
Changes in the Sex Patterning of Perceived Threats of Sanctions

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In contrast to a recent survey conducted by Miller and Simpson, two earlier surveys of adults, one conducted in 1972 and the other in 1982, reported that women scored higher than men on measures of what Grasmick and Bursik recently have called perceived threats of shame and embarrassment, as well as legal sanctions, for violating the law. Hagan's power-control theory, coupled with trends in labor force and household composition, is used to predict a decline over time in the magnitude of the effect of sex on perceived threats of sanctions. The 1982 survey is merged with an identical one conducted in 1992 to determine whether men and women have become more alike in their perception of these threats. Evidence supporting the predictions from power-control theory is found for theft but not for assault. The findings are discussed in the context of various theories and previous research concerning gender, crime, and social control.

The reason why crime is much less prevalent among women than among men did not become a pressing topic for theory and research until the late 1970s when Adler (1975) and Simon (1975) reported that the female crime rate, though still much lower than the male rate, was increasing more rapidly than and converging with the crime rate for men. Both Adler and Simon attributed this to the social structural and psychological consequences of the growing emancipation of women. The scant earlier literature on female crime and the sex-crime relationship had focused on biological explanations. (For a critique of the earlier works, see Smart 1977). Adler and Simon sparked a flurry of theory and research, not only on the convergence issue but also on the general question of why women commit less crime. Theories of gender differences in criminal motivation (e.g., Steffensmeier 1978; Adler 1975:94-95; Cernkovich &

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Giordano 1979; Datesman et al. 1975) and opportunity (e.g., Simon 1975; Austin 1982; Giordano 1978; Morash 1986) have been considered (see Smith & Paternoster 1987 for a review), as have links between crime and "masculine" personality traits such as competitiveness (e.g., Hill & Harris 1981; Cullen et al. 1979) and between crime and gendered self-concepts (e.g., Harris 1977).

Gender differences in social control experiences also have been proposed (e.g., Hagan et al. 1987; Jensen & Eve 1976; Richards & Tittle 1981; Shover et al. 1979; Smith 1979). According to this argument, women are more closely supervised throughout their lives than men and have more to lose if a transgression is detected. Richards and Tittle (1981:1184) suggest that "a woman who commits a crime not only does something wrong, but also engages in status threatening or role contradictory behavior" by failing "to appear passive, dependent, and fearful." Consequently, women should perceive higher costs for engaging in crime, explaining perhaps why women commit less crime.

Previous cross-sectional surveys of adults conducted in 1972 by Tittle (1980; Richards & Tittle 1981) and in 1982 by Grasmick (Finley & Grasmick 1985) report that women do score higher than men on various measures of perceived costs associated with a variety of illegal behaviors. However, in a more recent survey Miller and Simpson (1991), using somewhat similar measures, failed to find this pattern. Although their sample (college students) is unlike those of the other researchers and they focus on only one offense (courtship violence), their findings raise the possibility that gender differences in the perceived risks associated with illegal behavior are declining.

When Hagan's (Hagan et al. 1987) power-control theory is coupled with certain demographic trends, change over time in the gender patterning of perceived risks should indeed be expected. Women increasingly have entered authority positions in the labor force (see Sorensen 1991), and the number of father-absent families has increased (see Levy & Michel 1991). These two structural trends, in the context of Hagan's theory, would predict a reduction over time in gender differences in perceived sanctions associated with illegal behavior.

The research reported here considers the possibility of a decline among adults in the relationship between gender and perceived threats of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions for illegal behavior, threats that Grasmick and Bursik (1990; see also Finley & Grasmick 1985) argue are "costs" which actors consider in deciding whether to commit a crime. The 1982 survey reported by Finley and Grasmick (1985) contains measures of these variables that were replicated in 1992

with a sample drawn from the same population. The general hypothesis to be tested is that women's tendency to score higher than men on these perceived threats is not as strong in 1992 as it was a decade ago.

Gender, Social Control, and Power Control

Researchers studying crime and deviance often note that girls and women are more closely supervised and, thus, targets of more intense social control, especially informal control (see Gottfredson & Hirschi 1990:144–49; Hoffman-Bustamante 1973; Kruttschnitt 1982; Smart 1977; Steffensmeir & Allan 1991; Turk 1969:165), an observation consistent with literature on sex differences in socialization experiences (see Bardwick & Douvan 1972; Chafetz 1974; Fagot & Patterson 1969). Shover et al. (1979) and Hagan et al. (1987) are among those who strongly advocate control theory as an explanation of gender differences in crime, and Simpson (1989:621; 1991:121) suggests that some feminists see merit in the control perspective. Emphasis is placed on both such internal controls as moral inhibition instilled in the socialization process and such external controls as fear of social condemnation and legal sanctions.

Cross-sectional survey research stemming from the control perspective tends to produce consistent results concerning the source of the gender-crime relationship. For example, Jensen and Eve (1976) found that variables drawn from Hirschi's (1969) control theory, such as attachments to conventional others and belief in moral validity of the law, explain most of the relationship between gender and delinquency. In addition, Smith (1979) observed that gender differences in fear of loss of respect account for a substantial portion of the relationship between gender and deviance in a sample of adults.

The emphasis on greater control of females relative to males is central to Hagan's power-control theory concerning gender, class, and common forms of delinquency (Hagan et al. 1985, 1987; Hill & Atkinson 1988; Singer & Levine 1988). The theory not only attempts to explain why crime and common delinquency is less prevalent among females but also generates predictions that the relationship between sex and perceived risk of sanctions will change as women increasingly occupy positions of power, both in the labor force and in the household. According to power-control theory, the social control experiences of sons and daughters are most similar in the least patriarchal families—those in which the father is absent and those in which the mother is employed in a position of authority in the labor force. Women who head households and women holding positions of authority in the labor force share a common trait compared to other women—less domination from males. Their

occupancy of these roles presumably reduces some of the constraints on their behavior. The "shell of illusion" that Tittle (1980:67) describes, the belief that dire things always happen to those who break the law, begins to crack as such women's adult experiences begin to resemble those of men. Furthermore, in such families, the intensity of the woman's control over daughters is reduced and daughters, like sons, are encouraged to take risks. Thus, daughters of these women come to resemble sons in their social control experiences in the home.

