevention measures also emerge (Spratt, Webster, & Doob, 2013). This is important because public opinion typically determines the legislation and policy of these countries' criminal justice systems. Accordingly, fear of crime not only impacts the quality of life among individuals but also has potential negative broader policy criminal justice ramifications.

Despite extensive literature on the fear of crime construct, there is no consensus concerning its definition and operationalization (Farrall et al., 1997; Wyant, 2008). Initial studies often used a single-measure survey question to measure fear of crime, that is, "How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being alone in your neighborhood at night?" (LaGrange & Ferraro, 1987, p. 699). This question does not necessarily address fear, ignore context, and provide a static response about what is essentially a process (Farrall, 2004; Hough, 2004), resulting in capturing "formless<sup>1</sup>" fear and

overstating fear in general (Farrall et al., 1997; Ferraro, 1995; Mirrlees-Black & Allen, 1998). Additional issues include whether the measure of fear involves a specific moment or a more pervasive/general measure of worry about crime (Farrall, 2004; Gabriel & Greve, 2003; Hough, 2004; Williams, McShane, & Akers, 2000), that is, the question capturing beliefs and perceptions of anticipated fear in particular situations or worry in general (Rountree & Land, 1996; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981). Recent surveys have added several additional questions regarding time of day and worry about specific types of victimization and created alternative scales to acknowledge the multidimensional construct (Killias & Clerici, 2000; Rader, 2004; Rountree & Land, 1996; Williams et al., 2000).

Two broad and multilevel sets of correlates are often utilized concerning the fear of crime: individual and ecological. Individual-level correlates of fear of crime include gender, age, marital status, income, and unemployment. Ecological-level correlates include signs of disorder, neighborhood characteristics, and levels of crime—these correlates are often placed within the context of social disorganization theory and/or collective efficacy (Gibson, Zhao, Lovrich, & Gaffney, 2002; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Weisburd, Hinkle, Famega, & Ready, 2011).

Most of the research has consistently shown that women are more afraid of crime than men, despite a lower risk of victimization in both Western and non-Western contexts (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Cossman & Rader, 2011; Liu et al., 2009; Stanko, 1995). The standard explanation for gender differences and the fear of crime remain contentious (Schafer et al., 2006), largely because more recent research suggests that this discrepancy between fear and risk is more appropriately explained by women's greater risk of the most serious forms of domestic violence and sexualized crimes (Fox, Nobles, & Piquero, 2009). Furthermore, some qualitative research has determined that men are constrained by masculinity norms, which encourage them to respond with socially desirable answers, rather than answering survey questions honestly regarding fear (Sutton & Farrall, 2005).

The elderly, again despite having the lowest risk of crime victimization, are often found as more fearful (Greve, 1998; Killias & Clerici, 2000; Yin, 1982). Some suggest this is a result of actual vulnerability, that is, their inability to defend themselves resulting from age-related physical vulnerabilities in particular situations, such as walking alone at night, encountering groups of youth in public places, and experiencing a crime, especially unarmed robbery, sexual crime, and an assault (Greve, 1998). In addition, the elderly's disproportionate fear of crime may be related to their distance from the community, particularly their physical isolation (Farrall et al., 1997; Fattah & Sacco, 1989). However, these findings have been debated too. Chadee and Ditton (2003), in a replication study of Ferraro and LaGrange (1992), found that in Trinidad, age was not associated with fear of crime, and the elderly were the least afraid. Debate around the correlation between age and fear of crime may also be a result of the interdependency between social and physical vulnerability (Rader, Cossman, & Porter, 2012).

Vulnerability is not merely physical (age and gender) but also social. Individuals with a lower income have higher fear of crime, as living in less secure areas increases vulnerability to certain criminal events, and physical or financial loss can be more damaging (Franklin, Franklin, & Fearn, 2008; Hale, 1996). Individuals living in poverty are unable to pay to protect their property, often cannot afford insurance, are more reliant on public services such as public transit that can put them in harm's way, and cannot afford to move out of high crime areas (Pantazis, 2000). Partnership status can also be considered a form of vulnerability whether an individual is isolated. Partnered or married individuals report fear of crime less often, likely because an additional adult present can potentially offer physical protective assistance (Baumer, 1978; Mesch, 2000). However, recent research has examined the role of fear of victimization within an intimate partner relationship that could counter this narrative (Broll, 2014; Rader, 2009).

Ecological variables, including social capital and policing policies (Perkins & Taylor, 2002), can have mediating effects on key individual-level variables (Scarborough, Like-Haislip, Novak, Lucas,

& Alarid, 2010). For example, Brunton-Smith and Sturgis (2011) compared perception data with other “objective” data sources and found that signs of disorder, neighborhood structural characteristics, and amount of police-recorded crime directly and independently effect individual-level variables related to the fear of crime. Accordingly, ecological correlates of fear of crime include whether crime in the neighborhood is perceived as increasing, the level of neighborhood cohesion, the presence of incivilities, and whether the police are not helpful and/or effective.

Social disorganization theory associates neighborhood crime rates with the sociodemographics of these neighborhoods and has been central to most studies focused on the ecological correlates of fear of crime (LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; Markowitz, Bellair, Liska, & Liu, 2001; Robinson, Lawton, Taylor, & Perkins, 2003; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Taylor, 2001; Wyant, 2008). When key stabilizing community goals, especially safety, are not addressed, other stabilizing social structures (e.g., schools, parks/recreation, and businesses) deteriorate. Once incivilities or signs of physical and social disorder become common place, residents experience persistently higher levels of fear of crime (Coleman, 1990). More specifically, social (such as teenagers loitering in an area) and physical (such as litter and graffiti) incivilities can lead residents to believe that “no one cares,” thereby increasing feelings of vulnerability to criminal victimization and consequent reactive social isolation. The latter then perpetuates a feedback loop, reinforcing the fear of crime both individually and collectively within the neighborhood (Kelling & Coles, 1997; Link, Kelly, Pitts, Waltman-Spreha, & Taylor, 2014; Wilson & Kelling, 1982). However, in Trinidad, no major differences were found in fear of crime between high crime and disorder areas and low crime areas (Chadee & Ditton, 1999). Thus, disorder levels and fear of crime in non-Western contexts still require exploring.

A neighborhood with high collective efficacy may reduce social disorganization, increase social cohesion, and increase the likelihood that residents will intervene on behalf of the common good and the belief that others will reciprocate (Sampson et al., 1997). In effect, high levels of neighborhood trust and cohesion enhance the expectation that the neighborhood/community collective network will act to positively affect the goals of the members regarding crime (Portes, 1998). Socially organized neighborhoods are usually characterized by high levels of collective efficacy, which, in turn, are related to residents’ higher levels of social capital, that is, personal connections and group networks among people who promote norms of trust and reciprocity and act as a protective factor for fear of crime (Putnam, 2000; Sacco & Nakhaie, 2007).

A related neighborhood risk factor for fear of crime is negative perceptions of police. Lack of confidence in the police role has been associated with higher fear of crime (Mesko & Klemencic, 2007). Recent changes in police policies (e.g., a shift away from foot patrols/community policing to far less frequent and visible police squad car patrols) contribute to explaining this negative relationship (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). In effect, traditional policing most commonly emphasizes operational strategies, patrolling areas, responding to calls for assistance, and solving crime; while in many major urban and metropolitan areas, policing resources are shifting to highly specialized units such as organized crime, emergency response teams, white-collar crime, and, more recently, anti-terrorism (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997; Murray, 2005; Tankebe, 2013). This all contributes to some communities feeling less served by their police services, susceptible to fear of and worry about crime.

The study takes place in the Maldives, and thus it is important to understand that Maldivian context. The Maldives is an island nation comprised of approximately 1,200 coral islands crossing the Equator in the Indian Ocean, approximately 750 km to the southwest of India and Sri Lanka—188 of these islands are officially populated. According to the latest census in 2014, the total population was an estimated 344,000 people (Ministry of Health, 2016). Because one third of the country’s population live in the capital city of Malé, the country’s resources are centralized within the capital city. The land area of Malé is approximately 1.95 km<sup>2</sup> (Statistical Yearbook, 2016). The

country is largely an Islamic republic, and its economy depends primarily on tourism (BBC News, 2016). In recent years, the Maldives have suffered increases in illegal drug use and trafficking, political unrest, and terrorism (Burke & Rasheed, 2015).

In 2015, the crime rate in the Maldives was 3,985 crimes per 100,000 population. This is down from 5,111 per 100,000 population in 2013, the year the data were collected (Statistical Yearbook, 2016).<sup>2</sup> The property<sup>3</sup> and violent<sup>4</sup> crime rates for the Maldives in 2013 were 2,183 and 813 crimes per 100,000 population, respectively (Statistical Yearbook, 2016). Consequently, the Maldives is demonstrating a reduction in the crime rate like that of the rest of the Western world in recent years (Farrell, Tilley, & Tseloni, 2014). Moreover, the overall crime rate for the Maldives is less than the United Kingdom in 2015, at 6,864 per 100,000 population<sup>5</sup> (Flatley, 2016).<sup>6</sup> However, changes may emerge in Maldives, as more illegal drugs enter the country and the proportion of youth increases resulting from a declining infant mortality rate (Ministry of Health, 2016).

## Data and Method

The present study is based on a survey conducted in 2013. It involved a purposive convenience sample with a target population of residents of the Maldives. The survey was designed to investigate both the prevalence and the correlates of fear of crime within this unique population.<sup>7</sup> Key geographic regions of the Maldives were selected in order to collect a wide demographic sample. Malé was selected from the capital (Central) region. The islands of Seenu, Hithadhoo, and Gaaf Alif, Kolamaafushi, were selected from the Southern region and Raa, and Meedhoo were selected from the Northern region. The selection of islands was based on the availability of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) who volunteered to distribute and administer the research questionnaire. Within each of the three Maldivian islands, NGOs associated with the research project visited every household and provided each resident(s) with the opportunity to participate in the study. No incentives were provided for their participation. Questionnaires were administered by face-to-face interviews and lasted approximately 20 min.<sup>8</sup> The total sample consists of 480 participants, with 216 participants from Malé, 115 from Gaaf Alif, 99 from Seenu, and 50 from Gaa—see the Appendix for details regarding the sample participants.

## Outcome Variables

The outcome variables in the current study relate to both the fear of crime and the worry about crime. Fear of crime was measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*) considering the three following statements:

1. I feel safe to walk alone in this area after dark,
2. I feel safe to walk alone in this area during the day, and
3. I feel safe when I am alone in my own home at night.<sup>9</sup>

These three statements were then reverse coded to capture fear of crime in a dichotomous manner: *disagree and strongly disagree* were coded to 1, whereas *strongly agree, agree, and neither agree nor disagree* were coded to 0. Additionally, a composite fear of crime variable (ordinal  $\alpha = .89$ ) was generated by adding the values of the three base fear of crime variables together.

Worry about crime was measured on the same 5-point Likert-type scale considering the six following worry-specific statements:

1. I'm worried about my home being broken into,
2. I'm worried about being robbed when I'm in my neighborhood,

3. I'm worried that someone might steal my vehicle (motorbike/cycle),
4. I'm worried about being raped,
5. I'm worried about being physically attacked, and
6. I'm worried about being insulted or pestered in the neighborhood.

