

How Gender Affects Perception of Safety Following Information of Sexual Assault

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Introduction

In May of 2021, a student came out with her sexual assault experience. As a result, her abuser only received academic probation. This led to a student protest on campus to push the zero tolerance policy on sexual assault.

Past research has shown that women are more likely to be cautious of their surroundings than men and there are issues in terms of architecture where it was built for men (Rhodes, 2019). This connects to the shadow hypothesis where women are fearful of all crimes because it can potentially lead to a sexual assault (Macmillan, 2000)

Hypotheses: People will feel more wary of going out at night and will feel the need to be safer than they would if they were not informed about crime. Women will be more impacted by sexual assault information than general crime information. Men will be more fearful of crimes other than sexual assault

Methods

Participants: 92 USD participants (12 male and 72 females) at least 18 years old who is familiar with the campus

Design: 3 (information: sexual assault, general crime, control) X 2 (Gender: male, female) between -subjects design

Participants are randomly assigned to read modified statistics on either general crime or sexual assault, or to a control condition where participants read statement from USD on their obligation to report crimes on campus. Then they were asked to read scenarios and rate their level of safety

	Sexual Assault	General Crime	Control Condition
Men	2	6	4
women	21	20	31

Results

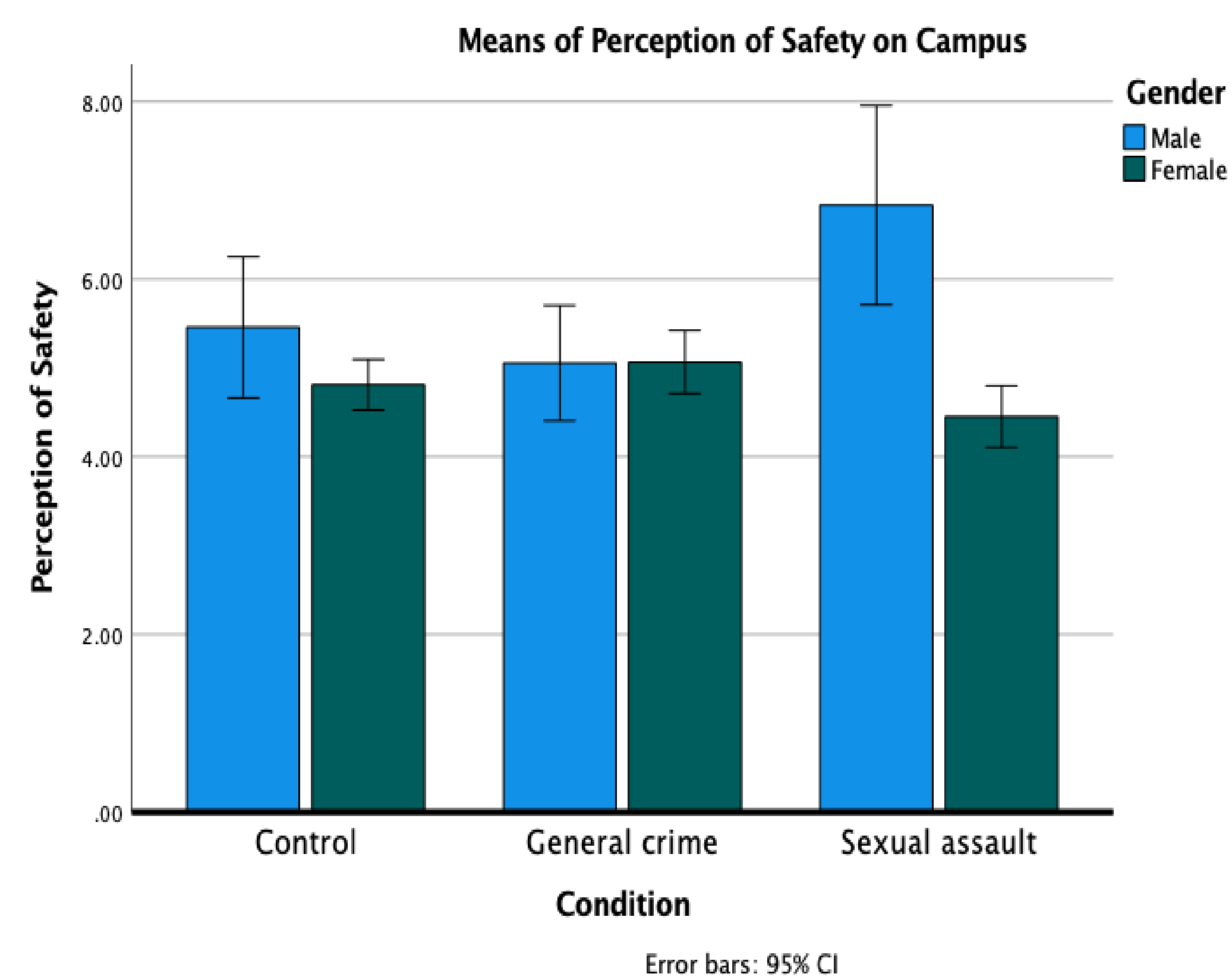


Figure 1: The difference in effect of information about crime rates on USD campus on perception of safety between male and female students

