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THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL TRUST IN COUNTERING FEELINGS OF UNSAFETY IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Abstract: The segregated nature of urban areas reflects an uneven exposure to risk and unsafety. This article analyzes the relevance of place to people's feelings of unsafety by comparing questionnaire responses from people living in a segregated, disadvantaged neighbourhood to a random sample of people living in the same city. The results suggest that the central factors explaining the individual's feelings of unsafety differ in this particular neighbourhood compared to the broader population. The article shows that place has a moderating effect on feelings of unsafety. Trust in public institutions is argued to be particularly important in segregated, disadvantaged neighbourhoods because of its potential to prevent feelings of unsafety.

Key words: feelings of unsafety, trust, moderation, segregation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban space is generally divided into islands of segregated areas where social exclusion, crime and relative poverty are clustered in certain parts of the cities. The inhabitants of those areas are more vulnerable and at a greater risk of exploitation than inhabitants in other neighbourhoods. In other words, these social phenomena are emplaced; they exist in relation to their locality. How can the effects of the emplacement of social risk and vulnerability be understood? Feelings of unsafety, fear of crime and mistrust, experienced by inhabitants of disadvantaged, crime-ridden neighbourhoods, has been explained by the fact that they face greater risks, and have a greater vulnerability due to lacking socioeconomic strength (Hale,

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1996; Sandstig, 2010). In short, structural explanations at the individual level have been the usual suspects for these feelings. However, does the geographical accumulation of these factors matter for the perception of unsafety?

Some researchers have argued that place has more explanatory power than is accounted for by its structural characteristics. The argument is that place partially shapes our social identities (Castells, 1997; Forrester and Kearns, 2001). We cannot avoid the way we categorize the world (by ethnicity, gender, race or place) or ignore the dominant connotations of those categories when we negotiate our identities (Putnam, 2007). The internal compositions of our neighbourhoods as well as others' perception of our neighbourhoods (i.e., their reputations) are important for our socialization (Forrester and Kearns, 2001; cf. Lilja, 2008, p. 173). Identities and perceptions are, thus, shaped by and embedded in the composition and relative categorization of one's neighbourhood. According to this argument, the neighbourhood as a place, and not just its structural characteristics, should influence the individual's feelings of unsafety.

At the end of the millennium a major advance in research at the neighbourhood level occurred (Sampson *et al.*, 2002). This research on neighbourhood effects, among other things, focuses on health-related issues, problem behaviour and fear of crime (Brunton-Smith and Jackson, 2012) and differentiates between structural explanations at the individual level and contextual variables (that are also defining variables in urban areas). However, this research has been criticized. First, it is charged that many quantitative neighbourhood studies use neighbourhood boundaries that have been defined by administrative agencies. Therefore, these boundaries are not necessarily equivalent to social community boundaries (Sampson *et al.*, 2002; Brunton-Smith and Jackson, 2012). Second, this research generally takes an aggregate-level approach in which the respondents describe the neighbourhood variables. It is questionable whether such an approach accounts for causalities, as they tend to claim. This research has argued that place has no direct effect on people's feelings of unsafety; instead, other geographically-clustered factors explain these feelings. However, few studies have investigated the alternative effects of place.

This study is based on case study data from an urban neighbourhood (Vivalla in Örebro City, Sweden), using a random sample of the other neighbourhoods in the same city as a control group. The neighbourhood of this study, Vivalla, has the typical characteristics of a segregated and disadvantaged neighbourhood. Because of physical planning, it is separated from surrounding neighbourhoods (see figure 3). This research design, in which the neighbourhood boundaries and its characteristics are well-defined, is appropriate because it permits a more nuanced analysis and avoids the trap in which the respondents embody all variables.¹ The aim of the study is to explore the effect of place on the neighbourhood inhabitants'

¹ This is not to say that the inhabitants' understanding and experience are secondary (cf. Lilja, 2008). However, when studying mechanisms quantitatively, there can be methodological difficulties.

general feelings of unsafety, while controlling for the structural characteristics of place. Hence, place is measured as a physical area with certain characteristics: The effect of place is examined as the residual explanation when other structural factors are accounted for. The study examines two issues: first, the perception of place on feelings of unsafety as an addition to the structural explanations; and second, the importance of place on feelings of unsafety in relationship to other variables (e.g., gender, age, interpersonal trust, trust in the police etc.). In summary, does place have a unique and direct effect on feelings of safety, or does it have a moderating effect? If the latter is true, how could we describe and understand that effect?

The next section, which discusses theoretical considerations in understanding and measuring feelings of unsafety, argues for the use of the symbolic paradigm. The following section presents the theoretical models that are tested in the study. A contextual description of the neighbourhood of the study is presented next. Thereafter, we turn to methodological considerations and the questionnaire construction, followed by the empirical analysis. The article ends with a discussion and conclusions.

2. A DEVELOPED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FEELINGS OF UNSAFETY

In recent decades, government policies and scholarly research have increasingly focused on the community. Well functioning communities are seen as the best response or solution to negative societal trends (assumed or real) such as violent criminality, feelings of unsafety, loss of social control (due to urbanization and individualization) and diminished trust (both interpersonal and institutional) (Bauman, 2001; Gilling, 2001; Crawford, 2009; Lidskog and Persson, 2012). These societal trends are not as obvious in Sweden as in other countries (e.g., the US or the UK). Still, numerous public surveys have measured feelings of unsafety as fear of specific crimes or fear of being out late at night (Björkemarken, 2009), and many local authorities in Sweden have adopted this general measure as a performance indicator. In the policy debate feelings of unsafety are not primarily associated with rising crime rates, but with general anxieties in society, anxieties which are generally argued to be unfounded and fed by the media (Persson, 2012). However, feelings of unsafety, as a political concept, is positioned within the policy field of community safety and local crime prevention. As such, it is closely related to the research on fear of crime (see, e.g., Lee, 2001).