Similar to the fear of crime variables, these six statements were dichotomized such that *strongly agree* and *agree* were coded as 1 and *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, and *neither agree nor disagree* were coded as 0. A composite worry about of crime variable was generated (ordinal  $\alpha = .94$ ) by adding the values of the three base fear of crime variables together.

The frequencies for the various outcome variables are shown in Table 1. In general, just under one third of those surveyed had no fear of crime, a further one third had 1 item related to fear (most often fear of walking during the night), and the final third of those surveyed were fearful of two or all of the contexts relating to fear and safety in their neighborhood. With regard to worry, just under 20% of those surveyed had no worries with regard to the six forms of victimization. However, more than 40% of those surveyed were worried about five or six of the forms of victimization. As such, levels of worry about crime are notably greater than actual fear.

With regard to the specific forms of fear and worry, one half of those surveyed reported fear walking alone at night, one quarter reported fear walking alone during the day, and just over one third reported fear being home alone at night. For worry about crime, 60% or more of those surveyed worried about burglary, robbery, stolen vehicles, rape (for women), and assault. Just over 50% of those surveyed reported being worries about being pestered in their neighborhood.

### Predictor Variables

In order to identify any predictable relationships for the presence of fear of and worry about crime, we use a set of individual-level and ecological-level variables based on the related research discussed earlier.<sup>10</sup> The individual-level variables relate to gender, age, marital status, low income, and unemployment. Gender is measured in a dichotomous fashion (*female* = 1), age and age-squared are included to account for any potential changes in the effect of age on fear of and worry about crime, marital status is measured in a dichotomous fashion (*married* = 1), as is unemployment (*unemployed* = 1), and low income is measured dichotomously, defined as those living with a monthly wage less the 10,000 Maldivian rufiyaa, the average income in the Maldives. Length of time in current neighborhood is a control and measured dichotomously (*less than 1 year* = 1). With reference to Table 2, it can be seen that 46% of the sample is female, with an average age of 31 years. Of those surveyed, 62% are married, 95% have lived in their neighborhood for more than 1 year, only 8% are unemployed, but 75% make less than average income.

The ecological-level variables include crime is increasing in my neighborhood, neighborhood cohesion, the presence of incivilities, and the police are not helpful and/or effective. Crime is increasing is measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*), dichotomized such that *strongly agree* or *agree* equals 1. Neighborhood cohesion is measured using the following three components:

1. How often do you talk with your neighbors;
2. When I do a favor for a neighbor, I trust my neighbor to return the favor; and
3. The area I live in feels like a "real home."

The first component is measured as daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, less than once a month, and never; this variable was dichotomized with daily and weekly equaling 1. The latter two components were measured using the above-mentioned 5-point Likert-type scale, dichotomized such that *strongly agree* or *agree* equals 1. A neighborhood cohesion composite variable was then

**Table 1.** Frequencies, Outcome Variables.

Dependent Variables	Value	Percentage of Cases
Fear, general	0	32.9
	1	32.5
	2	26.9
	3	7.7
Worry, general	0	19.6
	1	4.4
	2	7.7
	3	11.9
	4	14.4
	5	29.0
	6	13.1
Fear, walking during night	Agree/strongly agree	49.8
Fear, walking during day	Agree/strongly agree	24.8
Fear, home alone	Agree/strongly agree	34.8
Worry, burglary	Agree/strongly agree	67.5
Worry, robbery	Agree/strongly agree	65.4
Worry, stolen vehicle	Agree/strongly agree	61.5
Worry, rape (women)	Agree/strongly agree	27.5 (59.2)
Worry, assault	Agree/strongly agree	63.5
Worry, pestered	Agree/strongly agree	51.0

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics, Predictor Variables.

Independent Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Gender	0	1	0.46
Age	18	70	31.13
Married	0	1	0.62
Neighborhood, <1 year	0	1	0.05
Low income	0	1	0.75
Unemployed	0	1	0.08
Crime increasing	0	1	0.59
Neighborhood cohesion	0	3	1.95
Incivilities	0	8	4.49
Police not helpful/effective	0	2	1.14

calculated by summing these three dichotomous variables. Incivilities was measured considering eight dichotomous variables summed into a composite incivilities variable that considered the presence of (*strongly agree* or *agree*) noisy neighbors, problem teenagers, rubbish, vandalism, graffiti, people using drugs, people dealing drugs, and drunks. And finally, police are not helpful and/or effective was the composite of two dichotomous variables (*strongly agree* or *agree*): I believe the police in my area is doing a good job in controlling crime and I believe the police do everything they can to help people.

As shown in Table 2, 59% of those surveyed believe that crime is increasing, and there are more than four incivilities present, on average. Neighborhood cohesion is moderately high, on average, as is the belief that the police are not helpful or effective. The Spearman's (nonparametric) correlations are presented in Table 3. Although there are many statistically significant correlations, none are greater than .50, leaving no a priori concern for multicollinearity in the subsequent analyses.

**Table 3.** Nonparametric (Spearman's) Correlations, Predictor Variables.

Independent Variables	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10
Gender, X1	1	-.02	.12*	.02	.19**	-.07	-.09*	-.05	.11*	-.07
Age, X2		1	.48**	.07	-.17**	-.12**	-.09*	.06	.11*	-.06
Married, X3			1	-.08	-.13**	-.17**	-.20**	.095	.17**	-.19**
Neighborhood, <1 year, X4				1	-.20**	.10*	.07	-.12*	.02	-.03
Low income, X5					1	.05	-.04	.17**	-.01	.13**
Unemployed, X6						1	.12**	-.04	.01	.05
Crime increasing, X7							1	-.28**	-.16**	.38**
Neighborhood cohesion, X8								1	.05	-.09
Incivilities, X9									1	-.30**
Police not helpful/effective, X10										1

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

### Analytic Strategy

Because of the nature of the outcome variables, discrete choice models are estimated in all cases. For the composite variables representing fear of crime and worry about crime, we estimate multinomial logistic regression models. For both cases, the values of zero (no fear or worry) are the baseline values such that the models shown predict some level of fear of crime or worry about crime relative to that baseline. With regard to the specific forms of fear of crime and worry about crime, binary logistic regression models are estimated because of the dichotomous nature of the outcome variables. All estimated parameters, shown subsequently are odds ratios for ease of interpretation.

## Results

### Multinomial Results

The multinomial logistic regression results for fear of crime are reported in Table 4. Immediately evident is the relative lack of individual-level variables that are statistically significant for predicting various levels of fear of crime. As expected, gender is statistically significant for all levels of fear of crime, increasing as the levels of fear increase. Age and age-squared are only statistically significant for the presence of one type of fear: Initially as people age, there is a decrease in fear, but fear begins to increase with successive years. Although marriage does reduce the various levels of fear in all cases, as expected, it is only statistically significant when individuals are fearful in all three contexts: walking during the night, walking during the day, and being home alone. All other individual-level variables are not statistically significant.

The ecological-level variables all have their expected positive or negative effect and are statistically significant in most cases. When crime is perceived to be increasing in one's area, this increases the expected outcome of fear of crime, the increased presence of neighborhood cohesion reduces the fear of crime, increases in the presence of incivilities increases fear, and increases in the belief that police are either not helpful and/or effective increases fear. Moreover, when statistically significant, the magnitude of the odds ratios increase as the level of fear increases, similar to gender, as would be expected. And finally, the regional dummy variables indicate that Ga has lower levels of fear than the capital region whereas Seenu and, particularly, Raa have greater levels of fear.

The multinomial logistic regression results for worry about crime are presented in Table 5. Although each level of the worry about crime retains at least three statistically significant variables, far fewer of the predictor variables are statistically significant when compared to the fear of crime model. Gender is statistically significant for four of the six categories—there were no females who worried about all six crime types, hence the n/a value in that cell. Being married increased the

**Table 4.** General Fear of Crime, Multinomial Regression Results.

Independent Variables	1	2	3
Gender	2.21***	5.83***	7.46***
Age	0.88*	0.99	0.86
Age-squared	1.01*	1.00	1.00
Married	0.90	0.95	0.29**
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.07	0.59	1.88
Low income	1.00	0.68	0.97
Unemployed	0.67	1.14	0.97
Crime increasing	1.99**	2.74***	2.48
Neighborhood cohesion	0.82	0.51***	0.77
Incivilities	1.12**	1.204***	1.25**
Police not helpful/effective	1.23	1.919***	3.87***
Ga	0.35***	0.73	0.06***
Seenu	1.30	4.666***	1.07
Raa	21.36***	49.08***	n/a

Note. Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .434$ .

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

**Table 5.** General Worry About Crime, Multinomial Regression Results.

Independent Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	1.05	4.73***	6.59***	6.12***	4.06***	n/a
Age	0.92	0.92	0.97	1.05	0.91	0.83
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Married	4.62**	0.73	0.65	0.90	1.23	0.81
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.06	0.36	0.43	0.70	0.95	0.76
Low income	1.36	0.67	1.38	2.51*	2.61**	1.11
Unemployed	2.07	0.80	0.99	0.15**	0.41	0.37
Crime increasing	2.06	0.99	1.80	0.63	0.45**	0.70
Neighborhood cohesion	1.45	1.10	1.30	0.95	1.30	1.01
Incivilities	0.94	1.00	1.09	1.28***	1.31***	1.64***
Police not helpful/effective	0.78	0.89	1.25	1.23	0.95	1.19
Ga	0.24**	0.10***	0.29**	0.09***	0.05***	0.94
Seenu	1.29	1.28	2.50	2.57	1.44	9.50***
Raa	0.11**	0.01***	0.02***	0.012***	0.001***	0.13*

Note. Nagelkerke pseudo- $R^2 = .651$ .

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

probability worrying about one type of crime; although initially counterintuitive, this result indicates that being married is associated with a low level of worry (only one crime type), most often a property-related crime. The presence of low income increases worry about crime, as expected, but when unemployment is statistically significant, it reduces the probability of worry about crime. As such, in this model, individual-level variables as a whole, when statistically significant, do not correspond well with theoretical expectations.

Turning to the ecological-level variables, it is curious that the belief that crime is increasing reduces the worry about crime. However, increased levels of incivilities only become statistically significant when the level of worry about crime becomes high. Neither neighborhood cohesion nor police helpful/effective are statistically significant for worry about crime. And finally, aside from the highest level of fear in Seenu, levels of the worry about crime are greater in the capital region of Maldives.

## **Binomial Results**

The binomial logistic regression results for the individual fear of crime responses are shown in Table 6. Generally speaking, the results are consistent with the composite variable for the fear of crime, including the relative lack of individual-level predictors, but there are some notable results. As with the composite results, gender is statistically significant, so women are more fearful of crime than men. Interesting is the magnitude of the odds ratios for the different types of fear. As would be expected, gender is a stronger predictor of fear walking alone at night than during the day, but it has its greatest impact on the fear of being home alone. Being married only has a statistically significant effect (decreasing fear) regarding walking alone during the day. Low income and being unemployed only have statistically significant effects for being home alone, decreasing and increasing fear of crime, respectively.