Hagan argues that gender differences in common delinquency result from the more intense control, primarily by the mother, of daughters than of sons and from parents encouraging risk taking by their sons but discouraging it by their daughters. In patriarchal families wives prepare their daughters for traditionally female work and their sons for a future of labor force participation. For daughters this results in close supervision and sanctions against risk taking; for sons, weaker controls and encouragement of risk taking. Thus, gender differences in social control experiences lead to greater involvement in common forms of delinquency among sons than among daughters.

However, Hagan et al. (1987) report that the relationship between gender and common delinquency is smaller in families in which both the mother and father hold positions of authority over others in the labor force. In such families, mothers, preparing their daughters for similar careers, are more inclined to treat their daughters like their sons in both intensity of control and views about risk taking. The relationship between gender and delinquency among adolescents in these families, compared to more patriarchal families, is significantly lower because daughters are more delinquent.

Evidence indicates that college-educated women have made gains in those occupations that would tend to produce gender similarity in social control experiences according to power-control theory. Sorensen (1991:13) reports that from 1978 to 1989, "the median weekly salary of full-time female workers increased from 61 percent to 70 percent that of full-time male workers." Several explanations of women's gains in relative pay during the decade have been suggested (*ibid.*, p. 16–24), including a greater improvement in the quality of female labor relative to that of male labor and a decline in labor market discrimination against women. Sorensen's own analysis of data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, however, reveals that the major source of gender convergence in earnings has been changes in the sex composition of certain occupations, most notably gains by college-educated women in managerial, professional, and technical occupations. These are precisely the occupations most likely to involve power over others, which

is Hagan's (Hagan et al. 1987:795) definition of an authority position in the labor force. Women in such positions experience less intense supervision, develop a "taste for risk" (ibid., p. 799), and come to recognize that rule violations typically go undetected. Similar views are then transmitted to daughters in the socialization process. One implication is that as more adult women enter positions of authority in the labor force, they and their daughters will come to resemble men in their perceptions of the consequences of breaking the rules.

Hagan et al. also find that female-headed households display the pattern of similarity in social control of sons and daughters, and, thus, similarity in male and female involvement in common delinquency, with daughters becoming more delinquent than in traditional patriarchal households. In this respect, such families resemble those in which the mother holds an authority position in the labor force. Hagan et al. (p. 813) argue that "what both these kinds of circumstances have in common is a freedom from male domination." Patriarchy is reduced in two ways (labeled "liberation and deprivation" by Hagan et al.): by the employment of women in authority positions and by the absence of a male in the household. Consequently, not only the increasing entry of women into authority positions in the labor force but also the growing number of father-absent households should produce a tendency toward gender similarity in social control experiences.

Levy and Michel (1991) document the trend toward an increased proportion of families headed by females under 65. Among all families with a head under 65, one out of every eight was headed by a female in 1973. By 1986, this figure was one out of every five. The increasing proportion of female-headed households has been especially characteristic of black families. In 1986, 41% of black families were headed by a female under 65, compared to 31% in 1973. Comparable figures for whites are 11% and 8%. By 1990, 51% of black children and 16% of white children lived in single-parent families headed by women (O'Hare et al. 1991:19). The increased proportion of such families should, according to Hagan's theory, contribute to a trend toward gender similarity in perceived risks associated with illegal behavior.

In summary, we are suggesting that the rationale in power-control theory for gender differences in perceived risks, when coupled with historical trends, in fact predicts an interaction effect with time as the conditional variable. Theories are enriched when they begin to include additional hypotheses that specify conditions under which predicted relationships are stronger or weaker (see Tittle & Meier 1990).

Shame, Embarrassment, and Legal Sanctions as Risks

Grasmick and Bursik (1990; see also Grasmick et al. 1993) argue that variables with a range of names in various theories and research on social control might succinctly be captured as threats of shame and embarrassment. Like Hirschi (1986), they consider control theory compatible with a rational-choice theory of crime, and like Felson (1986) and Tuck and Riley (1986), they see merit in developing connections between the two. Their perspective is consistent with Scheff's (1988:396) emphasis on the importance of "the painful emotions of embarrassment [and] shame" as sources of conformity to norms (see also Braithwaite 1989; Tittle 1980; Paternoster 1989; Williams & Hawkins 1989) and with the revival of rational-choice theory in criminology (e.g., Cornish & Clarke 1986) and sociology (Coleman 1990). It also addresses Akers's (1990) criticism of traditional deterrence theory and rational-choice theory for focusing on too narrow a range of punishments.

Terms like belief in the legitimacy of a law, moral commitment to a legal norm, internalization of norms, conscience, and the like refer to internal controls and are linked by Grasmick and Bursik to shame (see also Blake & Davis 1964; Wilson & Herrnstein 1985:48–49). Individuals possessing these characteristics, when contemplating whether to commit an illegal act, must weigh the potential cost of feeling guilty or remorseful—what Grasmick and Bursik call *shame*—should they engage in illegal behavior. Thus, shame is a self-imposed punishment. On the other hand, the threat of embarrassment, or loss of respect, is a socially imposed punishment that occurs when actors violate norms endorsed by people whose opinions they value. *Embarrassment*, in Grasmick and Bursik's terminology, subsumes such variables as peer disapproval, informal sanctions, and social stigma.

Grasmick and Bursik argue that perceived threats of shame and embarrassment might be combined with the perceived threat of state-imposed legal sanctions to form a more inclusive set of cost factors for a rational-choice perspective on crime. They note a parallel between shame and embarrassment, on the one hand, and legal sanctions, on the other. Like legal sanctions, these threats have the dimensions of both certainty and severity. When contemplating an illegal behavior, actors consider both the likelihood (i.e., certainty) of shame and of embarrassment and how painful these emotions would be (i.e., severity) should they occur. As with the threat of legal sanctions in conventional deterrence theory (Becker 1968; Friedland 1990), perceived threats of shame and of embarrassment are captured by the products of their perceived certainty and severity.