The research on fear of crime is a fast growing research field (Lee, 2001) that is dominated by a rationalist paradigm. Thus, fear of crime has generally been viewed as the rational calculation of the risk of becoming a victim, of the ability to defend oneself, and of the expected gravity of becoming a victim. Hence risk,

helplessness and vulnerability, in addition to the experience of crime, are factors that explain people's fear of crime (Hale, 1996; Elchardus *et al.*, 2008). The paradox of fear of crime, (i.e. that women and the elderly are more fearful than men and young people even though their risk of falling victim is less) is according to the rationalist paradigm, explained by their higher sense of helplessness and vulnerability. The same counts for differences in fear of crime assigned to socioeconomic differences, which is explained by a more vulnerable position where the consequence of loss is greater.

Despite the extensive research on fear of crime, there have been surprisingly few insights in recent decades (cf. Taylor and Hale, 1986; Hale, 1996; Sandstig, 2010). In his review on the fear of crime research, Hale (1996, p. 132) concluded that 'reading the literature on fear of crime produces a sense that the field is trapped within an overly restricted methodological and theoretical framework'. Ditton and Farral (2000), writing four years later, agreed that, despite all the previous research, little could be said conclusively about the fear of crime. There is also a widespread criticism about how fear of crime is theorized and measured (Taylor and Hale, 1986; Hale, 1996; Holloway and Jefferson, 1997; Pain, 2000; Gabriel and Greve, 2003; Vanderveen, 2006). An ongoing conceptual consideration among researchers is whether fear of crime might be better understood as insecurity about certain aspects of modern living, such as the quality of life, urban unease, fear of strangers or perception of disorder (Hale, 1996, p. 84). Hence, in addition to the mainstream paradigm, another paradigm – the symbolic paradigm (Elchardus *et al.*, 2008) – has developed and is becoming more influential (see, e.g., Jackson, 2006; Lee and Farral, 2009; Cops, 2010; De Donder *et al.*, 2012). In this paradigm, it is argued that fear of crime has a symbolic nature. This argument posits that fear of crime results from people's feelings of unsafety that are connected to macro-sociological developments such as globalization, urbanization, emancipation, migration, secularization, and from attitudes of discomfort, threat and helplessness in the face of the consequences of such developments (Cops, 2010). According to the symbolic paradigm, fear of crime is not a rational calculation but rather a social construction based in perceptions about the social environment. Therefore, the relative controllability of crime by the individual explains the increasingly influential fear of crime discourse that is linked to the risk society (Beck, 1992). Fear of crime, in this interpretation, may be a projection of more indefinable anxieties that derive from uncertainty and multiple life choices (cf. Giddens, 1991; Holloway and Jefferson, 1997).

According to the symbolic paradigm a more accurate way to measure feelings of unsafety is to use a concept that captures the more general concern about unsafety rather than just fear of specific crimes or fear of being out late at night (Elchardus *et al.*, 2008). The concept, *general unsafety*, seeks to measure the worry that society is becoming harsher and is losing control over future developments. Feelings of unsafety are more consistent than fear of crime, which is typically linked to specific

situations and therefore may be significant in strength but occur infrequently (Farrall and Gadd, 2004). Because general feelings of unsafety are less specific than fear of crime or feelings of unsafety in certain circumstances, the concept of general unsafety does not have the functional aspect that is inherent with fear of crime (Jackson and Gray, 2010). General feelings of unsafety, which are more deeply rooted and enduring in the individual, tend to be more constant and persistent over time (Hough, 2004). This article follows the symbolic paradigm by which unsafety is measured as general feelings of unsafety and not as the more specific fear of crime.

3. THEORETICAL MODELS AND CONCURRING EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

This article is explorative in two respects. First, in an examination of the influence of place on feelings of safety, previous research (including the fear of crime research) does not proceed to investigate alternative models, such as interaction effects in the form of moderation after the identification of the direct effects. Second, operationalizing the explanatory variable, as feelings of unsafety, consistent with the symbolic paradigm, means that the explanatory model is not established. The number of quantitative studies applying this concept is still limited. Therefore, like other studies that have used this concept (e.g., Elchardus *et al.*, 2008; Cops, 2010; De Donder *et al.*, 2012), this study builds on the results and established variables of the rationalist paradigm. Feelings of unsafety, defined as fear of crime, are generally explained by individual characteristics such as gender, age and heritage, as well as socioeconomic status, including employment status and education level (Hale, 1996). These structurally-based individual explanations are therefore included in the models, together with exposure to crime, which is another key explanatory variable in the rational paradigm (Elchardus *et al.*, 2008).