Turning to the ecological-level variables, when statistically significant, they all have their expected relationship. Areas with crime perceived to be increasing have greater of fear, neighborhood cohesion decreases fear, incivilities increase fear, and police not being helpful and/or effective also increase fear. With regard to incivilities, this predictor is only statistically significant for walking alone during the night or day; this makes sense given that incivilities, by definition, occur outside of the home. The regional variables show that Ga still has lower levels of fear than the capital region, with Seenu and Raa generally having more fear than the capital region as well.

The final set of results refers to the specific worry about crime logistic regression models (Table 7). Overall, each model has more statistically significant variables with varying effects for the different types of worry. This provides strong support for not considering “worry about crime” as a general category but being specific with regard to the various types of worry—the disaggregate results for fear of crime were generally consistent with the composite variable but also showed more instructive disaggregate results.

For the individual-level variables, gender and low income were the most consistently statistically significant. Gender was statistically significant for all crime types except for vehicle theft, with the greatest impact being for assault—the model for rape only included females so gender was not included as a variable in this model. Low income was statistically significant for all crime types except for pestering and rape, increasing worry about crime. Age and age-squared were only statistically significant for rape with an initial decrease in worry followed by a moderate increase in subsequent years. And being unemployed led to decreased worry about assault; this may be because the unemployed are expected to spend more time in the relatively protective environment of the home (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

With regard to the ecological-level variables, perceived increases in an area’s crime unexpectedly leads to decreases in the worry about burglary, stolen vehicle, and pestering. Neighborhood cohesion increases the worry about pestering but decreases the worry about rape. This former result is unexpected with no obvious explanation. Incivilities, as expected, increase the probability of worry about all crime types aside from rape. The helpfulness and/or effectiveness of the police has no statistically significant effect on worry about crime. And aside from rape, those who live in Gaa and Raa are generally less worried about crime than those who live in the capital region, whereas those who live in Seenu are more worried about burglary and stolen vehicle than those who live in the capital region.

## **Discussion**

The study intended to answer two main research questions. What is the amount of fear of crime in the Maldives, and do the correlates of fear of crime in Western and developed countries also exist in different cultural and social climates? The amount of fear of crime in the Maldives is generally

**Table 6.** Fear of Crime, Binary Logistic Regression Results.

Independent Variables	Dark	Day	Home
Gender	2.81***	1.65*	4.06***
Age	0.96	0.96	1.03
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00
Married	0.96	0.56*	0.74
Neighborhood, <1 year	0.98	1.00	1.17
Low income	1.25	0.85	0.53**
Unemployed	0.73	0.81	2.43**
Crime increasing	1.69**	1.90*	1.91***
Neighborhood cohesion	0.65***	0.92	0.75**
Incivilities	1.20***	1.10*	1.05
Police not helpful/effective	1.35**	2.09***	1.80***
Ga	0.49***	0.10***	1.48
Seenu	2.64***	0.30***	3.46***
Raa	0.15**	24.74***	3.24***
Nagelkerke pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.356	.441	.306

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

**Table 7.** Worry About Crime, Binary Logistic Regression Results.

Independent Variables	Burglary	Robbery	Steal Vehicle	Assault	Pester	Rape
Gender	2.07***	2.48***	1.14	3.52***	2.18***	
Age	1.03	0.96	0.92	0.99	1.03	0.72***
Age-squared	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.01***
Married	1.09	0.98	1.00	0.85	0.80	1.24
Neighborhood, <1 year	1.68	1.13	0.56	1.09	1.65	1.30
Low income	1.76**	2.22***	2.08**	1.64*	1.23	0.62
Unemployed	0.52	0.55	0.78	0.42**	0.77	1.69
Crime increasing	0.56**	0.66	0.56**	0.82	0.47***	0.74
Neighborhood cohesion	1.17	0.87	0.86	1.13	1.23*	0.61***
Incivilities	1.19***	1.19***	1.2***	1.29***	1.24***	1.11
Police not helpful/effective	1.11	1.16	1.18	0.91	0.81	1.10
Ga	0.49***	0.30***	0.60**	0.18***	0.54**	2.00
Seenu	3.59***	1.07	2.38***	0.99	1.11	0.89
Raa	0.07***	0.05***	0.09***	0.05***	0.14***	1.00
Nagelkerke pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	.386	.37	.306	.435	.339	.251

\*\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \* $p < .10$ .

consistent with other findings. The consistency of fear of crime could be a result of similar crime problems in the Maldives (HRCM, 2011). It could also reflect an issue with the operationalization of the question that instead captures “formless fear” and overestimating fear, although efforts were made to reduce this issue.

The second question, regarding the consistency of fear of crime correlates, resulted in some interesting findings. Being female remains as a significant correlate. This finding is not surprising, as it is the most consistent finding across the fear of crime literature (Franklin & Franklin, 2009; Stanko, 1995) and in non-Western studies (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Karakus et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2009). Although some research has investigated the social desirability of fear of crime respondents (Sutton & Farrall, 2005), the consistency of concern found across crime types may be reflective of a

genuine gender difference. In the Maldives, which rank 95th of 135 countries in gender equality for women, this fear could also be a product of the current rank of women in this area (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Although the Maldives is making great strides to increase women's equality in education and the workforce, more work needs to bridge the gender gap to reduce victimization as well as fear of crime for women. Furthermore, more research is necessary into analyzing social desirability issues in these contexts.

Income also often emerged as a significant variable. Less than 1% of the population in the Maldives lives in absolute poverty, and while there still are income disparities, this may not translate into the isolation and fear that is commonly found for poor individuals in Western countries (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2012). However, it may contribute to perceived vulnerability and increased concern about property crime.

Other individual-level variables do not consistently emerge as statistically significant in this analysis. Marital status decreases or has no statistically significant relationship with fear or worry about crime except for one instance. In this latter case, being married increases the probability of being worried about one crime type: property-related crime. However, as stated earlier, this initially counterintuitive result is consistent with the literature because it states that married persons are more likely to only be worried about this crime type (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Age was insignificant, a finding consistent with other non-Western fear of crime research (Karakus et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2009). This research could contribute to the growing body of Western and non-Western fear of crime literature demonstrating that individual-level fear of crime variable may not be useful.

Alternatively, theoretical ecological variables (perceptions of police, social incivilities, and neighborhood cohesion) were significantly associated with fear of crime when controlling for individual characteristics. This would suggest that the role of ecological variables is robust, a consistent finding in the literature (Gainey, Alper, & Chappell, 2011; Ross & Jang, 2000). When social disorganization theory is applied to the conditions in the Maldives, high levels of disorganization could be considered present. Due to the inequitable distribution of resources between the capital city and the rest of the Maldives, relative poverty, gender inequality, and unemployment, the crime rate is higher in the capital city relative to the other areas (Department of National Planning & Ministry of Finance and Treasury, 2011; UNDP, 2012). This is consistent with the Western literature though differs from some non-Western literature (Adu-Mireku, 2002; Hwang, 2006) and demonstrates the importance of addressing community cohesion and relationships with the policing when addressing fear of crime in the Maldives. Furthermore, perceptions of increasing crime were associated with decreases in fear. Furthermore, some residents in some locations are more fearful than others. Thus, research needs to consider not only the type of crime individuals perceive as increasing to help explain this anomaly but also types of crime prevalent in certain areas that could be contributing to different levels of fear. These findings would suggest that ecological-level variables continue to be significant contributors to fear of crime and quality of life, and further investigation into these variables, as well as better operationalization, in Western and non-Western contexts is a useful direction for fear of crime research.

### **Limitations**

The findings of the current study need to be interpreted within the context of their limitations. First, issues of generalizability to other non-Western populations are raised, given the use of a convenience sample on a geographically dispersed population (i.e., the Maldives consists of over 200 islands). However, the sampling method is the result of the challenges of collecting data in this kind of geographic location, and the large sample size does allow adequate statistical power to examine the unique social structure in the different island populations of the Maldives. Second, the operationalization of the questions for fear and worry of crime are problematic, considering recent research in this area. However, these measures are still reflective of the British Crime Survey and

allow for an analysis of fear of crime in the Maldives that is consistent with other measures. Third, not all variables that have been tested for fear of crime were available for testing in this study. Fourth, and finally, the research was initiated by a member of the police services. While there are concerns with the validity of data collection connected with persons in power, all attempts were made to ensure confidentiality and include nonpolice partners. Furthermore, we must acknowledge the realities of collecting data in a non-Western location, and that issues of power and surveillance could also be a problem with government run crime surveys.

## Conclusion

The effects of fear of crime on individuals and the community are real and are often similar if not the same as criminal victimization. Thus, it is important to continue to measure fear of crime in new areas and to determine whether the same variables that explain fear of crime in Western or developed countries can be generalized to different social and cultural settings. In the case of the Maldives, the amount of fear of crime is generally consistent with other nations. Furthermore, gender and income emerge as significant individual-level variables. Interestingly, ecological variables are consistently significant in the findings. This could have implications for policy and future fear of crime research. Perhaps, considering the issues with measurement of individual-level variables, more investigation is needed into ensuring accurate capture of ecological-level variables and exploring these correlates as the best possible routes for addressing fear of crime and in turn quality of life.

## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Descriptive Statistics for the Survey Data.

Variables	Malé	Seenu	Gaaf	Raa	Total	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>						
18–24 years	37	29	52	30	148	30.8
25–44 years	155	52	52	17	276	57.5
45 years and above	24	18	11	3	56	11.7
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	111	51	65	30	257	53.5
Female	105	48	50	20	223	46.5
<b>Marital status</b>						
Single/divorced/separated	61	51	47	25	184	38.3
Married	155	48	68	25	296	61.7
<b>Residential stability</b>						
<1 year	14	8	4	0	26	5.4
1 year to <5 years	36	5	11	0	52	10.8
5 years to <10 years	17	15	7	0	39	8.1
10 years+	149	71	93	50	363	75.6
<b>Employment status</b>						
Working	167	53	74	25	319	66.5
Not working	49	46	41	25	161	33.5
<b>Income</b>						
Less than MVR 5,000	58	52	60	39	209	43.5
MVR 5,000–9,999	91	18	37	4	150	31.3
MVR 10,000–14,999	27	18	15	1	61	12.7
MVR 15,000–29,999	40	9	3	6	46	9.6
MVR 30,000+	12	2	0	0	14	2.9

Abbreviation: MVR: Maldivian Rufiyaa.

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## Notes

1. Not linked to a specific type of victimization.
2. These crime rates have been calculated, based on a population estimate of 344,000, from the Statistical Yearbook of Maldives. This specific crime rate does not include traffic accidents, lost items, or embezzlement which are listed in the logged cases for that year.
3. Includes theft, vandalism, counterfeit, and forgery.
4. Includes assault, domestic violence, sexual assault, and robbery.
5. Calculated on a population estimate of 64.1 million.
6. This comparison may prove difficult based on different crime collection procedures and criminal laws.
7. This Maldivian survey was based on the British Crime Survey questionnaire but translated into the Maldivian language of Dhivehi to increase its reliability within this sample.
8. The nongovernmental organization workers for the study did not collect data on those who did not participate, and thus we are unable to provide a response rate for this data set. We acknowledge this is a limitation of the study but a reality of conducting research with nonsocial science researchers as gatekeepers.
9. These questions are consistent with other research into the fear of crime construct; however, some changes have been made to its operationalization
10. Regional dummy variables are also included for Ga, Seenu, and Raa—Male is the baseline category.