Previous Evidence of Sex Differences in Perceived Threats

Using data collected by Grasmick in 1982 from a sample of adults, Finley and Grasmick (1985) reported that women score significantly higher than men on measures of perceived certainty and perceived severity of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions for a variety of offenses. These results are consistent with evidence from Tittle's 1972 survey of people 15 and older. Tittle (1980:294) reported that women were more likely than men to fear a "loss of respect" if they violated the law (see also Smith 1979). Richards and Tittle (1981) found that women perceive a higher certainty of arrest than men and that they tended to rate a series of offenses as more "morally wrong" than do men. These results, as Finley and Grasmick (1985:319) noted, would be expected based on evidence that women are more concerned than men about other people's impressions of them (see Macoby & Jacklin 1974; Gilligan 1977) and that moral transgressions are more likely to produce guilt feelings in females than in males (see Hoffman 1975; Morris 1965).

Miller and Simpson (1991), using data collected in 1990 and relying on the findings described above from surveys conducted in 1972 and 1982, initially propose that among college students perceived threats of formal and informal sanctions for acts of courtship violence would be higher among women than among men. In fact, however, their data reveal the opposite: men in their more recent data set score higher on perceived threats than women. The discrepancy between these and earlier findings could stem from a variety of sources. Both Grasmick's and Tittle's surveys were samples primarily of adults (although Tittle's included some adolescents), not college students. Furthermore, courtship violence might be considered a unique offense since, traditionally, boys are socialized not to hit girls while girls learn that slapping boyfriends is an appropriate expression of their presumed emotionality.

However, another possibility as implied by Hagan's theory is that the gender patterning of perceived threats of sanctions actually has changed over time. Miller and Simpson (1991:351) suggest that for courtship violence among young men, perceived risks of sanctions probably have increased. An alternative, consistent with Hagan's power-control theory and with labor force and household composition trends, is that women's perceived risks for common crimes in general have decreased.

Methods

The Samples

Every year since 1979, the Department of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma has conducted an annual survey of adults (18 and older) in Oklahoma City. The 1982 survey, with a sample size of 350, contained questions measuring perceived certainty and severity of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions for several types of illegal behavior. The study reported here is concerned with two of these, petty theft and simple assault, which most clearly parallel the distinction between property crimes and violent crimes that has been central to the research on gender convergence in crime (see Adler 1975; Grasmick et al. 1984; Hill & Harris 1981; Simon 1975; Smith & Visser 1980; Steffensmeier 1978, 1980). The very same questionnaire items were included in the 1992 survey ($N=396$), which used the same population and methodology. Combining the two surveys affords a unique opportunity: identical measures of perceived sanction threats are obtained from independent samples in the same community separated by a decade, and that decade has been a period of changing gender roles.

In both the 1982 and 1992 surveys, a simple random sample of names and addresses was drawn from the annual *R. L. Polk Directory* for the city. Initial contact was in the form of a letter describing the nature of the survey and indicating that a member of the research team would soon try to schedule an appointment for an interview. Attempts to schedule appointments were made in person by trained field supervisors and interviewers. Members of the target sample who refused or could not be located were replaced by random selection until the target sample size was attained.

In the 1982 sample, 54.3% of the respondents were women and 82.6% were white. These sample characteristics did not differ significantly from 1980 Census figures for adults for these variables. The median age of the 1982 sample was 38. In the 1992 sample, 53.8% of the respondents were women and 83.1% were white. For both percentage women and percentage white, the 1992 sample did not differ significantly from comparable figures for adults in the 1990 Census, or from comparable figures in the 1982 survey. As expected because of the aging of the adult population, the median age of 44 was greater than the median age in the 1982 survey.

Analysis Strategy

For the analysis that follows, the two data sets have been merged, with year as a dummy variable coded 0 for 1982 and 1 for 1992. The total number of cases is 746. A listwise deletion of missing cases results in an N of 738 in the analysis for theft; 733 in the analysis for assault. The general hypothesis predicts an interaction effect of year and gender: the inverse effect of being male on perceived threats is expected to be less in 1992 than in 1982. Significant interaction effects then must be examined in detail to determine whether, as predicted from power-control theory, perceived threats have decreased among women or whether they have increased among men.

Analysis of the entire sample was supplemented with separate analyses for whites and nonwhites and for respondents who graduated from college and those who did not (see Simpson 1991). Nonwhite women are more likely to have been reared in and now to head single-parent families. College-educated women are more likely to be in positions of authority in the labor force (Sorensen 1991) and presumably to have come from families in which the mother held such a position.¹ Power-control theory implies a decrease over time in perceived threats primarily for nonwhite rather than white women and primarily for college-educated rather than less educated women.

Age is an important control variable. Because of a general aging of the adult population in the United States, the 1992 sample is somewhat older than the 1982 sample. Grasmick and Bursik (1990) report that age is positively related to each of the three perceived threats. Thus, *ceteris paribus*, perceived threats should be higher in the 1992 than in the 1982 sample. Consequently, age is potentially a confounding variable and is controlled throughout the analysis.

Perceived Threats

Theft was presented on the questionnaire as “taking something from someplace worth less than \$20 that did not belong to you,” while assault was presented as “physically hurting another person on purpose.” For both of these offenses, perceived certainty and severity of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions were measured.

For perceived certainty of legal sanctions, respondents in both years were asked if they thought *they* “would get caught” by the police if they engaged in the behavior. Responses were given on a four-point scale ranging from “definitely would”

¹ The merged data set does not permit direct measurement of household composition or employment in positions of authority, either in the family of origin or the current family.