However, the wider, symbolic definition of feelings of unsafety, as *general unsafety*, requires a broader set of explanations. Feelings of unsafety are related to concerns about the moral and social trajectory of society (including concerns in specific neighbourhoods) and are influenced by political action (Lee, 2001; Jackson, 2006; Cops, 2010). Various forms of trust are said to be variables that may explain feelings of general unsafety (see e.g. Walklate, 1998). According to Goldsmith (2005, p. 444), 'Trust, through its presence or absence, is innately linked to feelings of existential safety'. Both concepts are connected to risk and the way we handle insecurity. The ability to cope with anxiety is, according to Giddens (1991), related to trust developed in childhood; this trust is then continuously shaped through social interaction. According to the literature on institutional trust, the way institutions function in a certain country affects not only the trust in those institutions but also the generalized trust and social capital among its inhabitants

(Stolle, 2007; Rothstein and Stolle, 2008). By its type of welfare state, its degree of general subsidies, the predictability and its level of corruption, a country signals values and interacts with its inhabitants. By these means, a country can enhance trust (Rothstein and Stolle, 2008) and neutralize public insecurity. Institutions may thereby strengthen the individual ability to handle anxiety (Hummelsheim *et al.*, 2011, p. 337).

The forms of trust addressed in this study are generalized trust, institutional trust and trust in the police. Our attitudes towards the police are assumed to influence our feelings of unsafety. If affected by or concerned about crime, the police is the institution that we have to turn to and place our confidence and trust in. Previous research has argued that excluded and marginalized groups in general tend to have less trust in institutions (Goldsmith, 2005), and, of these, minority groups in particular tend to have less trust in the police (Tyler, 2005).

Two theoretical models are used in this study for testing the relationships among trust, place and general unsafety. Model 1 tests if place has a unique effect on general unsafety (see figure 1). Hence, model 1 tests whether feelings of unsafety depend on a number of individual explanations, including individual characteristics, the level of social and institutional trust, and the neighbourhood of residence (place).

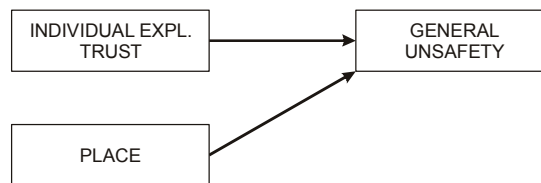


Fig. 1. Theoretical model 1

Source: own study

Model 2 assumes that the neighbourhood of residence affects feelings of unsafety in a more complex way (see figure 2). In this model, place does not necessarily have a direct effect on general unsafety; rather, place alters factors that are central to safe perceptions of the world. Hence, model 2 tests whether place has a moderating effect on the other explanatory variables of general unsafety.

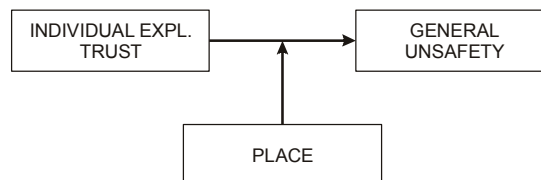


Fig. 2. Theoretical model 2

Source: own study

4. THE PLACE – A CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF VIVALLA

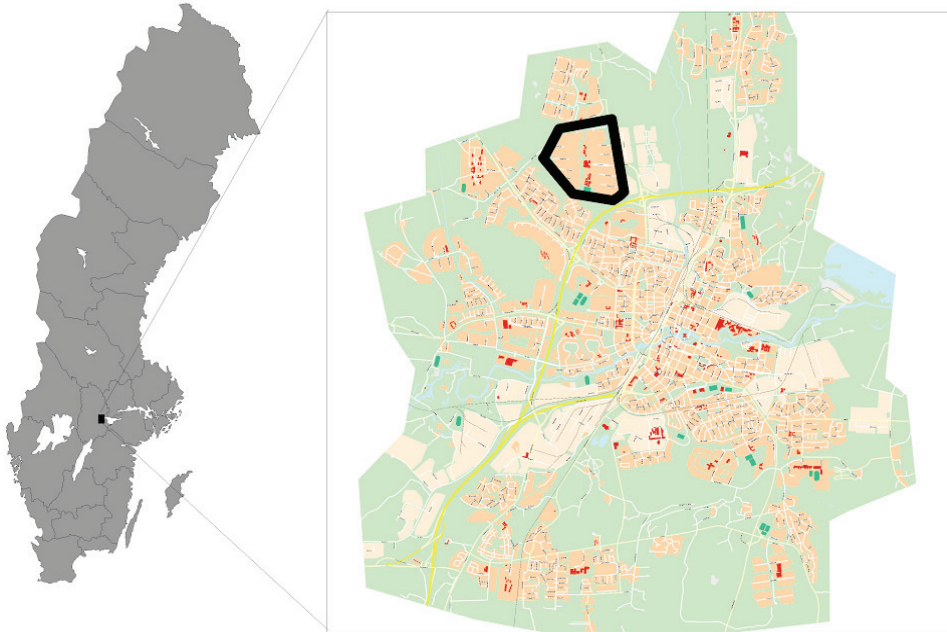


Fig. 3. Vivalla's geographical position in Sweden and in Örebro

Note: the map on the right shows the two samples; the map covers Örebro, with Vivalla marked

Source: own study

The two theoretical models were tested on quantitative data collected in Örebro, Sweden. Örebro is a midsize city in the middle of Sweden with approx. 137,000 inhabitants. Like many cities in Sweden of comparable size, ethnic segregation exists. The most segregated areas are the 'white' neighbourhoods that are distanced from the socioeconomically weak and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods (Johansson, 2002, pp. 216–220). The neighbourhood (or place) investigated in this study is Vivalla, the Örebro neighbourhood considered the most problematic (The Örebro Police, 2009). A sample population from the city of Örebro is used as the comparison reference point. The demographic composition of Örebro is comparable to other mid-sized Swedish cities.