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# Extremist Violence From the Fatherland to the Homeland: A Comparison of Far-Right Homicide in Germany and the United States

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## Abstract

The creation of open-source terrorist and extremist crime databases has led to a more complete understanding of violence committed by members of the extreme far-right movement in the United States. Yet, important questions remain about how serious forms of extremist violence in the United States compare with far-right violence in other nations, which are also facing this type of threat to homeland security. The current study draws from structured action theory of extremist violence and extends an open-source methodology for the purposes of making cross-national comparisons of incident-, offender-, and victim-level characteristics of extreme far-right homicide in the United States and Germany. Despite some similarities, such as in offender race, legal outcomes, and places where homicides occurred, we find several key differences in the nature of extreme far-right homicide across these two countries. In particular, we find differences in geographic and temporal patterns as well as offender and victim demographic and background characteristics. We conclude our study by considering how the unique social, political, and economic contexts of the United States and Germany over the last 25 years serve to shape our findings.

## Keywords

far-right, extremism, homicide, Germany, structured action theory

## Introduction

There has been a concerted effort to advance social and behavioral research on terrorism and extremism in the United States over the last 15 years. As part of this effort, criminologists have

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worked to construct large, open-source databases on crimes committed by terrorists and extremists for which official data have previously been inadequate or nonexistent. Despite several notable exceptions (see, e.g., Fahey, LaFree, Dugan, & Piquero, 2012; LaFree, Morris, & Dugan, 2010), the focus of recent research utilizing open-source data has centered on U.S.-based terrorism. Moreover, existing cross-national terrorism studies have generally failed to hone in on certain types of terrorism movements of interest, including the extreme far-right movement. As a result, it remains a challenge to ascertain from existing empirical studies how and why characteristics of fatal far-right attacks might be similar or different across nations.

In this study, we seek to advance research by extending the open-source methodology to two countries, the United States and Germany, and make more precise cross-national comparisons of a single form of ideological violence, homicide committed by far-right extremists, which continues to be an enduring form of interpersonal violence in both countries. We acknowledge that cross-cultural, criminological studies are difficult to conduct due to differences in social norms, the cultural specificity of criminal behavior, and the lack of comparable data sets across countries. In response, we utilize two unique data sources, both built from publicly available, open-source information, and purposefully adjust their inclusion criteria to make the samples of far-right extremist homicides more comparable. We also employ a theoretical framework that helps to contextualize possible relationships between hierarchically organized social structures in both countries and the manifestation of situated homicide events.

To begin, we outline a theoretical framework that conceptually links macrolevel structures and microlevel exchanges between far-right offenders and their victims. Next, we briefly introduce the extreme far-right movements in Germany and the United States during the time period under study, 1990 through 2012. Providing background information on how violent far-right extremism manifests in both countries, we then describe the data, methods, and results of the study, and end by discussing how ideologically motivated homicide events in Germany and the United States compare during periods of rapid social and political change. By comparing incident-, suspect-, and victim-level attributes of extreme far-right homicide, this study illuminates how unique national socio-political and cultural contexts shape situated acts of extremist violence in the United States and Germany. To guide the current study, we seek to answer the following research question: *Does fatal, far-right extremist violence vary across time and place, or is it a homogenous phenomenon?* Specifically, our hypotheses state:

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be differences in incident-, suspect-, and victim-level attributes between similar acts of fatal, ideological violence that have occurred in Germany and the United States over the last 25 years.

**Hypothesis 2:** Differences in these attributes can be explained by differences in societal characteristics between these two countries.

### *Theoretical Orientation*

This study relies on a structured action perspective of far-right extremist homicide to examine the dynamic relationships between situated human interactions and broad social structures. We draw from both structured action theory (Messerschmidt, 1993) and doing difference theory (Perry, 2001; West & Fernstermaker, 1995), adopting several assumptions about how society is organized, how social categories are constructed and given meaning, and the mutually reinforcing relationship between personal identity building and shared expectations about appropriate social roles.

We begin by recognizing that society is hierarchically organized around socially defined categories of race, class, gender, and nationality as well as other relevant status markers. Classifications are imbued with meanings that are understood through the eyes of others, informing how we

perceive and carry out social roles in everyday interactions (Goffman, 1959). Organizing categories also tend to have a commonsense quality about them, as if they are naturally occurring and mutually exclusive. For instance, Omni and Winant (1994) argue that racial and ethnic categories are often perceived as if they are determined strictly by biological characteristics, as opposed to malleable, socially defined distinctions. The same is true of sexual orientation and gender identity (Herek, 1990). Dominant or hegemonic beliefs about the social positioning of groups relative to others based on social markers are reinforced by society's most prominent cultural institutions, including educational systems, religion, and mass media. Though all rely on social categorizations to make sense of the complex world, far-right extremist ideologies advance racist, xenophobic, heterosexist, and classist views that insist a more militant adherence to cultural norms.

It is also recognized that human actors construct social situations through their everyday interactions (Blumer, 1969), including violent exchanges. As part of identity formation, individuals align themselves with certain social categories while rejecting others. In particular, extreme far-rightists find personal meaning in identifying as White males, while also relegating non-Whites, immigrants, persons of Jewish descent, and homosexuals as inferior out-groups. Some have suggested that it is primarily through macrolevel narratives of traditional masculinity that far-right extremists make sense of their privilege and the perceived entitlements that go along with their dominant social positions (Kimmel & Ferber, 2000). The rejection of subordinate others by far-right extremists may be expressed when joining extremist groups, as well as through derogatory language, discriminatory violence, and other situated acts aimed to emphasize specific group differences. It is expected that violent behavior becomes more likely when offenders believe that traditional social norms are being challenged by inferior groups. In some instances, the mere existence of an individual belonging to a subordinate group can serve as a challenge to hegemonic cultural norms and may lead to humiliation, anxiety, and fear on the part of offenders (Perry, 2001). Challenges to traditional social order can present situated opportunities for using targeted violence as a resource for policing existing social boundaries between in-groups and out-groups (Bufkin, 1999). In this way, situated acts of discriminatory violence by far-right extremists are mutually reinforcing in that they are shaped by hierarchically organized social structures while also reconstituting them.

In short, we suggest that criminal events are shaped in large part by the fervent adherence to traditional views of race, class, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity as advanced by extremist ideology as well as mainstream sociopolitical discourses. It is expected that social, political, and cultural shifts may be reflected in the situated nature of far-right homicides. Therefore, within this current study, we explore the comparative nature of microlevel attributes of extreme far-right homicide within the structural contexts of the United States and Germany. We are particularly interested in how societal changes in these two countries over the last 25 years may be reflected in the incidents, offenders, and victims of these fatal attacks. In the following sections, we discuss the social changes experienced by these two countries that could play an influential role in shaping extreme far-right homicide and assist us in exploring our research hypotheses.

### *The Extreme Far-Right in Germany*

By the beginning of 1990, the Berlin Wall had come down, immigration and emigration restrictions between East and West Germany had been lifted, and the two countries were quickly negotiating the terms of their unification. Four and a half decades as proxies to a Cold War between the world's largest superpowers had come to an end. For East and West Germans alike, their national identities were rapidly changing, objectively and subjectively, in ways in which they had no control. During the first few years of unification, prior to major changes in immigration policy, Germans reacted to both the real and perceived impact of immigrants, asylum seekers, and migrant workers pouring into their country. At the same time, far-right political parties gained support, at least at the

local and state levels. Violent and nonviolent criminal activity against foreigners increased (Willems, 1995). Although anti-immigrant sentiment through far-right political parties and violence perpetuated by extremists peaked shortly after unification, it never completely disappeared. Research on the unification process has identified several possible mechanisms for both the limited success of far-right political organizations and the increase of violence perpetrated by extreme far-rightists against immigrant communities.

*Searching for national identity.* One catalyst for the propagation of far-right ideology appears to be the struggle to develop a national identity. Even before unification, Minkenberg (1994) argues that changes in the political structure of West Germany helped set the stage for the rise of the extreme far-right. These mechanisms, however, were not unique to West Germany, as other Western countries also saw increases in support for far-right political platforms. During the same period, East Germans were dealing with the collapse of socialism, not only within their borders but also in most of Eastern Europe. This dramatic transition in national identity from a socialist authoritarianism to a capitalist democracy (Minkenberg, 1994, p. 170), coupled with an influx of immigrants, proved a fertile atmosphere for the spread of far-right influence. Limited interaction with individuals from other countries and cultures also likely fueled the social acceptance of xenophobic attitudes. Minkenberg (1994) argued that in Germany far-right extremists had “an ethnically/racially based concept of nation and national identity and an authoritarian view of politics and political leadership, often coupled with an anti-liberal and anti-communist bias” (p. 172).

In addition, information on German history was difficult to come by in the east, as capitalism and fascism were portrayed negatively in comparison to socialist ideals. Before unification, this lack of information on Nazism led to an increased interest by East Germans in their past history (Minkenberg, 1994). In her research examining national identity, Miller-Idriss (2009) found evidence that years after unification German working-class youths coming of age in the 21st century turned toward extreme far-right beliefs in an attempt to identify with a culture that allowed them to express pride in being German. In many ways it was a reaction to the beliefs of their teachers, and their teachers’ generation, who believed that Germans should not express or develop a sense of nationalism because of the actions of the Nazi party during the Second World War.

*Concerns about immigration.* In addition to struggling to form a national identity, immigration issues also provided a rallying call for the far-right both prior to, and immediately after, unification. Even though Germans had not historically identified as a country that supports immigration on a large scale, millions of immigrants from Eastern Europe fled to West Germany from the end of World War II until the beginning of the 1960s. A guest worker program also allowed many unskilled laborers into the country that never left. Then, when the border was open in 1989, nearly 1 million East Germans moved to the West (Kurthen & Minkenberg, 1995). Although public opinion polls in the early 1990s showed that East Germans were more concerned with foreigners than West Germans, the number of immigrants living in East Germany were much fewer than those living in West Germany (Minkenberg, 1994). According to Krueger and Pischke (1997), “At the time of unification, foreigners made up about 8 percent of the population in the west. There were relatively few immigrants in the east because most guest workers from the communist period returned home (p. 185).” Even so, immigration was a concern to many in a united Germany and politicians focused on legislation to appease these concerns.

Prior to unification, however, there were also political parties that existed in West Germany that were connected to the extreme far-right and concerned with immigration. One example was the Republikaners, a nationalist political party, which split from the conservative Christian Social Union, focusing heavily on anti-immigration policies. The Republikaners were able to win elected seats in both local and national politics during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Betz, 1990; Pettigrew,

1998). The Republikaners disproportionately drew support from young males whose occupational prospects were predominantly relegated to unskilled labor (Betz, 1990). Supporters of the party were drawn to a platform that focused on “national identity and the preservation of national culture” (Betz, 1990, p. 51), which were intrinsically tied to reunification and immigration policies. On the state level, the far-right benefited politically from the discussion and surrounding publicity of immigration issues often brought about by mainstream political parties. This heightened awareness of immigration issues helped the far-right as the public was often more conservative regarding immigration policies than mainstream government officials, and Republikaners were the only political group to consistently favor anti-immigration policies (Karapın, 2002b).