(coded 4) to “definitely would not” (coded 1). Following the strategy of Grasmick and Bryjak (1980; see also Miller & Simpson 1991) for measuring perceived *subjective* severity of punishment, respondents were asked to imagine they had been caught and to think about what punishment they would expect. Then they were asked to respond to the question, “How much of a problem would this create for your life?” Answers were given on a five-point scale ranging from “a very big problem” (coded 5) to “no problem at all” (coded 1). Finally, in accord with the expected utility model upon which rational-choice theory is based, the perceived threat of legal sanctions is operationalized as the product of perceived certainty and perceived severity. The score has a possible range from 1 to 20, with means of 13.0 for theft (s.d.=4.8) and 14.0 for assault (s.d.=4.8) in the merged data set.

The measure of perceived threat of shame was similar. After an introductory remark noting that some people might feel ashamed, guilty, or remorseful *even if no one else found out*, respondents were presented with the statement, “Generally, in most situations I would feel guilty if I . . .,” followed by the offense. Responses were given on a four-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” (coded 4) to “strongly disagree” (coded 1). Next, they were asked to imagine that they did feel guilty or remorseful and to consider how big a problem such a feeling would cause for their lives. The response options were identical to the five-point scale for severity of legal sanctions. Also, like the threat of legal sanctions, the perceived threat of shame was computed as the product of its certainty and severity. In the merged data set, the mean perceived threat of shame is 15.5 for theft (s.d.=4.9) and 16.0 for assault (s.d.=5.1).

Similar procedures were used for embarrassment. Respondents were asked if most of the people whose opinions they value would lose respect for them if they committed each of the two offenses. Responses were given on a four-point scale ranging from “definitely would” (coded 4) to “definitely would not” (coded 1). Perceived severity of embarrassment was measured by instructing respondents to imagine that such people would lose respect for them, and then to indicate how big a problem this would cause for their lives. The same five-point scale used for severity of legal sanctions and shame was used for severity of embarrassment. The perceived threat of embarrassment was computed as the product of certainty and severity and has a mean of 13.5 for theft (s.d.=5.4) and 14.4 for assault (s.d.=5.5).

Other Variables

Gender and year are the key independent variables. Gender is a dummy variable coded 1 for men (46.0% of the merged samples). Year also is a dummy variable coded 1 for 1992 (53.1% of the merged samples.) Age serves as a control variable throughout the analysis and has a mean of 44.4 (s.d.=17.2) in the combined data set. The analysis considers whether any tendencies toward similarity over time differ across categories of race and education, as power-control theory would predict. Of the 128 nonwhites (17.2% of the merged samples), 100 are black, with the remaining 28 primarily American Indian and Hispanic. The tables presented below compare whites to all nonwhites. However, the analysis was replicated using just blacks, and the conclusions did not differ from those reported. Those who graduated from college (30.3% of the merged samples) are distinguished from those who did not. In the sample, 31.2% of the whites indicated they had completed college, compared to 25.5% of the nonwhites. Langston University, a predominantly black institution, is located very near Oklahoma City, resulting in a black population with a fairly high proportion of college graduates. Because race and education are not strongly related in the sample, findings concerning race as a conditional variable will not necessarily overlap with those concerning education.

Analysis

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with product terms are used to judge whether a trend toward similarity between men and women in perceived threats occurred between 1982 and 1992. For both offenses, each of the three perceived threats is regressed on the dummy variables year (coded 1 for 1992) and gender (coded 1 for men), the product of year and gender (which equals 1 for males in 1992 and 0 under all other conditions), and age as a control variable. Given the dummy coding, the unstandardized regression coefficient for gender (i.e., male) will indicate the estimated difference between males and females in perceived threat in 1982 at fixed levels of age. This coefficient is expected to be negative, meaning that males scored lower than females on the perceived threat in 1982. Whether or not a trend toward similarity has occurred will be reflected in the unstandardized regression coefficient for the product term. That coefficient, which we call the "convergence coefficient," indicates, at fixed levels of age, the change between 1992 and 1982 in the difference between men and women in the predicted perceived threat. The 1992 difference in predicted perceived threat between men and women is the sum

of the coefficient for male (expected to be negative) and the coefficient for the product term. If convergence has occurred, the coefficient for the product term will be positive; when added to the negative coefficient for male, the sum will indicate less of an inverse effect of being male on perceived threat in 1992 than in 1982. Since direction is predicted, one-tailed significance tests are reported throughout the analysis.

While a significant positive coefficient for the product of year and male, along with a negative coefficient for male, will indicate the presence of convergence in perceived threat, by itself this coefficient will not indicate the nature of the convergence. It is possible, as power-control theory predicts, that perceived threats among women decreased over time, making them more like men in 1992 than in 1982. Alternatively, perceived threats among men might have increased. Finally, both changes might have occurred. To determine the nature of convergence, the coefficients from the regressions are used to calculate the predicted perceived threat scores, at fixed levels of age, for men and women in both 1982 and 1992. These predicted scores can be used to compute percentage change in perceived threat for both men and women, which might be positive (i.e., an increase) or negative (i.e., a decrease). While percentage change scores in some contexts can be sensitive to floor and ceiling effects, in the present analysis the predicted perceived threat scores never approach their minimum or maximum values.

The analysis begins by examining the perceived sanction convergence hypothesis in the entire sample for both theft and assault. Then results are reported within categories of race and of education to determine if the significance and nature of gender convergence differs across categories of these variables. Unfortunately, sample size limitations prohibit consideration of higher order interactions within categories of education and race simultaneously.

Entire Sample

Table 1A reports the results of tests for the presence of gender convergence in the whole sample. Note first that for all three threats—shame, embarrassment, and legal sanctions—the effect of male is negative and significant for both theft and assault. In other words, for all three perceived threats for both offenses, men scored significantly lower than women in 1982. Next, note that in all cases the coefficients for the product terms are positive as predicted. In other words, for all three threats applied to both offenses, the tendency for males to score lower than females is not as strong in 1992 as it was in 1982.