In 2011 (the year following this study), the neighbourhood of Vivalla, had 6,823 inhabitants. During the last decade the neighbourhood has had a steadily increasing population (Örebro Municipality, 2012). The neighbourhood was founded around 1967–1970 in the years when large-scale apartment housing was built in the suburban areas of Sweden, resulting in a homogenous neighbourhood dominated by small rental apartments. Before long, the neighbourhood began to be perceived and described as a 'problem area' and it has since been dominated

by negative connotations such as: criminality, unsafety, social problems, a high density of immigrants, and uniform apartments (The Örebro Police, 2009), of which many are structural challenges that Vivalla faces. However, as Lilja (2008) notes, it is important to remember that the external images of a marginalized place may often be more negative than the image held by its inhabitants who have memories, life experiences and a relationship to the place. See table 1 for a listing of the characteristics of the Vivalla and Örebro inhabitants.

Table 1. Neighbourhood characteristics

Area	% with...	Higher education	Edu-cation < 9 years	Open unem-employment 18–24 years	Open unem-employment 18–64 years	Foreign birth	Foreign back-ground
Vivalla	Women	7.7	25.4	12.8	14.0	52.4	74.8
	Men	9.6	19.6	11.0	16.3	50.3	74.5
	Total	8.7	22.5	11.9	15.1	51.3	74.7
Örebro	Women	30.0	4.6	4.9	3.9	15.1	20.7
	Men	21.1	4.6	6.0	4.4	14.8	20.8
	Total	25.5	4.6	5.4	4.1	15.0	20.7

Note: unemployment (31.10.2011) = according to definition of the Swedish Employment Office.
Source: Örebro Municipality (2012).

Table 1 reveals that Vivalla has a higher unemployment rate than the average in the city of Örebro. Vivalla's inhabitants also have lower levels of education and more foreign backgrounds. In the last decade, the percentage of the inhabitants in Vivalla with foreign backgrounds has steadily risen (an average of 74.7% in 2011 compared to 52.6% in 2003 (Örebro Municipality, 2012)). This increase is explained by a high turnover of inhabitants with a relatively large number of 'native Swedes' moving from the neighbourhood at the same time that more people with foreign backgrounds have moved into the neighbourhood.

Because Vivalla is the neighbourhood in Örebro with the most concerns about criminality, the Örebro police department has recently initiated neighbourhood policing (The Örebro Police, 2009). The most alarming crime statistics are the numbers of relational violence against women² and muggings. Both crimes are about three to five times higher in Vivalla than in Örebro in general. Other crimes, which are about twice as common in Vivalla as in Örebro, are physical assault

² The design of this study does not capture the particularities of this form of crime. This is arguably a limitation of the study because many researchers have shown that the home is the most dangerous victimization location for women.

outside, moped theft and drug offences (The Örebro Police, 2009). According to the police, there is also a serious problem with the recruitment of young men into criminal gangs, as a consequence of the structural disadvantages of the neighbourhood (The Örebro Police, 2009). Considering the conditions in Vivalla; its social composition and structural context, living there is likely to affect the inhabitants' identities as well as influence their feelings of unsafety.

5. METHOD

For this research, a questionnaire was sent to 1,000 potential respondents in the second half of 2010 (Örebro 400; Vivalla 600). The respondents were asked about their feelings of unsafety, trust, their views on the police, together with a number of control variables. The questions were in Swedish, but respondents could reply in English via the Internet. Four reminders were sent. The netto³ response rate was 43.6% (Örebro 61.8%, Vivalla 30.8%),⁴ resulting in a sample of N = 401 (Örebro 235, Vivalla 166). The lower response rate in Vivalla was arguably caused by the rapid turnover in its population as well as by language barriers.

In connection with the fourth and last reminder, we telephoned the potential respondents and encouraged them to answer the questionnaire. However, only about one-third of the potential respondents in Vivalla who had not yet answered had listed phone numbers (in the whole sample of nonrespondents the number was 319 of 599). Of those who answered the phone call (just over half), together with those who returned the questionnaire without answering it, 15 explicitly told they could not answer the questionnaire because of language difficulties. In summary, this tells us that there might be a part of the population that are more mobile and less established, that this sample do not account properly for. It is likely that the inability to answer the questionnaire due to language difficulties is even greater in this group.

To control for bias in the Vivalla sample, due to nonresponses, three variables of individual characteristics (gender, employment, foreign birth), were compared with the municipal dataset. No significant differences were revealed.⁵ The number

³ After subtracting those responses that were sent back blank.

⁴ As a consequence of the difficulty in obtaining high response rates (which is typical in contemporary segregated areas), research has been conducted on the statistical effects and limitations that a limited sample implies. These studies show very limited differences due to nonresponses (Langer, 2003). Langer also emphasizes that nonresponses have received disproportionate attention as far as reliability in relation to other methodological questions (such as constructs and choice of statistical method).

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of women and men are similar. The number of respondents born abroad in this data set is 49.1% in Vivalla and 11.1% in Örebro, compared to 50.1% and 14.5%, respectively, in the municipal dataset for 2010. Concerning employment the number of respondents in this sample describing themselves as unemployed are 9.1% in Vivalla and 1.7% in Örebro, compared to 9.3% and 5.3%, respectively, in the municipal dataset from the same year. Note that the Vivalla respondent percentages are closer to those in the municipal dataset than the Örebro respondent percentages as far as unemployment and foreign birth. This difference may partly be explained by the fact that the sample used in this study is from the city of Örebro, whereas the municipal statistics cover a wider area. To conclude, this test shows no considerable bias due to nonresponses.