*Economic woes.* In addition to immigration issues, support for far-right parties like the Republikaners was also tied to voters’ fears of their loss of status and economic entitlements in the new Germany (Minkenberg, 1994). Analyzing survey data collected during the summer of 1990, Watts (2001) found that East German youths were more likely to support discriminatory political practices against foreigners when xenophobic attitudes were coupled with other ideological elements of the far-right and they felt threatened economically and culturally. This effect was especially pronounced in males who on average were more likely to be xenophobic, ideologically driven, and to feel threatened. The translation of such fears into support for the Republikaners was short lived, however, as mainstream parties soon adopted their main platform issue—immigration reform (Perlmutter, 2002). Nonetheless, the party still claimed success for the passing of new asylum laws in 1993 limiting immigration (Minkenberg, 2002).

*Studies of violent extremism in Germany.* Intrinsically tied to the question of immigration policy and the struggle for a national identity is extreme far-right violence, which in Germany has primarily targeted immigrants and asylum seekers. After World War II, relevant policies focused primarily on curbing anti-Semitism. Prejudice against immigrants, who were also racial minorities, did not become a concern until after unification (Bleich, 2007). Prior to that, however, skinheads and neo-Nazis in East Germany were known to attack immigrants and punks, while their violence evoked limited concern and enforcement of the law from authorities (Minkenberg, 1994). Explanations for the rise in violence against immigrants during the early 90s have been tied to a sense of normlessness revolving around the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reunification process, economic issues related to the modernization of the workforce, cultural acceptance of violence, and challenges to the masculinity of the youths engaging in the acts of violence (Krell, Nicklas, & Ostermann, 1996). The far-right, especially those in the east who “lost out in the reunification process and its aftermath” (Lehr, 2013, p. 194), targeted easily identifiable scapegoats, including immigrants, punks, left-wing intellectuals, homosexuals, and Jewish citizens. From 1992 to 1993, approximately 13,000 violent and nonviolent crimes were committed in Germany that were antforeigner in nature (Krueger & Pischke, 1997). Crimes against foreigners, both violent and nonviolent, increased between 1991 and 1993. These crimes occurred in waves, often peaking soon after major, inciting incidents (Willems, 1995). There is also evidence that extreme far-right violence against asylum seekers propagated, at least in part, based on whether the violence was covered in the media and, if so, the type of coverage it incurred (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004).

In one of a few quantitative analyses that explored crimes against foreigners in Germany, Krueger and Pischke (1997) examined regional differences in antforeigner violence in 1991 and 1992. Of the over 1,000 acts of violence they identified in newspaper coverage, they concluded that violence was disproportionately high in the East compared to the West when controlling for the total and foreign populations. They found that the type of victim varied across the old East and West divide, with Turkish and Southern Europeans being attacked in the West, and Eastern Europeans and Asians being targeted in the East. Also, violence against foreigners was not related to unemployment rates

and was more likely to occur in rural areas in the East and urban areas in the West. Finally, the study discovered a relationship between the percentage of foreigners in the East and the rates of violence; however, this relationship did not exist in the West. Offering a slightly different story, another study found that increases in unemployment were significantly related to higher frequencies of extreme far-right violence but only in conjunction with increases in immigration (McLaren, 1999).

Research has also presented descriptive information about extreme far-right offenders. In West Germany, right-wing tendencies were found in individuals who were older, less educated, and among individuals who lived in rural or suburban areas (Kurthen & Minkenberg, 1995). Most xenophobic attacks that occurred in East Germany after unification were conducted by males between 15 and 20 who were not members of political organizations (Watts, 2001). In one study, Willems (1995) surveyed offenders who committed xenophobic violence over a 15-month period in 1991 and 1992 and found them to be almost exclusively male (95%) and young (75% under 20 years of age), while more than one third had a prior criminal history. In addition, more than 90% of offenses were categorized as group offenses and most were recorded as spontaneous acts. Four types of offenders who engaged in right-wing extremism were identified: politically motivated, xenophobic or ethnocentric youths, the criminal and marginalized youths, and offenders who engage in extremist activity because of their relationships with individuals who fall into the previous three categories.

In an attempt to explain the presence and magnitude of far-right violence, Karapin (2002a) argues that violence against foreigners in East Germany during the 1990s was tied to the political process in the locations where the violence occurred. As the process of unification moved forward, local politicians failed to identify the violence as a priority that needed to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Formal efforts did not occur to de-escalate conflict between immigrants and anti-immigrant actors, or to provide legitimate platforms for anti-immigrant actors to express their frustrations. As compared to the extreme far-left in Germany, who were aggressively hunted and prosecuted during the 1970s and 1980s, Lehr (2013) argues that the actions of the extreme far-right were, to a certain extent, tolerated by the German government. Evidence of this lies in the disproportionate amount of policy and legislation aimed at dismantling the extreme far-left, while at least until very recently, very little policy and legislation focused on dismantling the far-right. In lieu of direct intervention, such as the development of comprehensive hate-crime laws, the German government instead decided to fund educational and informational programs aimed at countering right-wing extremism (Bleich, 2007). Minkenberg (2006) notes that attempts by the German government to ban far-right political parties have not only failed to outlaw such organizations but also failed to stop the rise in violence committed by far-rightists. Bans on popular culture and free speech were put into effect under the authority of the Basic Law, which allows the government to limit the rights of individuals if they are deemed a threat to the existence of the democracy. An example of which was the banning of neo-Nazi music in 1992 (Jacobs, 1993).

In short, unification brought with it a sense of anomie, a struggle for a national identity, and an influx in immigration both from within, and without, Germany. While far-right violence peaked in the early 1990s, it continued into the 21st century, even as Germany once again entered the European community as a united, economic leader. Meanwhile, in the United States, the ebb and flow of far-right political support and far-right violence followed a similar pattern, though possibly for different reasons.

### *The Extreme Far-Right in the United States*

America's extreme far-right movement has experienced periods of expansion in the last 25 years, primarily with increases in the number of paramilitary militias and racist skinhead groups in the early 1990s and 2000s (Potok, 2012). Modern-day militias are part of the broader Patriot Movement,

an assortment of antigovernment groups who generally believe that the federal government is controlled by global elites seeking to impose a totalitarian “New World Order” (Barkun, 1996). Militias often view federal laws as obsolete and local sheriffs as the highest form of legitimate legal authority. While some have claimed to enlist hundreds or even thousands to their ranks, most militias are small and loosely organized. Not all militias are racist, though many have been heavily influenced by race-laden, apocalyptic religious beliefs of the Christian Identity movement (Barkun, 1997; Michael, 2014). The Christian Identity ideology maintains that European Caucasians (or Anglo-Saxons) are the true descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and that Aryans are “God’s Chosen People.” On the other hand, Jews are believed to be the product of a union between Eve and Satan, while non-Whites are considered pre-Adamic “mud people.” Most adherents of Christian Identity also believe that the Second Coming of Christ (or Armageddon) is imminent and that they must prepare for battle with the evil forces represented by Jews and non-White races. In preparation, many antigovernment militias participate in paramilitary exercise and survivalist trainings.

The early 1990s also witnessed an increase in racist skinhead groups when the movement was infiltrated by neo-Nazism. Though the skinhead movement that originated in London during the 1960s was neither racist nor violent, a revived skinhead youth subculture characterized by shaved heads and steel-toe boots later spread to cities across the United Kingdom and United States (Hamm, 1993). By the early 1980s, neo-Nazism had made significant inroads in the American skinhead youth scene, which had previously centered more on music and fashion than politics. The movement was eventually co-opted by neo-Nazism, as a “hate rock” music scene flourished and spread anti-Semitic messages of White power in cities across the country (Cotter, 1999; Futrell, Simi, & Gottschalk, 2006; Hamm, 1993). While not all neo-Nazi skinheads were violent, Hamm (1993) found that those who engaged in violence were working-class, young, White males with only minor or altogether lacking criminal records. Some violent racist skinheads were unaffiliated youthful offenders seeking thrills, while other offenders were members of national organizations (e.g., Hammerskins) and prison based, White supremacist gangs (e.g., Aryan Brotherhood).

*Political shifts.* Various socioeconomic and political forces have contributed to the fluctuations of American far-right extremism. One explanation for upswings in far-right extremism is political change. For example, the election of Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1992 was a cause for grave concern by many extreme far-rightists who feared that he intended to strip Americans of their Second Amendment rights by furthering a gun control policy agenda. These fears were supported when Clinton signed the Brady Bill into law in 1993 and enacted various restrictions on gun purchases, including a 5-day waiting period and background checks. Less than a year later, Clinton signed the Federal Assault Weapons Ban as part of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, effectively outlawing certain types of semiautomatic firearms and ammunition magazines. These new laws supported far-right conspiracy theories maintaining that the federal government intended to systematically disarm the public. There are several parallels between the 1992 election of President Bill Clinton and the 2008 election of President Barack Obama (see Johnson, 2012). For example, fears of additional restrictions on gun ownership were reignited early in Obama’s presidency. In addition, many extreme far-rightists were appalled that an African American could become President of the United States. The election, as well as the perception from conservatives that the government was unwilling to seriously address illegal immigration across the southern border of the United States, stoked racist and nationalistic sentiments in the extreme far-right and served as further signs of an impending race war.

*High-profile catalyst events.* As discussed in Chermak (2002), two particular high-profile events fueled far-right extremism during the early 1990s, each serving as symbols of a federal government that had turned against its citizens (see also Crothers, 2003; Hamm, 1997). One of the earliest incidents was

the 1992 standoff in Northern Idaho (in the area of Ruby Ridge) between federal law enforcement agents and Randy Weaver, a White supremacist and antigovernment extremist who was wanted on federal charges of making and possessing illegal weapons. The standoff on Weaver's property was viewed by the extreme far-right as an example of the tyrannical federal government interfering in the lives of ordinary American citizens. A second standoff between federal law enforcement and American citizens in 1993 served as another rallying cry for the extreme far-right. During this event, after attempting to serve search and arrest warrants related to illegal weapons charges, federal agents were engaged in a deadly gun battle with members of a religious cult known as the Branch Davidians. Following a 51-day standoff with the group, federal agents raided their complex with tanks, propelling tear gas into the building. The building subsequently caught fire, killing nearly 80 men, women, and children.

For many far-rightists, the Ruby Ridge standoff and Waco siege were evidence that the U.S. federal government had turned against its own citizens. This was certainly the case for Timothy McVeigh who, with the help of two friends from the Army, bombed the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in 1995, killing 168 people and injuring hundreds more in the worst act of terrorism on U.S. soil prior to the 9/11 attacks (Hamm, 1997). Believing that Ruby Ridge and Waco were declarations of war against the American people, McVeigh hoped that the Oklahoma City bombing would wake up the public and lead them to take up arms against the corrupt U.S. government (Michel & Herbeck, 2001).