Results

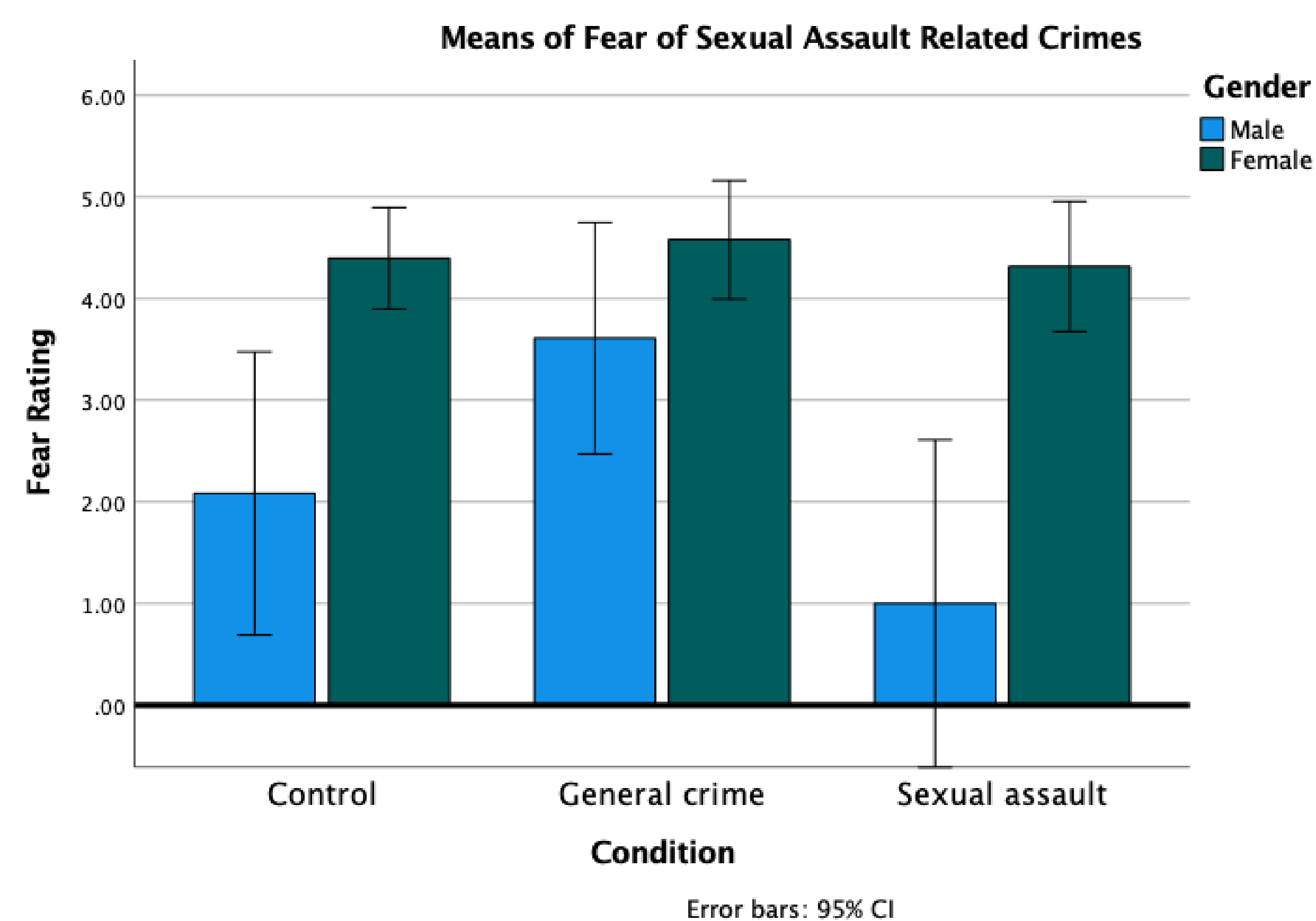


Figure 2. The difference in effect of information about crime rates on USD campus and in the city of San Diego on fearfulness ratings of sexual assault related crimes between male and female students

Discussion

- Reading about crime rates may make others more self-aware and try to change their behaviors - feeling more safe
- Men and women respond differently to sexual assault. UK study shows that 115 men who were sexually assaulted did not report it (Sable et al, 2010) Because men are more likely not to report their sexual assault, society forgets that men have these experiences as well
- Women are more likely to report their sexual assault but may be hesitant due to the fear of additional abuse by their perpetrator or not wanting to re-live through their trauma

Future Directions

Observing how individuals who are transgender perceive sexual assault is important since they may have similar or different experiences

Feedback on how students perceive safety on campus and sexual assault training on campus

If students hear an abuser was given academic probation, how would they perceive their safety?