The statistical method used is regression analysis, where the moderation of place is evaluated by subgroup regression (Hartmann and Moers, 1999). Since the moderator is dichotomous, a subgroup regression approach to testing moderation equals a moderated regression analysis (MRA), which is the most common regression technique for evaluating moderation (Hartmann and Moers, 1999, p. 295). The significance of the differences between the subgroups is calculated using the z-score (Garson, 2011). Missing values on the index/variable level in the regression models are generally few, ranging from 0 to 7.5%. Since listwise deletion is used in the regressions, the listwise number of missing values for some models is about 25%. However, the comparison of listwise means and correlations with estimated means (EM) and correlations reveals no differences.

Questionnaire

General unsafety

The dependent variable was measured using a 6 item index ($\alpha = 0.823$),⁶ in which the respondents were asked to respond to the following statements: ‘Compared to fifty years ago, the world has become more unsafe’; ‘Over the last ten years, the streets have become less safe’; ‘At night, you have to be particularly careful when out in the streets’; ‘A burglar alarm is essential nowadays’; ‘It isn’t safe enough to let kids play out in the streets alone’; and ‘The police aren’t able anymore to defend us from criminals’.

The respondents could choose responses coded on a 5-point Likert scale (which was used in the whole questionnaire). The responses ranged from ‘strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘agree’ to ‘strongly agree’. High responses indicate high levels of general unsafety.

⁶ The alpha of the indexes have additionally been calculated in both subgroups (Vivalla and Örebro). No significant differences were found. The indexes have strong reliability in both groups.

Place

Place is measured as the geographical place of residence. Vivalla (coded as 2) is contrasted with Örebro (coded as 1). Hence what is sought to be captured is the particularities of a separated and segregated area, with its particular characteristics, in relation to the general area (i.e., the average of Örebro).

Gender

Men were coded as 1 and women as 2.

Age

The respondents were asked to state their year of birth. Hence, high years indicate younger age.

Heritage

The respondents were asked to select the best response from the following choices: 'You and your parents were born in Sweden'; 'You were born in Sweden, but your parents were born in another country'; 'One of your parents was born in Sweden and the other was born in another country'; 'You were born in another European country'; and 'You were born in a non-European country'. In the regressions, a recoded variable was used: born in Sweden was coded as 0 and born abroad was coded as 1.

Education

The respondents were asked to describe their highest level of education. They were offered the following choices: 'I have no education (0)'; 'Elementary school or equivalent (0)'; 'High school or the equivalent (1)'; and 'University level or the equivalent (2)'.

Employed/unemployed

The respondents were asked to describe their employment status. They were offered the following choices: 'Employed'; 'Pensioner'; 'Student'; 'Unemployed'; 'Job training or course through the Employment Office'; 'Other'. Employed, pensioner and student were coded as 1. Unemployed and job training or course through the Employment Office were coded as 2.

Civic engagement

The respondents were asked how they would describe their civic engagement (for example, in sports, the church, choir, culture or similar)? They responded on

a 5-point Likert scale in which the responses ranged from ‘very large’ to ‘very little’. ‘Very large’ was coded as 5 and ‘very little’ as 1.

Exposure to crime

The respondents were asked if they were victims of any of the following crimes in the last 12 months: vandalism, apartment burglary, robbery, threat, or physical abuse). In the coding, 1 is ‘not exposed’, 2 is ‘exposed to one crime’, and 3 is ‘exposed to two or more crimes’.

Generalized trust

The respondents were asked the standard question for measuring generalized trust (and sometimes social capital): ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?’ The respondents were offered the following alternatives: ‘People in general can be trusted’; ‘People in general can often be trusted’, ‘neither in general nor often’; ‘People in general can seldom be trusted’; and ‘People in general cannot be trusted’. High numbers indicate high levels of trust.

Institutional trust

A 6-item index was used to measure institutional trust ($\alpha = 0.851$). This measurement combined the respondents’ level of trust in the Swedish Government, the Swedish Parliament, the Courts, the police, the compulsory schools and the social services. The choices ranked from ‘very little trust’ to ‘very much trust’, where high numbers indicate high levels of trust.

Trust in the police institution

A 4-item index was used to measure trust in the police as an institution, using the following statements ($\alpha = 0.836$): ‘I have confidence that the police can do their job well’; ‘I trust the leaders of the police to make decisions that are good for everyone in Örebro’; ‘People’s basic rights are well protected by the police’; ‘The police care about the well-being of all people they deal with’. High numbers indicate high levels of trust.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF PLACE – VIVALLA COMPARED TO ÖREBRO

Previous research gives us reason to believe that the level of perceived unsafety is higher and trust is lower in segregated, disadvantaged areas because the inhabitants of such areas generally experience greater socioeconomic vulnerability and higher

levels of victimization. They also encounter more visible signs of disorder. These are all factors that are known to produce an increase in feelings of unsafety (measured as fear of crime). In addition, research from the US has shown that ethnic group differences account for the fact that some groups trust the police less than other groups (Tyler, 2005; Stoutland, 2001).