*Economic changes.* In addition to political changes, the economy may also be partially responsible for periodic upswings in extremism, as surges in far-right extremism directly align with major changes in the U.S. labor market and increases in the national unemployment rate (Potok, 2012). In the early 1990s, farmers were still reeling from the "farm crisis" of the 1970s and 1980s when many families were forced to give up their farms (Dyer, 1997). Changes were also occurring to blue-collar jobs as advances in technology and outsourcing reduced the number of manufacturing employment opportunities (Van Dyke & Soule, 2002). Transitioning from a manufacturing to a service-based economy continued to plague working-class males who in previous decades could support their families through stable, low-skill work. The end of the 21st century's first decade endured historically high unemployment rates and "the Great Recession," which is considered to be the worst financial crises in the United States, since the Great Depression. Just as families had defaulted on their loans and lost their farms during the 1980s, millions of families were forced to relinquish their homes due to foreclosure. Unable to make a living through agricultural jobs or factory work like their fathers and grandfathers had done, males became increasingly disheartened and frustrated. With frustration turning to anger, some White males turned to far-right extremist narratives that blamed the federal government for failing to protect their jobs and way of life, while at the same time cultivating opportunities for social minority groups through progressive social policies (Kimmel & Ferber, 2000).

*Studies of far-right homicide in the United States.* Research has found that far-right homicide perpetrators in the United States are usually White males who are in their 20s (Gruenewald, 2011). In comparison to more common forms of homicide, extreme far-rightists are significantly more likely to kill victims in public places with knives, blunt objects, and other forms of "intimate weaponry" (Gruenewald, 2011; Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012; see also Hamm, 1993). Gruenewald and Pridemore (2012) also found that over 50% of extreme far-right homicides targeted racial and ethnic minorities, the majority of which were perpetrated by racist skinheads, while government targets were the second most common type of victims. Victims of homicide have tended to be White males in their 30s and 40s, though the race of victims depends on the group targeted (e.g., social minority groups, government representatives, etc.; Parkin & Freilich, 2015; Parkin, Freilich, & Chermak,

2014). Far-right homicides have also been shown to be proportionately more likely to occur in western U.S. states and in nonmetropolitan areas (Gruenewald & Pridemore, 2012), suggesting that extreme far-right homicide offenders commit their crimes in relatively more rural settings compared to traditional homicides.

In sum, several studies have begun to examine the nature of extreme far-right violence in both the United States and Germany. However, to date, there has been no study to our knowledge that has empirically compared far-right homicide incident-, offender-, and incident-level characteristics across these two countries. The gap in research on this topic is due in large part to the lack of official data on far-right violence available to researchers. In response, we describe in the next section how the current study's utilization of publicly available open-source data can advance cross-national comparisons of this serious form of extremist violence.

## Data and Method

The cross-cultural nature of this research required the identification of two data sets that collect similar information on extreme far-right violence in Germany and the United States across incident-, suspect-, and victim levels of analysis. For the German homicides, we started our data collection with an open-source project from the online versions of *die Zeit* and *der Tagesspiegel*, German newspapers collecting information on far-right homicides in Germany. We collected data from the original report (Jansen, Radke, Kleffner, & Staud, 2012) and supplemented it with information about victims, incidents, and suspects published in a follow-up report that has been updated several times online (Radke & Staud, 2013). As these data sets and reports were published through news outlets, detailed methodologies that outlined their inclusion criteria and coding processes were not available. Based on a review of the incidents included in these reports, we determined that media outlets regarded these incidents as far-right based on their accordance with the reformed definition of "politically motivated-right" crimes in Germany. Based on this definition, crimes are classified as politically motivated-right if one can infer from the circumstances of the crime that the victim was chosen due to his or her political views, nationality, ethnicity, race, skin color, religion, ideology, origin, sexual preference, disability, physical appearance, or due to his or her socioeconomic status (Selkens & Wilde, 2001).

In addition, we supplemented the data collected from the two news sources by conducting additional searches for resources that identified or listed far-right violence. One additional resource searched was the Internet portal "www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de," which emphasizes the importance of awareness on homicides and violence committed by far-right extremists and which provides help to victimized individuals and families. Others included the website "opferfonds-cura.de," blogs, newspapers, LexisNexis International, and various search engines. Sources were searched using key words in German and English, which were a combination of terms in German that could identify new possible cases, such as murder or homicide and skinheads, far-right, right-wing extremism, neo-Nazi, or anti-migrant. These sources were also used to add information to incidents that were already included in the data set and to confirm existing values. We also searched open-sources using the victim's and suspect's name as well as key terms associated with each incident. This process uncovered both ideologically motivated and nonideologically motivated homicide incidents committed by far-right extremists in Germany between 1990 and 2012.

For the U.S. data, we used the U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB), which tracks criminal acts committed by extremists in the United States (Freilich, Chermak, Belli, Gruenewald, & Parkin, 2014). The ECDB has information on both ideological and nonideologically motivated crimes, such as homicides, financial schemes, arsons and bombings, and violent plots that failed or were foiled by law enforcement. Although data are also collected on environmental and animal rights extremists,

Al-Qaeda and associated movements, and secular Arab nationalists, this study focuses exclusively on far-right extremists. The ECDB states that:

Far-right extremists subscribe to aspects of the following beliefs: They are fiercely nationalistic, anti-global, suspicious of federal authority, and reverent of individual liberties, especially their right to own guns and be free of taxes. They believe in conspiracy theories involving imminent threats to national sovereignty or personal liberty and beliefs that their personal or national 'way of life' is under attack. Sometimes such beliefs are vague, but for some the threat originates from specific racial or religious groups. They believe that they must be prepared to defend against this attack by participating in paramilitary training or survivalism (Freilich et al., 2014, p. 380).

In identifying the homicide incidents that were included in the ECDB, multiple open-sources were systematically searched in a way that increased the validity of the identified population (Chermak, Freilich, Parkin, & Lynch, 2012). Each homicide needed to have at least one far-right extremist involved in the act and, at a minimum, a suspect must have been arrested by law enforcement at the local, state, or federal level. To verify the ideological motivation of each incident, indicators must be found in the open-source materials that demonstrate the victim was targeted based on their real or perceived identity. These indicators can take the shape of verbal or written statements made by the suspects before, during, or after the homicide, evidence left at the crime scene, or if the victim was killed in a location that had symbolic significance to the suspect's extreme ideology (Gruenewald, 2011). After incident identification, each potential case was assigned to a researcher who systematically searched multiple search engines and open-source materials to develop a file on each incident. Then a coder verified that it met the ECDB's inclusion criteria, conducted targeted follow-up searches, and coded incident-, suspect-, victim-, and target-level variables.

One of the difficulties with cross-cultural research is the comparison of data, especially when it evolves out of separate data collection methodologies. We were cognizant of this when determining what homicide incidents to use from the ECDB as a comparison group to the Germany data. After the data collection effort for the Germany data was complete, we examined the types of far-right homicides represented in our data as well as the differences in inclusion criteria across data sets. We decided to first apply the inclusion criterion that only homicide incidents occurring between 1990 and 2012 would be examined. Although the ECDB data does have cases outside of this date range, the Germany data at the time only included cases until 2012. Next, we discovered that the Germany data contained cases where the ideological motivation of the act was apparent (e.g., a skinhead states that they purposefully targeted an individual who was Jewish) but also where the ideological motivation had to be inferred (e.g., a skinhead attacks an African immigrant outside of a bar but makes no statement that the incident was motivated by ideology). Also, we noticed that the far-right incidents in the German data were driven by the targeting of minorities, whether racial, ethnic, religious, or social. There were no antigovernment or antiabortion attacks, such as those that have occurred in the United States over the last 25 years (e.g., the murder of Dr. George Tiller, a physician and abortion provider, or the 2014 assassination of a Pennsylvania State Trooper by a survivalist in Eastern Pennsylvania).

In order to compile a comparable set of far-right homicides from the ECDB, we followed three steps: (1) removal of all antiabortion and antigovernment far-right homicides, (2) addition of all other ideologically motivated homicides committed by far-right extremists, and (3) inclusion of all nonideologically motivated homicides committed by far-right extremists if the victim characteristics matched the ideological concerns of the offender. This Step 3 deserves further discussion. In order to be comparable to the incidents in the Germany data, where no ideological motive was recorded in the open-source, we determined that a subsection of incidents from the ECDB that also were not

ideologically motivated needed to be included in the analysis. A review of the German nonideological cases demonstrated a pattern of inclusion of cases where ideological motivation could be inferred, even if not explicit, based on victim characteristics. Therefore, we identified all victims who were racial, ethnic, religious, or social minorities (e.g., homosexuals, homeless) and if the offender's far-right ideological concerns were connected to the minority status of the victim, these were also included in database. For example, a White supremacist who murdered a Black male outside of a bar, or a skinhead who robbed and killed a Jewish man, would be included. Although no additional information was found in the open-source materials to support an ideological motivation for attacking the victim, a reasonable argument could be made that the offender partially selected the victim based on their perceived identity and the offender's ideology. Through this alteration of the inclusion criteria for the ECDB data, we believe that we identified an appropriate comparison group of homicide events for the Germany data.

Next, information was collected across three levels of analysis—incident, suspect, and victim. The variables selected were limited based on what information could be found in the open-sources. Even with the targeted follow-up searches to code additional information on the German incidents, we were still restricted to a few variables at each level of analysis. At the incident level, we captured the number of suspects who were at least suspect to some form of criminal justice investigation and/or proceedings. In many cases, a greater number of individuals were reported to have been involved but not further processed. Due to the fact that information on suspects that were not subject to any form of criminal justice proceedings is basically nonexistent, only the main suspects are included for purposes of comparison.

Geographic location was also coded to determine in which German state that the incident took place. Germany has a total of 16 “Laender” (federated states), which are comparable to U.S. states in a sense that German states have their own government and administration, which exist in addition to their federal government. Before 1989, Germany was divided into Western and Eastern Germany, thus we capture if the incident occurred in a federated German state that was part of the former eastern block. Based on our data, Berlin could not be categorized in either Eastern or Western Germany. Even though Berlin is located in the Eastern part of Germany, it was divided into Western and Eastern Berlin before the fall of the Berlin Wall, and our data did not differentiate between whether the incidents occurred in the areas historically controlled by the USSR or not. Therefore, the variable's categories contained Western Germany, Eastern Germany, and Berlin.

Other incident-level variables included the time of day that the incident took place, broken into three categories: early morning, daytime, and evening/night. Although the U.S. data were more precise than the German data for this variable, we aggregated to the lowest common denominator, as the German open-source materials were often vague as to the time of the incident. In addition, the place of the incident was also coded, measured as outside, within a residence (home or shelter), a commercial location (e.g., a store, club, or restaurant), or other.