Table 1A. OLS Regressions to Test for Sex Convergence in Perceived Threats

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Theft (N=738)						
Age	.04	<.001	.04	<.001	.05	<.001
Male	-1.65	.001	-1.72	.002	-2.33	<.001
Year (1992=1)	-.44	.181	-.60	.134	-.85	.034
Male × year	.41	.283	1.29	.050	.99	.074
(Intercept)	14.62		12.34		12.16	
Assault (N=733)						
Age	.06	<.001	.06	<.001	.04	<.001
Male	-1.45	.004	-2.25	<.001	-1.25	.007
Year (1992=1)	.27	.196	.08	.443	.33	.246
Male × year	.53	.238	1.40	.038	.07	.459
(Intercept)	13.73		12.58		12.40	

Table 1B. Predicted Threats by Sex and Year at Fixed Level of Age^a

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Theft						
1982	14.79	16.44	12.57	14.29	11.96	14.29
1992	14.75	16.00	13.25	13.69	12.10	13.44
% change	-0.3%	-2.7%	+5.4%	-4.2%*	+1.2%	-5.9%**
Assault						
1982	14.94	16.39	12.76	15.01	13.10	14.35
1992	15.74	16.66	14.24	15.09	13.50	14.68
% change	+5.4%	+1.6%	+11.6%	+0.5%*	+3.1%	+2.3%

^a Predicted threats are computed from regressions in Table 1A at mean levels of age. For theft, the mean age is 44.301; for assault, 44.302.

* Interaction is significant in Table 1A.
 ** Interaction approaches significance in Table 1A.

While all signs for product terms are positive, only some are significant. For the threat of shame, the interaction effect is insignificant both for theft and assault. Thus, although men and women are more alike in 1992 than in 1982, this change over time is not significant. In contrast, the positive coefficient for the product term is significant for perceived threat of embarrassment for both offenses; women and men are significantly more alike in 1992 than they were in 1982 in their perceived threat of embarrassment for theft and for assault. For perceived threat of legal sanctions, the product term clearly is insignificant for assault ($p = .459$) but approaches significance for theft ($p = .074$).

In Table 1B, the coefficients from Table 1A have been used to calculate predicted perceived threat scores for both men and women in both 1982 and 1992. In the calculations, age has been fixed at its mean for each equation. Although interaction

effects can be viewed from more than one angle, we focus on the one most pertinent to the gender convergence hypothesis.

First consider the threat of embarrassment for theft for which convergence was significant in Table 1A. Table 1B reveals that the predicted score for women is 4.2% lower in 1992 than it was in 1982. But in addition, the predicted score for men is 5.4% higher in 1992 than in 1982. Therefore, the significant gender convergence in perceived threat of embarrassment for theft results from two changes: a decrease among women and an increase among men.² In Table 1A, the tendency toward gender convergence in perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft approached significance. Table 1B suggests that the change primarily was among women. They perceive a lower threat of legal sanctions for theft in 1992 than in 1982 (-5.9%), while the predicted score for men actually increased (+1.2%), but only slightly.

For assault in Table 1A, the only significant convergence was in the threat of embarrassment. Table 1B indicates that this occurred because men perceived a higher threat of embarrassment in 1992 than in 1982 (+11.6%). The predicted score among women was essentially unchanged over time (+0.5%).

Within Categories of Race

Table 2A reports the results of regressions similar to those in Table 1A but with separate estimates for nonwhites and whites. Again, all the coefficients for male (in this case, 12 of them) are negative, while coefficients for all the interaction terms are positive. Caution should be exercised in interpreting the figures for nonwhites because of their relatively small number compared to whites (124 vs. 614 in the equations for theft; 122 vs. 611 in the equations for assault). Due to sample size differences, rejecting the null hypothesis of no convergence is more difficult among nonwhites than whites.

Nevertheless, for theft, Table 2B reveals an unambiguous tendency among nonwhites toward gender convergence in perceived threat of legal sanctions. In absolute magnitude, the coefficient for this product term of 3.85 ($p = .012$) is larger than the coefficient for any other product term in the table. (In the analysis not reported for which the nonwhite category was restricted to blacks, this coefficient was 3.08 and also larger than any other in the table.) In 1992, nonwhite women and men

² This pattern is remarkably similar in form to a finding reported by Hagan et al. (1990:1034). Analyzing data from parents and adolescents in Toronto, they found a smaller adolescent sex difference in self-reported theft in the less patriarchal compared to more patriarchal families. They observe that "the convergence in male and female theft scores in the less patriarchal families results not simply from daughters' increasing their involvement in these forms of theft, but also from sons' decreasing their involvement."

Table 2A. OLS Regressions to Test for Sex Convergence in Perceived Threats within Categories of Race

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Theft						
<i>Nonwhite (N=124)</i>						
Age	.07	.028	.09	.003	.03	.081
Male	-2.35	.071	-3.00	.028	-4.51	<.001
Year (1992=1)	-.32	.405	1.05	.208	-3.20	.001
Male × year	1.65	.220	.92	.330	3.85	.012
(Intercept)	12.66		10.08		14.95	
<i>White (N=614)</i>						
Age	.03	<.001	.04	.003	.05	<.001
Male	-1.65	.001	-1.57	.006	-1.77	.001
Year (1992=1)	-.48	.178	-.93	.060	-.25	.312
Male × year	.28	.351	1.49	.042	.29	.350
(Intercept)	15.17		12.85		11.45	
Assault						
<i>Nonwhite (N=122)</i>						
Age	.04	.115	.05	.081	.06	.020
Male	-2.70	.045	-2.36	.081	-1.88	.101
Year (1992=1)	-.01	.496	.81	.283	-.27	.412
Male × year	2.98	.082	1.67	.230	.21	.458
(Intercept)	13.94		11.53		12.12	
<i>White (N=611)</i>						
Age	.06	<.001	.05	<.001	.04	<.001
Male	-1.38	.008	-2.41	<.001	-1.11	.022
Year (1992=1)	.28	.306	-.15	.401	.50	.171
Male × year	.20	.401	1.51	.036	.02	.491
(Intercept)	13.83		12.97		12.50	

Table 2B. Predicted Threats by Sex and Year at Fixed Level of Age within Categories of Race^a