After considering the quality of data,⁷ the initial consideration was therefore to learn whether there was a difference in trust and feelings of unsafety between Vivalla and the greater Örebro. Related aspects were also investigated, one being civic engagement, which is often seen as a proxy for social capital and fundamental for general safety (Stolle, 2007). Differences in the level of exposure to crime were also measured, although known from other data that these differences existed, these measures were included to control for the representability of the respondents.

Table 2. Mean levels of central concepts: Vivalla in relation to Örebro

Variables	Vivalla		Örebro		p < 0.05	Cohens D
	mean	SD	mean	SD		
General unsafety	2.24	0.85	2.44	0.81	Sig.	0.24
Institutional trust	3.05	0.88	3.17	0.70	n.s.	
Trust in police	3.36	0.93	3.29	0.83	n.s.	
Generalized trust	3.13	1.13	3.70	1.00	Sig.	0.52
Civic engagement	2,66	1.37	2.73	1.28	n.s.	
Exposure to crime	1.47	0.72	1.27	0.54	Sig.	0.32

Source: own study.

Table 2 shows that the inhabitants of Vivalla have higher general feelings of unsafety than the inhabitants of Örebro as a whole. The inhabitants of Vivalla also have lower generalized trust. These two variables show significant mean difference in an ANOVA test ($p = 0.021, 0.000$). The difference in exposure to crime was also tested and, as expected, there is a difference between Vivalla and Örebro. People living in Vivalla are more exposed to crime than people living in Örebro ($p = 0.002$). The strength of the difference can be calculated using Cohen's D (Borg and Westerlund, 2006; Garson, 2011). According to Cohen's categorization of effect strength (Borg and Westerlund, 2006), the difference in general unsafety and exposure to crime is small, whereas the difference in generalized trust is moderate.

⁷ The descriptive statistics show that both the skewness and kurtosis statistics are within the limits of assumed normality (see Appendix 2). The standard deviation shows a sufficient variance within the variables. Comparison of the groups (Vivalla and Örebro) shows that the smaller sample in Vivalla has no negative effects on the variance (Appendix 2; table 2).

Considering the socioeconomic disadvantages of the Vivalla inhabitants, including the rapid turnover in its population, these differences were expected. If anything, they would have been expected to be even larger. However, what was less expected is that no significant difference exists between Vivalla and Örebro as for institutional trust, trust in the police and civic engagement. As mentioned, research in a US context shows that minority groups tend to have less trust in the police (Tyler, 2005). A complementary finding is that neighbourhoods with socially disadvantaged and minority groups often provoke socialization processes and experiences that reduce trust in public institutions, including the police (Goldsmith, 2005; Tyler, 2005). It is often claimed that civic engagement has a buffering effect on such lack of trust (Ross and Joon, 2000). However, our study provides no evidence of this could explain the lack of difference, since we found no significant difference in civic engagement by the two groups.

7. THE MODERATING EFFECT OF PLACE ON FEELINGS OF UNSAFETY

Having concluded that there is a difference in general unsafety, however small, we now turn to the central question of this study: Does place have a part in explaining the difference between the two groups regarding feelings of unsafety? Looking at the correlation matrix of the variables (see Appendix 1), we see that place has an individual effect on the dependent variable. Hence, model 1 tests whether that effect remains when the other explanatory variables are controlled for (see table 3).

In order to test model 1, place was included in the same regression with the other independent variables so as to show it has no unique effect on feelings of unsafety. The variables explaining variance in feelings of unsafety are gender, age, and education, plus the three trust variables – generalized trust, trust in institutions, and trust in the police. Women and the elderly feel more unsafe than men and younger people do. The more education an individual has, the more that individual trusts and the less unsafe it feels. This conclusion agrees with other research findings (see, e.g., Hale, 1996; Sandstig, 2010). Employment status, heritage and exposure to crime have no effect on feelings of unsafety. Victimization increases fear of crime, but has less effect when measuring general unsafety (see also Elchardus, 2008, p. 464). In short, we can dismiss model 1: place has no individual and direct effect on feelings of unsafety.

This is where many studies on the effect of place end, however, to investigate the matter further, we now turn to see if place has a moderating effect on feelings of unsafety. Subgroup regressions were made for the inhabitants of both Örebro and Vivalla. As regressions two and three (table 3) show, the explanatory effects of the other independent variables change. They are moderated by the effect of place. Different aspects influence feelings of unsafety depending on whether one lives

in Vivalla or in Örebro. In Örebro, there are still unique effects for the individual explanations: gender, age, and education, plus generalized trust which is the dominant variable, which accounts for 14%⁸ of Regression model 3's explanatory power. Institutional trust and trust in police lose significance.

Table 3. Antecedents of general unsafety: the influence of place

Variables	Total		Vivalla		Örebro	
	theoretical model 1		theoretical model 2			
	regression model 1		regression model 2		regression model 3	
	Std. Beta	Sig	Std. Beta	Sig	Std. Beta	Sig
<i>Individual variables</i>						
Gender	0.140	0.006	0.078	0.365	0.174	0.007
Age	-0.139	0.011	-0.035	0.712	-0.172	0.011
Heritage	-0.091	0.115	-0.116	0.217	-0.056	0.382
Education	-0.152	0.006	-0.128	0.147	-0.180	0.009
Employed/unemployed	-0.031	0.571	-0.065	0.468	-0.017	0.791
Exposure to crime	-0.020	0.703	-0.118	0.186	0.023	0.716
<i>Trust variables</i>						
Generalized trust	-0.309	0.000	-0.209	0.025	-0.371	0.000
Institutional trust	-0.180	0.007	-0.323	0.005	-0.080	0.331
Trust in police	-0.117	0.068	-0.241	0.028	-0.036	0.650
<i>Place</i>	0.035	0.553				
Adjusted R ²	0.241		0.267		0.237	

Note: N total 306, N Örebro 199, N Vivalla 107.