Finally, at the incident level, we also classified whether an incident was ideologically motivated or nonideologically motivated. An incident was considered to be ideologically motivated if the offender was found to be a far-right extremist and the victim was chosen according to specific personal characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, country of origin, status (e.g., homeless, unemployed, welfare recipient), political and/or religious affiliation as well as sexual orientation. Far-right extremist crimes were coded for suspects in cases where (1) it was reported that the court/police/prosecution indicated such an affiliation; (2) statements that could be interpreted as an expression of far-right attitudes were reported (e.g., “beat up Polish people,” “you'll find yourself in Auschwitz, Jews must burn,” “hunting down punks,” “Jews are our misfortune”); (3) the suspects had far-right symbolic signs on their body and/or clothing (such as swastikas, German runes, etc.); (4) far-right symbols and/or materials were found in the suspects belongings and/or residence; (5) the suspect was a known member of a far-right extremist group

(e.g., Taunusfront, Odin's Juenger); or (6) it included open-source information suggesting that offenders' affiliations with particular far-right extremist movements or subcultures (e.g., skinhead, neo-Nazi, etc.). An incident was considered to be nonideologically motivated if the suspect had the aforementioned characteristics, but there was no information that the victim was chosen for ideological reasons and/or the victimization was a reaction to a perceived insult or other type of precipitating event.

As mentioned earlier, the data included only suspects who were subject to at least some sort of criminal justice investigation/proceedings. We collected information from open-sources on sex, race, immigrant status, age, criminal history, and case outcomes related to the incident. Although sex was straightforward, the information presented about the suspect's age could be problematic, especially in the German data. While in some cases the specific suspect age was listed, in others, only age ranges were reported (e.g., four skinheads, age 19–26). In a smaller number of cases, victims were only classified as being under age, which in German law means younger than 18. For race and immigrant status, if not otherwise mentioned in the open-sources for both the German and U.S. data, a suspect's race was considered to be White and a non-immigrant. For a lengthier discussion of missing values in open-source data, please see Parkin and Freilich (2015, p. 190).

Finally, the last two variables examined at the suspect level were related to prior arrest history and the case outcome. Prior arrest captures information about whether the open-sources reported on a suspect's history of prior arrests and/or criminal behavior. Only in cases in which prior arrest and/or conviction was explicitly mentioned was it coded as such. For the trial result variable, we captured the trial outcome. Categories include conviction, acquittal or mistrial, and charges dropped.

The final sets of variables examined were related to the homicide victims. The sex of the victims was coded as either male or female (no transgender victims were identified in either data set). Age was broken into five categories, 17 or less, 18–24, 25–34, 35–49, and 50 or over. For victim race/ethnicity, categories included White, Black, Asian, or Hispanic. In the majority of cases, race was not reported. Therefore, individuals were only classified as non-White if there was an indication in the open-sources to the contrary. Additionally, race was determined in cases in which the victim originated from a country in which the majority of its citizens were Black (e.g., Ghana) or Asian (e.g., Vietnam). Also, for the race variable, individuals who were from Northern Africa or Middle East were also coded as White (including Egypt, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Morocco, Syria, Russia, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Pakistan). If a victim's country of origin differed from Germany, the individual victim was classified as an immigrant. Immigrant status was also assumed in cases in which victims died during an attack at an asylum shelter. Race, ethnicity, and immigration are explored further in the discussion in relation to the targeting behaviors of the offenders and the patterns in victimization.

The "weapon killed with" variable captures the weapon used by the offender(s) to kill the victim. If more than one weapon was used during the incident, the weapon more likely to inflict fatal wounds, absent specific information to the contrary, was considered to be the weapon with which the individual was killed (e.g., in an incident in which a knife and a cudgel was used the knife has been considered to be the murder weapon unless the open-source specifically stated the victim was beaten to death). The categories included in this variable were knife, gun, blunt object, bodily weapon (when no specific weapon was used, meaning that the victim was beaten and/or kicked to death), arson/bomb, and other. We also included an overkill variable, which indicated if the offender used violence/force exceeding the amount necessary to kill a human being. An example of a victim subject to overkill would be an individual who was kicked, beaten with fists and a blunt object, drowned, and then burned. Finally, employment status of the victim at the time of his or her death was also captured, along with whether or not he or she was homeless.

## Findings

The results of our analyses of data are presented as descriptive statistics across three tables. It should be noted that the percentages reported are based on the sample size for each variable, not the total incident count for each country. The valid sample size is reported in the total rows below the distribution for each variable. In Table 1, incident-level variables are presented with counts and percentages. Between 1990 and 2012, there were 155 far-right homicide incidents that met the inclusion criteria identified in Germany and 154 homicides in the United States. One third of the German incidents had only one suspect, compared to 44.8% of U.S. incidents. On the opposite end of the spectrum, German incidents had five or more suspects at a rate more than twice as often as U.S. incidents (13.3% and 5.2%, respectively). When dichotomizing the variable, slightly more than two thirds of German incidents had multiple suspects, compared to only 55.2% of U.S. incidents. For victim count, the U.S. incidents more often had multiple homicide victims for each incident, 17.5% compared to 6.5%.

For geographic variables, we found that the locations of the incidents were remarkably similar across countries, with approximately 50% of both occurring outside, 22% occurring in a home or shelter, and around 12% occurring in a commercial venue, such as a store, bar, club, or restaurant. Although the responses for the geographic region of each incident were not directly comparable across each country, we see that the majority of homicide incidents occurred in Eastern Germany (51.9%). In the United States, the South and West census regions had the same percentage of incidents, 35.7% each, and contained the highest proportions of incidents. For time of day, the vast majority of homicide incidents occurred in the evening/nighttime for both countries. Another temporal variable, the year of the incident, shows that far-right homicide incidents in Germany peaked from 1990 to 1994, were similar for the years between 1995 and 2004, and decreased for the time period 2005–2009. In the United States, the homicides under study were relatively similar for the periods 1990–1994, 1995–1999, and 2005–2012. Finally, evidence of an ideological motivation by the offenders was supported in 76% of the U.S. incidents, but only in 55.5% of the German incidents. For the other incidents, as discussed in “Data and Method” section, far-right ideological motivation was inferred based on the victim and suspect characteristics.

Suspect characteristics are reported in Table 2. For the German incidents, there were 378 suspects involved in the 155 homicide incidents, an average number of 2.4 suspects per incident. For the 154 homicide incidents that occurred in the United States, there were 322 suspects, or 2.1 per incident. For both countries, the suspects were overwhelmingly male. Only 2.5% of German suspects and 8.4% of U.S. suspects were female. In Germany, all suspects were White and natural-born citizens, compared to 96.3% of suspects in the United States, who were White and 99.1% who were natural-born citizens. The distribution of suspect age did vary across countries. For example, in Germany, suspects were more often 17 years of age or less compared to those in the United States (21.6% and 14.2%, respectively). Although the percentage of offenders in the 18–24 years of age range was almost the same across the two countries, U.S. suspects were relatively more often in their mid-20s and older. Surprisingly, U.S. suspects were much more likely to have a prior arrest when they committed the homicide (41.0%) compared to German suspects (14.6%). Finally, 95.9% of German suspects were convicted compared to 92.5% of U.S. suspects. However, these findings, especially that of prior arrests, could be an artifact of differences in data accessibility across the two countries. Open-source documents in the United States may be more likely to report on this type of information and/or law enforcement may be more likely to publicly acknowledge prior criminal records of suspects.

Table 3 presents the victim-level data. In Germany, there were 181 victims, or 1.2 victims per incident. In the United States, there were 214 victims, or 1.4 victims per incident. As with the suspects, victims were predominantly males (85.6% for Germany, 80.8% for the United States).

**Table 1.** Incident Characteristics.

Variable	Germany (n = 155)		United States (n = 154)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Number suspects				
1	50	33.1	69	44.8
2–4	81	53.6	77	50.0
5+	20	13.3	8	5.2
Total	151	100.0	154	100.0
Multiple suspects				
Yes	101	66.9	85	55.2
No	50	33.1	69	44.8
Total	151	100.0	154	100.0
Multiple homicide victims				
Yes	10	6.5	27	17.5
No	145	93.5	127	82.5
Total	155	100.0	154	100.0
Place				
Outside	61	48.8	76	50.3
Home/shelter	27	21.6	34	22.5
Store/club/restaurant	15	12.0	17	11.3
Other	22	17.6	24	15.9
Total	125	100.0	151	100.0
Region				
Eastern Germany	80	51.9	–	–
Western Germany	62	40.3	–	–
Berlin	12	7.8	–	–
Northeast	–	–	25	15.6
South	–	–	55	35.7
Midwest	–	–	19	12.3
West	–	–	55	35.7
Total	154	100.0	154	100.0
Time				
Morning	2	3.2	8	11.4
Day	4	6.3	9	12.9
Evening/night	57	90.5	53	75.7
Total	63	100.0	70	100.0
Year				
1990–1994	58	37.4	38	24.7
1995–1999	35	22.6	43	27.9
2000–2004	39	25.2	24	15.6
2005–2009	18	11.6	41	26.6
2010–2012	5	3.2	8	5.2
Total	155	100.0	154	100.0
Ideological				
Yes	86	55.5	117	76.0
No	69	44.5	37	24.0
Total	155	100.0	154	100.0

There was, however, a large variation in race across countries. In the United States, only 34.6% of victims were White, compared to 93% of German victims. The largest race category in the United States was Black (39.3%), with Hispanic (13.6%) being the third largest category. This variation is reversed in the immigrant category, with 37% of German victims having immigrated to the country,

**Table 2.** Suspect Characteristics.

Variable	Germany (n = 378)		United States (n = 322)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	355	97.5	295	91.6
Female	9	2.5	27	8.4
Total	364	100.0	322	100.0
<b>Race</b>				
White	378	100.0	310	96.3
Other	0	0.0	12	3.7
Total	378	100.0	322	100.0
<b>Immigrant</b>				
Yes	0	0.0	3	0.9
No	378	100.0	319	99.1
Total	378	100.0	322	100.0
<b>Age</b>				
17 or less	40	21.6	42	14.2
18–24	87	47.0	139	45.7
25–34	33	17.8	70	23.7
35–49	6	3.2	36	12.2
50+	1	0.5	8	2.7
Total	185	100.0	295	100.0
<b>Prior arrest</b>				
Yes	55	14.6	132	41.0
Unknown	323	85.4	190	59.0
Total	378	100.0	322	100.0
<b>Conviction</b>				
Conviction	351	95.9	235	92.5
Acquitted/mistrial	5	1.4	5	2.0
Charges dropped	10	2.7	14	5.5
Total	366	100.0	254	100.0

compared to only 10.7% of U.S. victims. For the age of victims, German victims were almost half as likely as U.S. victims to be 17 or less, and more likely to be 50 years of age or over when compared to the U.S. victims (23.2% and 16.8%, respectively). Another large discrepancy can be found in the means by which the victims are killed. U.S. victims were killed by a firearm almost two thirds of the time, compared to only 14.1% of German victims. Likely due to this large difference across cultures in gun use, German victims were more likely than U.S. victims to be stabbed, beaten, and burned to death. However, there is evidence that overkill occurs more often in the U.S. victimizations (18.2%) than in the German incidents (11%). Finally, German victims were much more likely to be unemployed and homeless in comparison to U.S. victims.

## Discussion

Utilizing the structured action perspective, the brief histories of each country during the time period under study, and the results of our study, we return to our two hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be differences in incident-, suspect-, and victim-level attributes between similar acts of fatal, ideological violence that have occurred in Germany and the United States over the last 25 years.