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Theft						
<i>Nonwhite</i>						
1982	12.95	15.31	10.55	13.55	11.83	16.34
1992	14.29	14.99	12.52	14.60	12.48	13.14
% change	+10.3%	-2.1%	+18.7%	+7.7%	+5.5%	-19.6%*
<i>White</i>						
1982	15.06	16.70	12.86	14.42	12.02	13.79
1992	14.86	16.23	13.41	13.49	12.05	13.54
% change	-1.3%	-2.8%	+4.3%	-6.4%*	+0.2%	-1.8%
Assault						
<i>Nonwhite</i>						
1982	12.75	15.45	11.04	13.41	12.64	14.52
1992	15.71	15.44	13.52	14.21	12.58	14.25
% change	+23.2%	-0.1%**	+22.5%	+6.0%	-0.5%	+1.9%
<i>White</i>						
1982	15.27	16.62	13.03	15.45	13.15	14.26
1992	15.71	16.89	14.39	15.30	13.66	14.75
% change	+2.9%	+1.6%	+10.4%	-1.0%*	+3.9%	+3.4%

^a Predicted threats are computed from regressions in Table 2A at mean levels of age. For theft, the mean age is 40.790 for nonwhites and 45.010 for whites; for assault, 40.787 for nonwhites and 45.003 for whites.

* Interaction is significant in Table 2A.

** Interaction approaches significance in Table 2A.

were more like each other in perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft than they were in 1982. In contrast, in the equations for theft among whites, it is embarrassment, rather than legal sanctions, for which gender convergence is significant ($p = .042$). For assault, none of the interaction terms for nonwhites are significant. Among whites, however, the product term is significant in the embarrassment equation as it was for theft.

Table 2B provides a clearer indication of the nature of the convergence revealed in Table 2A. The significant convergence among nonwhites for perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft primarily results from a reduction among women. At fixed levels of age, the predicted score among nonwhite women in 1992 is 19.6% lower than in 1982, in sharp contrast to an increase of 5.5% among nonwhite men. For theft among whites, significant convergence occurred for the perceived threat of embarrassment. Table 2B shows that this results from the combination of a decrease among white women (-6.4%) and an increase among men (+4.3%).

For assault among whites, significant convergence appeared in the embarrassment equation. Table 2B indicates that this occurs almost entirely because of change among white men. The predicted perceived threat of embarrassment for assault among white men increased by 10.4% between 1982 and 1992; among white women, it remained essentially the same (-1.0%).

Within Categories of Education

The regression analyses to test for the presence of convergence within educational categories are reported in Table 3A. The sample sizes of those who did and those who did not graduate from college differ. In the analysis for theft, 225 respondents are college graduates, while 513 are not. For assault, the comparable figures are 224 and 509. Because of the smaller number of people who did not graduate from college, their standard errors are larger, making rejection of the null hypothesis less likely.

Despite these differences in standard errors, Table 3A provides convincing evidence that convergence has been restricted to those with college degrees. For theft, none of the product terms are significant among people who did not graduate from college. In contrast, for theft among college graduates, the coefficient for the product term is significant for embarrassment ($p = .050$) and for legal sanctions ($p = .011$). These coefficients are positive, and the ones for male negative, as the convergence hypothesis predicts. Evidence that convergence has been restricted to those with a college education also appears in the

analyses for assault. Among those with no college degree, the product term for each of the three threats clearly is insignificant. In fact, for the threat of legal sanctions, it is negative in sign, contrary to the convergence hypothesis. However, among college-educated respondents, the positive coefficient for the interaction term is significant for embarrassment ($p = .032$).

The nature of convergence detected in Table 3A is described in Table 3B. The significant convergence in embarrassment for theft among the college educated results from an increase in perceived threat among men (+6.5%) and an even greater *decrease* among women (-9.9%). The same pattern occurs for the threat of legal sanctions for theft among the college educated: an increase of 7.4% among men and an even greater decrease of 13.1% among women. For assault, significant convergence was detected for embarrassment among those with college degrees. The predicted embarrassment scores in Table 3B suggest this is attributed to a substantial increase of 19.2% among men, accompanied by a slight decrease (-1.4%) among women.

Summary and Discussion

The usual caveats apply concerning generalizing from data collected in a single community to the whole population. Of particular concern is the relatively small number of nonwhites in the analysis and their unusually high percentage of college graduates. However, the data set with measures of perceived threats of shame, embarrassment, and legal sanction in both 1982 and 1992 affords unique opportunities for exploring changes in the gender patterning of perceived costs associated with illegal behavior, changes that are predicted from Hagan's power-control theory based on labor force trends and changes in family structure. Certain findings merit further attention in the study of gender and social control, especially in the context of previous research.

Resistance to Convergence of Perceived Threat of Shame

The finding that perceived threat of shame, a self-imposed punishment, is most resistant to gender convergence is important since Grasmick and Bursik (1990; see also Grasmick et al. 1993) report that the threat of shame is the strongest among the three deterrents. Men scored lower than women in 1982 for both theft and assault, and by 1992 no significant gender convergence was detected. This characterizes the sample as a whole, both nonwhites and whites, and both those with and without college degrees. Nothing happened during the decade to alter the tendency of women to feel more guilty than men if

Table 3A. OLS Regressions to Test for Sex Convergence in Perceived Threats within Categories of Education

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Theft						
<i>No College Degree (N=513)</i>						
Age	.05	<.001	.05	<.001	.06	<.001
Male	-1.13	.036	-.92	.099	-1.86	.001
Year (1992=1)	-.62	.137	-.31	.173	-.61	.134
Male × year	.69	.211	1.11	.130	.53	.264
(Intercept)	14.13		11.74		12.00	
<i>College Degree (N=225)</i>						
Age	.00	.470	.02	.189	.02	.135
Male	-2.60	.002	-3.42	<.001	-3.16	<.001
Year (1992=1)	-.06	.473	-1.47	.069	-1.82	.015
Male × year	.14	.457	2.22	.050	2.61	.011
(Intercept)	16.16		13.99		12.90	
Assault						
<i>No College Degree (N=509)</i>						
Age	.07	<.001	.07	<.001	.05	<.001
Male	-1.19	.040	-1.44	.021	-.78	.111
Year (1992=1)	.49	.449	.24	.352	.48	.201
Male × year	.32	.367	.83	.196	-.49	.286
(Intercept)	13.04		11.69		12.31	
<i>College Degree (N=224)</i>						
Age	.02	.175	.03	.137	.03	.046
Male	-1.97	.010	-4.05	<.001	-2.20	<.001
Year (1992=1)	.87	.155	-.21	.414	-.22	.400
Male × year	.66	.286	2.52	.032	1.52	.103
(Intercept)	15.89		15.01		12.74	