Source: own study.

In Vivalla, on the other hand, we find a new and somewhat reversed pattern. The traditional explanations disappear. Age, gender, education, heritage and employment status show no unique effect on general unsafety. The variables that are significant in the explanation of feelings of unsafety are generalized trust, the level of trust in institutions and institutional trust in the police. Thus, trust is much more central than individual characteristics such as gender, age, employment etc. Moreover, institutional trust and trust in the police are the strongest explanatory variables, accounting for 16% of the variance in regression model 2. To conclude, trust in institutions, and particularly trust in the police, seems to be more important in countering feelings of unsafety in neighbourhoods such as Vivalla than in the average city. It seems to be particularly important (or fruitful) to have a trustworthy

⁸ Calculated by taking the squared Std. Beta.

police force and trustworthy institutions in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Exposure to crime does not have a unique effect on feelings of unsafety in either of our models. Although such exposure may affect fear of crime, it does not seem to affect general feelings of unsafety (cf. Elchardus, 2008, p. 464).

The moderating effect of place causes two different explanatory patterns of unsafety in Vivalla and Örebro. To this point, we have not accounted for the statistical significance of the differences between the subgroups. To account for these differences concerning specific variables, the significance of the difference between the standardized betas of Örebro and Vivalla (table 3 regression model two and three) was calculated.⁹ A one-tailed significance test was used to identify significant differences in institutional trust and trust in the police. These are the central aspects moderated by place. The conclusion that place moderates the effect of traditional explanations such as gender, age and socioeconomic status needs to be confirmed by studies with larger respondent samples. The limited sample of this study may lack the power to confirm those relationships. However, the indication that strong identity-forming factors (e.g., gender and age) have no effect on how the inhabitants of Vivalla perceive their environment in terms of general unsafety is an original finding that merits further study.

8. DISCUSSION

A plausible reason for the relative influence of trust in institutions and trust in the police with respect to feelings of unsafety in Vivalla may be the greater presence of and dependence on the police in such neighbourhoods. Trust in the police (as well as in other institutions) may therefore be more essential in such neighbourhoods by having the possibility to prevent feelings of unsafety. It could be explained in terms of vulnerability, however, in a different sense than is portrayed in the literature of fear of crime. The inhabitants are vulnerable because of their relatively greater dependence on public institution. This situation may explain why their level of trust in them relates to their feelings of unsafety.

The crucial role of public institutions to prevent feelings of unsafety is supported by the study of Hummelsheim *et al.* (2011), which shows that a high degree of social expenditure and a higher degree of decommodification of social welfare policy are correlated with lower crime-related insecurity. The authors suggest that these policy measures neutralize public insecurity and social anxiety (Hummelsheim *et al.*, 2011, p. 337). These results explain Sweden's relatively low levels of unsafety as a consequence of the country's social democratic welfare state with its high level of decommodification (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Hence, the differences in trust and

⁹ Calculated by converting into z-scores and computing the standard error of difference (Garson, 2011).

feelings of unsafety between disadvantaged, segregated neighbourhoods and the general urban average may be greater in countries with other welfare state models. The somewhat surprising fact that feelings of unsafety were only moderately higher in Vivalla than in Örebro suggests that the public institutions have somewhat neutralized the social insecurity that is the result of structural disadvantages.

A recent empirical study from the same local context pointed to the critical function of the schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: schools can be safe havens for children (Svensson *et al.*, 2012). Young people in these neighbourhoods, in particular young immigrants, perceive their schools as safe havens where they have an influence that they typically lack in their neighbourhoods. In Svensson *et al.*'s study (2012), as well as in this study, respondents in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, compared to control groups, did not have higher levels of trust in institutions or greater perceptions of their own influence. However, their trust in institutions and their perceptions of influence have a more critical function as it seems to prevent feelings of unsafety and generate feelings of safety. Hence, to get a full scope of the influence of central factors on feelings of unsafety, one needs to consider moderating effects. In this case we have identified trust as a critical factor for feelings of unsafety in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, whereas other research designs would not have revealed its prominent function in these contexts.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Feelings of unsafety and fear of crime are a political and social concern that is distinguishable from actual crime or risk. Policies on local crime prevention and community safety not only address causes of crime but also address the anxiety and unsafety that surround crime (Gilling, 2001). However, it is difficult to define unsafety as well as deal with it. Unsafety, as a concept, often becomes a measure of how safe one feels from specific crimes and in specific situations. This study takes an alternative approach to feelings of unsafety and follows the symbolic paradigm. Feelings of unsafety is understood and measured as a perception of the societal development and how safe the surrounding society is (see Elchardus *et al.*, 2008). The study looks, in particular, at the role place plays in this perception.

Two theoretical models on the role of place on feelings of unsafety were tested. The findings from model 1 show that place has no unique effect on how unsafe one perceives the world. Theoretically, this finding indicates that place can be reduced to its structural variables. However, model 2 shows that place has a moderating effect on feelings of unsafety. Hence, a primary conclusion is that more complex mechanisms than direct effects should be considered when determining the effect of place and when searching for mechanisms behind feelings of unsafety.