**Table 3.** Victim Characteristics.

Variable	Germany (n = 181)		United States (n = 214)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Sex				
Male	154	85.6	172	80.8
Female	26	14.4	41	19.2
Total	180	100.0	213	100.0
Race/ethnicity				
White	159	93.0	74	34.6
Black	9	5.3	84	39.3
Asian	3	1.8	11	5.1
Hispanic	0	0.0	29	13.6
Other	0	0.0	16	7.5
Total	171	100.0	214	100.0
Immigrant				
Yes	67	37.0	23	10.7
No	114	63.0	191	89.3
Total	181	100.0	214	100.0
Origin				
Africa	12	7.0	4	1.9
Asia	32	18.7	10	4.7
Western Europe	114	66.7	1	0.5
Southern Europe	6	3.5	0	0
Eastern Europe	7	4.1	0	0
Latin America	0	0.0	8	3.7
United States	0	0.0	191	89.3
Total	171	100.0	214	100.0
Age				
17 or less	14	8.5	36	16.8
18–24	32	19.5	38	17.8
25–34	33	20.1	39	18.2
35–49	47	28.7	65	30.4
50+	38	23.2	36	16.8
Total	164	100.0	214	100.0
Weapon killed with				
Knife	40	22.6	36	16.8
Gun	25	14.1	136	63.6
Blunt object	19	10.7	18	8.4
Bodily weapon	67	37.9	18	8.4
Arson/bomb	25	14.1	2	0.9
Other	1	0.6	4	1.9
Total	177	100.0		100.0
Overkill				
Yes	20	11.0	39	18.2
No	161	89.0	175	81.8
Total	181	100.0	214	100.0
Occupation				
Employed	48	44.0	68	50.4
Unemployed	53	48.6	24	17.8
Retired	4	3.7	3	2.2
Student	4	3.7	40	29.6
Total	109	100.0		100.0
Homeless				
Yes	30	16.4	7	3.3
No	151	82.5	207	96.7
Total	181	100.0		100.0

**Hypothesis 2:** Differences in these attributes can be explained by differences in societal characteristics between these two countries.

The results of the analysis show some similarities in how extreme far-right offenders demonstrate status-based differences through deadly violence in Germany and the United States. In these circumstances, we argue that there is evidence that supports the two hypotheses stemming from the broader research question. Not only do our results reveal evidence of suspects doing difference when targeting their victims, but also that the macrolevel cultural and social environments impact when and where these incidents are more likely to have occurred over the last 25 years.

At the incident level, locations compared similarly, with roughly 50% of homicide occurring outside, and slightly more than 20% and 10% occurring either at a residence (home or shelter) or at a commercial business, respectively. In this way, far-right homicide is unique from more routine forms of homicide. Indeed, far-rightists often choose to kill their victims outdoors and in public, as penalties for belonging to particular social groups. Not surprisingly, offenders were almost exclusively White, nonimmigrants in both countries. Known conviction rates were also similar for both countries when we look at legal outcomes for suspects. At the victim level, the percentage of individuals who were between the ages of 18 and 49 were similar, although U.S. victims were more often under 18, while German victims were more often 50 or over.

On the other hand, our results demonstrated that lethal attacks against demonized victim groups were used as a resource for demonstrating differences and policing social boundaries more often in Germany than in the United States. Though the raw frequency of incidents was similar in both countries, the rates based on total population were not (Table 4). In fact, the rate of far-right homicide was more than 3 times that of the United States, East Germany had a rate 10 times that of the United States as a whole, and almost 20 times that of the U.S. Midwest. One interpretation of the elevated homicide rate is that fewer means existed for realizing hegemonic notions of White masculinity and national identity during the region's transition into a more unified Germany.

The temporal variation in incidents also fits into the broader story told in each country. In Germany, the far-right violence peaked in the immediate aftermath of unification when social disorganization and potential strains were likely at their highest. During this time, the social dominance of White males was severely threatened by an influx of immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities who were viewed as competition for low-skill labor. When traditional means of identity building become less available, perhaps through hard work and providing for one's family, discriminatory violence becomes a more viable source for fulfilling traditional social roles. Findings showed that the number of incidents decreased, yet remained comparable between 1995 and 2004. During this period, Germany's economy slowly improved (Hunt, 2008). Most importantly, however, from the perspective of the far-right movement, immigration policy was fundamentally altered in 1993 (Minkenberg, 2002), also a plausible explanation for the decrease in violence from 1995 forward.

In the United States, a very different story emerges. By 1990, the same cessation of Cold War hostilities that had such a dramatic impact on Germany ushered in an era in which the United States was the sole remaining superpower in the world. However, during this period, the threat to the U.S. far-right was not external, it was internal. In the early 1990s, the extreme far-right rallied around a perceived expansion of federal authority and the threat it posed to the individuals that belonged to White nationalist and militia groups. Such groups provided a safe space for asserting the patriarchal views and traditional norms of working-class White males. Incidents such as the standoff between federal law enforcement and the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas, the siege at Ruby Ridge, and the Oklahoma City bombing, mobilized the far-right. These deadly attacks were viewed by those in the far-right movement as an attempt to strip Americans of their Second Amendment rights and the ability to protect themselves and their families. Even though these incidents mostly engendered

**Table 4.** Far-Right Homicide Incidents and Population.

Variable	Incidents	Population <sup>a</sup>	Incidents/1,000,000
Germany	155	82,440,300	1.88
Eastern Germany	80	13,729,122	5.83
Western Germany	62	65,322,744	0.95
Berlin	12	3,388,434	3.54
United States	154	281,421,906	0.55
Northeast	25	53,594,378	0.46
South	55	100,236,820	0.55
Midwest	19	64,392,776	0.30
West	55	63,197,932	0.87

<sup>a</sup>German population in 2001, U.S. population in 2000.

antigovernment sentiment, similar beliefs were also prevalent among White nationalists and racist far-rightists. In addition, a general sense of paranoia and fear arose as the new millennium approached, a date significant for both the religious and survivalist prongs of far-right extremism. We then see a decrease in activity between 2000 and 2004, relative to the other years. During this time period, America suffered its most devastating terrorist attack to date, the hijacking and subsequent downing of four airliners by Al-Qaeda, resulting in the deaths of nearly 3,000 victims. This unprecedented attack was followed by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which not only focused national attention on violent Islamic extremism but also produced a generation of soldiers returning from combat (For a detailed discussion on the relationship between far-right extremism and military service, see Simi, Bubolz, & Hardman, 2013.). The number of attacks again increased for the period between 2005 and 2009, the end of which saw the election of the country's first Black President, Barack Obama. For far-rightists also affected by the Great Recession and a changing economy, such events were interpreted as racial minorities increasing in social power, the homeland being attacked by immigrants, and White working-class males being stripped of the rights and liberties to which many believe that they are entitled.

At the incident level, we also see that homicide incidents in Germany were more likely to have greater than five offenders, while the U.S. incidents more often had multiple victims. In both countries, the vast majority of incidents occurred in the evening or at night, while U.S. homicides had larger numbers of incidents occurring in the morning and afternoon. An understanding of the differences in these patterns might rest in the variation in offender age, where more than 95% of German suspects were younger than 35 years of age, compared to only 85% of U.S. suspects. In fact, German suspects were under the age of 18 more than 21% of the time, compared to approximately 14% of U.S. suspects. This younger pool of offenders could account for the increases in the prevalence of multiple suspects and the slightly larger percentage of homicide events occurring at night. All in all, however, German offenders were more homogenous when compared to U.S. offenders who were older, included more females, and even a small percentage of minorities.

As suggest by our overall theoretical framework (Perry, 2001; West & Fernstermaker, 1995), offenders choose victims whose identities differ from theirs in ways that reflect their specific belief systems. During ideological violence, victims are chosen as symbolic representatives of the "Other." In many cases, offenders' ideological beliefs will influence their target selection as they seek out suitable victims whose identities are antithetical to that of their worldviews. In the United States, this appears to manifest itself in targeting behaviors that seek out racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, while in Germany, a sizable portion of victims are targeted for their perceived immigrant status. This idea also explains the differences in other variables, such as unemployment status and homelessness, as the higher proportions of these victim characteristics in the German data are also

characteristics of immigrants who are still being processed and have not been fully integrated yet into German society.

On the surface, there appears to be wide variability between the victim characteristics across countries. This could be due to both cultural and structural differences across countries, including changing demographic patterns and the social narratives demonizing certain out-groups. For example, in the United States, only 34.6% of the victims were White, compared to 93% of German homicide victims. The plurality of U.S. victims was Black, while a sizable percentage was Hispanic (13.6%). In Germany, individuals were not necessarily targeted for their race (although there are obvious examples of this), but more for their immigration status and their country of origin (e.g., immigrants from Turkey). In these cases, victims were not necessarily targeted because they were immigrants, but because they immigrated from a Muslim majority country and were perceived as the racial, ethnic, or religious other.

Finally, an interesting aspect of situated attacks by extreme far-rightists is their tendency to operate in groups and rely on weapons other than firearms to kill their victims. Small group settings provide opportunities to publicly demonstrate an adherence to hegemonic White masculinity through vicious attacks on those perceived as others. Unique from more impersonal forms of homicide, deadly far-right attacks often consist of intimate, brutal beatings that symbolize subordination and weakness among victims. When examining the weapons used during homicide events, national culture and law appear to have an impact on the nature of these attacks. In the United States, a long history of gun ownership and advocacy, born from the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, makes guns of any sort more accessible in the United States than in Germany, where changes in gun laws over the last century have restricted and relaxed access to firearms at different times. In Germany, victims of far-right extremist violence were much more likely to be punched and kicked to death, stabbed to death, or killed during a bombing or arson. This variation in weapon type, however, may also impact the number of victims and suspects. Multiple suspects were less likely in U.S. incidents, but so too were multiple victims. One explanation of this could be the increased use of firearms, as the likelihood of fatal violence increases along with the lethality of weapons used. At the same time, restricted access to deadlier weapons may lead either to the failure to commit homicides or to behaviors aimed to increase fatal outcomes, such as engaging in deadly violence with others.

## Conclusion

This research is the first to cross-nationally compare the manifestation of far-right extremist violence in Germany and the United States. Two open-source databases were utilized to examine similarities and differences in the incident and suspect and victim characteristics of these homicide events that occurred between 1990 and 2012. Theories of structured action and doing difference were relied upon to interpret similarities and differences in homicide attributes across countries. It is important to note that, as an exploratory step in examining these phenomena, future research is needed to develop, apply, and test other theoretical explanations for this type of ideological violence and to better understand how it may occur in different places and time periods. This can be done through the application of criminological theories developed to explain homicide victimization and theories developed to explain differences in criminal offending and victimization across cultures. The inclusion of additional comparison countries such as Italy, Greece, and England might also assist in a better understanding of homicides committed by far-right extremists. The findings of this study provide initial evidence that although victim selection varies across country based on social and cultural considerations, far-right extremists' underlying ideological motivations for selectively targeting victims antithetical to their worldview are similar.

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