Table 3B. Predicted Threats by Sex and Year at Fixed Level of Age within Categories of Education^a

	Shame		Embarrassment		Legal Sanctions	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Theft						
<i>No College Degree</i>						
1982	15.39	16.52	13.13	14.05	12.63	14.49
1992	15.46	15.90	13.93	13.74	12.54	13.87
% change	+0.5%	-3.6%	+6.1%	-2.2%*	-0.7%	-4.3%
<i>College Degree</i>						
1982	13.64	16.25	11.46	14.88	10.72	13.88
1992	13.78	16.18	12.21	13.41	11.51	12.06
% change	+0.5%	-0.4%	+6.5%	-9.9%*	+7.4%	-13.1%**
Assault						
<i>No College Degree</i>						
1982	15.03	16.22	13.12	14.57	13.61	14.39
1992	15.43	16.30	14.20	14.81	13.60	14.87
% change	+2.7%	+0.5%	+8.2%	+1.6%	-0.1%	+3.3%
<i>College Degree</i>						
1982	14.76	16.74	12.06	16.12	12.09	14.29
1992	16.29	17.61	14.37	15.90	13.38	14.07
% change	+10.4%	+5.2%	+19.2%	-1.4%*	+10.7%	-1.5%**

^a Predicted threats are computed from regressions in Table 2A at mean levels of age. For theft, the mean age is 44.285 for those without a college degree and 44.338 for those with a college degree; for assault, 44.248 for those without a college degree and 44.424 for those with a college degree.

* Interaction is significant in Table 3A.

** Interaction approaches significance in Table 3A.

they violate the law. In the absence of a decrease among women and/or an increase among men in this internal control, given the strength of shame as a deterrent, substantial gender differences in rates of these crimes would be expected to persist.

Of the three threats, shame is the most private, while embarrassment and legal sanctions occur in the social or public sphere. The threat of shame, Grasmick and Bursik (1990) suggest, originates in the internalization of norms, a process that typically occurs early in life, with consequences persisting throughout the life course. As a result, the perceived threat of shame perhaps is less immediately responsive to social structural changes, and changes in this perceived threat might be expected to lag behind changes in perceived threats of embarrassment and legal sanctions. At the same time, however, in the long run changes in the more public threats are likely to produce changes in the perceived threat of shame. The 10-year time span captured in our data might be too short to detect changes in perceived threat of shame that only now are beginning to occur.

Restriction of Convergence to the College Educated

Within categories of education, convergence clearly was restricted to the college educated. Among those who did not graduate from college, all product terms for the interaction of gender and year were insignificant for both theft and assault. In contrast, among the college educated, significant convergence was observed for theft for both embarrassment and legal sanctions. For assault, it was detected for embarrassment.

Steffensmeier (1978, 1980), in contrast to Adler (1975) and Simon (1975), proposes that gender convergence in property offenses (particularly larceny, fraud, and forgery) stems from the growing marginalization, not emancipation, of some women, reflected in increased divorce rates, an increased number of single-parent families headed by women, and the overrepresentation of women in low-paying jobs as they enter the labor force. Such marginalization produces additional strain among these women, increasing their motivation to engage in even more "traditionally female crime." As such marginalized women engage in more crime, they should be influenced by what Paternoster et al. (1983) call an "experiential effect," realizing that the risks involved in crime are not so high after all. While arguments to the contrary might be offered, the type of marginalization Steffensmeier describes would appear more characteristic of the less educated. But in our data, convergence in perceived costs associated with theft occurred only among the college educated, a finding seemingly inconsistent

with Steffensmeier's position, but perhaps consistent with Hagan's power-control theory.

Nature of Convergence in Perceived Threat of Embarrassment Differs for Theft and Assault

Significant gender convergence was detected most often for the threat of embarrassment. The finding is especially noteworthy in the context of Gilligan's (1977) claim that women are more inclined than men to base decisions on how they think others will react. The measure of perceived threat of embarrassment is intended to capture perceptions of social disapproval. The convergence coefficients for embarrassment in the sample as a whole, among whites, and among the college educated were significant for both theft and assault. In the case of theft, convergence occurs because of a decrease among women coupled with an increase among men. In contrast to the internal control of shame, for which women did not change, the perceived threat of informal external sanctions that we call embarrassment did decline among women, but only for theft. For assault, convergence results almost entirely from an increase in perceived threat of embarrassment among men with hardly any change among women.

That perceived threat of embarrassment among women decreased only for theft, not for assault, is consistent with earlier findings and arguments in the literature on gender convergence and crime. Some of these studies (e.g., Grasmick et al. 1984; Simon 1975; Steffensmeier 1978, 1980) report evidence of increased crime among women and a tendency toward convergence with men for at least some property offenses but not for violent offenses. In contrast to theft, the significant convergence in perceived threat of embarrassment for assault was exclusively a function of an increase among men. Neither in the sample as a whole nor in any of the subgroups did women change substantially in either direction.