Living in Vivalla changes the influence of other factors on feelings of unsafety. In Örebro (and as reported on in previous research) the variables with a unique effect on general unsafety are gender, age and education, together with generalized trust. The fact that women, the elderly, and socioeconomically weaker groups experience greater feelings of unsafety is often ascribed to their greater vulnerability (Hale, 1996), and, for women in particular, it is connected to a socially constructed identity with an inferior power position (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1986; Listerborn, 2001). In Vivalla, these factors with an established relationship to fear of crime do not influence feelings of unsafety. The factors that have a unique effect on feelings of unsafety are institutional trust, trust in the police, and generalized trust.

This is a limited and explorative study and we cannot draw any general conclusions from the presented results. However, the findings challenge established explanations, and further research is needed to determine its scope. The results point in a partly new direction that assigns public institutions a central role in preventing feelings of unsafety in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This result indicates that it is particularly in such areas that trustworthy institutions have the potential to generate feelings of safety and to neutralize the higher vulnerability and the greater risks these inhabitants face. These results are particularly important in a time when the welfare state is (or is in danger of) being dismantled, when decommodification and redistribution are being reduced, and when nations are considering reduction of social services in deprived areas.

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10. APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Correlation matrix

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Place	Pearson Corr	1	0.119	0.010	0.070	0.422	-0.251	0.243	-0.258	-0.088	0.039
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.021	0.834	0.161	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.442
	N	401	376	401	401	399	395	379	397	373	383

2. General unsafety	Pearson Corr	0.119	1	0.099	-0.123	0.025	-0.240	0.058	-0.336	-0.322	-0.196
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.021		0.054	0.017	0.634	0.000	0.276	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	376	376	376	376	374	371	355	372	353	365
3. Gender	Pearson Corr	0.010	-0.099	1	0.072	0.059	0.018	-0.012	0.003	-0.011	0.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.834	.054		0.152	0.244	0.723	0.816	0.953	0.838	0.565
	N	401	376	401	401	399	395	379	397	373	383
4. Age	Pearson Corr	0.070	-0.123	0.072	1	0.198	0.214	0.082	-0.118	-0.014	-0.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.161	0.017	0.152		0.000	0.000	0.112	0.019	0.782	0.077
	N	401	376	401	401	399	395	379	397	373	383
5. Heritage	Pearson Corr	0.422	0.025	0.059	0.198	1	-0.109	0.183	-0.329	0.040	0.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.634	0.244	0.000		0.031	0.000	0.000	0.444	0.527
	N	399	374	399	399	399	394	378	397	373	382
6. Education	Pearson Corr	-0.251	-0.240	0.018	0.214	-0.109	1	-0.164	0.178	0.133	-0.121
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.723	0.000	0.031		0.001	0.000	0.011	0.019
	N	395	371	395	395	394	395	374	392	370	378

7. Employment / unemployment	Pearson Corr	0.243	0.058	-0.012	0.082	0.183	-0.164	1	-0.187	-0.123	0.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.276	0.816	0.112	0.000	0.001		0.000	0.020	0.813
	N	379	355	379	379	378	374	379	376	356	363
8. Generalized trust	Pearson Corr	-0.258	-0.336	0.003	-0.118	-0.329	0.178	-0.187	1	0.305	0.174
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.000	0.953	0.019	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.001
	N	397	372	397	397	397	392	376	397	371	380
9. Institutional trust	Pearson Corr	-0.088	-0.322	-0.011	-0.014	0.040	0.133	-0.123	0.305	1	0.565
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.090	.000	0.838	0.782	0.444	0.011	0.020	0.000		0.000
	N	373	353	373	373	373	370	356	371	373	363
10. Inst. trust in police	Pearson Corr	0.039	-0.196	0.029	-0.090	0.032	-0.121	0.012	0.174	0.565	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.442	0.000	0.565	0.077	0.527	0.019	0.813	0.001	0.000	
	N	383	365	383	383	382	378	363	380	363	383
11. Exposure to crime	Pearson Corr	0.157	0.049	-0.063	0.123	0.035	0.026	0.104	-0.158	-0.144	-0.130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	.359	0.223	0.017	0.505	0.622	0.050	0.002	0.007	0.014
	N	371	349	371	371	369	365	352	367	349	358

Appendix 2. Descriptive statistics

Specification	N statistic	Min. statistic	Max. statistic	Mean statistic	Std. dev. statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis
						statistic	Std error	statistic
General unsafety	376	1.00	5.00	2.36	0.83	0.67	0.13	0.37
Gender	401	1	2	1.49	0.50	0.025	0.12	-2.01
Age	401	1,935	1,994	1,964.2	16.56	0.08	0.12	-1.12
Heritage	399	0.00	1.00	0.27	0.44	1.05	0.12	-0.90
Education	395	0.00	2.00	1.18	0.75	-0.311	0.12	-1.16
Employment	379	1.00	2.00	1.10	0.29	2.77	0.13	5.72
Exposure to crime	371	1.00	3.00	1.35	0.62	1.59	0.13	1.31
Generalized trust	397	1	5	3.47	1.09	-0.68	0.12	-0.33
Institutional trust	373	1.00	5.00	3.19	0.78	-0.37	0.13	0.27
Trust in police	383	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.87	-0.42	0.13	-0.06
Place	401	1	2	1.41	0.49	0.35	0.12	-1.89
Valid N (listwise)	306							

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