The increase among men from 1982 to 1992 in perceived threat of embarrassment for assault appears puzzling on the surface but might be consistent with Miller and Simpson's (1991) interpretation of their data. In a random sample of adults like that in the research reported here, "physically hurting someone on purpose" (the phrase used on the questionnaire for assault) might connote acts of domestic violence for a major portion of respondents. It is in the family where adults are most likely to commit and be victims of acts of assault (see Gelles & Cornell 1990; Straus 1990; Stets & Straus 1990). The 1980s was a decade of intense activity, prompted by the efforts of the women's movement, with regard to assault on women in families. Wife battering as a social problem received more pub-

licity as newspapers became more willing to report cases of wife assault and many magazine articles and television documentaries described the seriousness of the problem (see Straus and Gelles 1986). Whether husband-to-wife assault has, in fact, been decreasing is a topic of heated debate (see Gelles et al. 1988; Gelles & Conte 1990; Stocks 1988; Straus & Gelles 1986). In the present analysis, however, the perceived threat of embarrassment for "physically hurting someone on purpose" among white men and college-educated men did increase between 1982 and 1992, while no change among women was evident.

This finding has special relevance when compared to results and conclusions of Miller and Simpson's (1991:351) study of perceived threats of sanctions for courtship violence among college students. Contrary to their expectations based on previous research, they fail to find perceived threats to be lower among men than among women. As an explanation, Miller and Simpson suggest that men, as a result of public education over the past decade, might have come to recognize that violence against women is not "a male prerogative." Their optimistic conclusion perhaps is supported by our evidence here of increased perceived threat of embarrassment for assault among men. If, as speculated, the reference on the questionnaire to "physically hurting someone on purpose" elicits thoughts of domestic violence among the survey respondents, the overall pattern of results appears to suggest that the increased social condemnation of wife assault has had its greatest impact on perceived threat of embarrassment among the college educated and among white men. Again, however, conclusions concerning nonwhites are problematic because of their relatively small number in our sample.

Convergence in Perceived Threat of Legal Sanctions for Theft Reflects the Complexity of Gender, Race, and Class Interactions

Convergence in perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft was significant (1) among nonwhites but not whites and (2) among those with a college degree but not the less educated. In Simpson's (1991) terminology, gender convergence in perceived threat of legal sanctions characterized both the lower "caste" (nonwhites) and the upper "class" (college educated). This is precisely the pattern predicted from Hagan's power-control theory, under the assumptions that female-headed households are more likely to be nonwhite and that college-educated women and their mothers are more likely to have held positions of authority in the labor force.

Among nonwhites, the convergence results from a substan-

tial decrease among women (-19.6%) accompanied by a more modest increase among men (5.5%). This decrease among nonwhite women might be considered consistent with Steffen-smeier's marginalization thesis, assuming marginalization has been more characteristic of nonwhite than of white women. The marginalization argument, however, would seem unable to account for the reduction in perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft among college-educated women but not among those with less education. The reduction among college-educated women of 13.1% was almost as great as the reduction among nonwhite women. Unfortunately, attempts to untangle these complexities by performing the analysis simultaneously within categories of race and education failed because of the small number in the data set of nonwhites, both men and women, with a college education.

On the other hand, the findings seem to reflect the views of Hagan et al. (1987) on the two ways—deprivation and liberation—in which male domination and the intensity of social control women experienced is minimized. The increasing proportion of female-headed households is more characteristic of blacks than of whites, while the increasing entry of women into positions of authority in the labor force has been more common among the highly educated (Sorensen 1991). Thus, for different reasons, nonwhite women rather than white women and the college educated rather than the less educated have experienced some reduction in male domination. As noted earlier, Tittle (1980:67) has argued that many people live in a "shell of illusion," believing there are serious consequences for people who violate the law. Between 1982 and 1992, this shell, in respect to perceived threat of legal sanctions for theft, appears to have cracked more for nonwhite women and more for college-educated women, perhaps because of increased deprivation among the former and at least some liberation among the latter.

Conclusion

These suggestions concerning the possible link between our findings and Hagan's power-control theory point to the potential dynamic aspects of the theory. So far, the theory has been developed and tested with a focus on static issues: the relationship among women's labor force experience and family structure, the control of sons and daughters, and the cross-sectional relationship between gender and common delinquency. The theory, however, has important dynamic implications. Over time, changes in the gender patterning of the occupational structure and changes in family composition can be expected to produce changes in gender differences in social con-

trol experiences and perhaps also changes in the gender-crime relationship.

Drawing on Weber's analysis of the separation of home and workplace in the development of rational, industrial capitalism, Hagan (1989:155) accounts for patriarchy in such societies as a consequence of the development of two distinct spheres: "the first was populated by women and focused on domestic labour and consumption, and the second was populated by men and centered around labour power and direct production." Out of this separation of consumption and production developed the classical patriarchal family that reproduced itself as mothers prepared their sons for the production sphere and their daughters for the consumption sphere. This type of family was at its pinnacle in the 1950s, but "increasing wages and demands for semi-skilled, moderately-to-well-educated workers in the service sector" increasingly brought women into the labor force.

Eventually, and more recently, as we noted earlier, women's involvement in the productive sphere in positions of authority also grew. This increase in women's power in the workplace, according to power-control theory, translates into increased power in the family and into a tendency toward convergence in the way mothers treat their daughters and sons. This trend, leading to "liberation" of women, shows no signs of slowing, nor does the growth in single-parent, female-headed households which leads to "deprivation" as the second source of erosion of the traditional patriarchal family.

Consequently, those types of families in which daughters are most likely to be socialized similarly to sons should constitute an increasing proportion of all families in the years to come. The trends we have observed in our research here are likely to continue, and other trends toward gender similarity might be explained and predicted by power-control theory. One logical extension is the prediction of gender convergence in the commission of the types of common crime we studied as more and more daughters experience the relatively weak social controls traditionally granted only to sons. The debate on gender convergence in crime and delinquency probably is not over but now can be approached with a fresh theory not available to earlier participants.

Furthermore, the increased taste for risk among daughters and eventually women from the nonpatriarchal families should become manifest in gender convergence in other risky behaviors such as smoking and drinking and such other consequences of risky behavior as involvement in accidents. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that such behaviors are analogous to crime as reflections of less intense social control and the development of a preference for risk during childhood socialization. Power-control theory, coupled with expected

continuation of liberation and deprivation and the resulting convergence in the socialization of sons and daughters, predicts changes in the gender patterning of a wide range of behaviors, not just crime and delinquency.

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