

How Fear of Crime and Gender Affect Memory Recall

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Abstract

I explored the relationship between fear of crime and gender and how they affect memory recall of a crime. The significance of the study is that it may inform an understanding of how reliable memory recall is when an individual is under stress. Approximately 40 men and women participated in an online study to assess the relationship between gender, fear of crime, and memory of a mock crime scene. Participants included CLU students and adults obtained through the researcher's social media platforms. Participants answered questions about different types of crimes they may or may not have encountered and then viewed a picture of a mock crime scene for 15 seconds. They then answered questions to assess their memory for visual details presented in the scene. This was a 2 x 2 mixed factorial design, with participant gender (male, female) and fear of crime (high, low) as the factors. Memory of crime details was the dependent variable. I hypothesized that participants' gender and fear of crime would interact such that when fear of crime was high, men would score higher on memory recall than women, but when fear of crime was low, women would score higher than men. No significant main effects or interactions were found.

Introduction

It is not uncommon for two witnesses to the same incident to give widely differing, and even inconsistent accounts. However, it raises the question as to why reports of an incident can be so different when everyone has witnessed the same crime. There are only a few known studies to investigate this relationship, especially when focusing on memory recall of a crime. A study on episodic memory for autobiographical records of unique events found significant differences favoring females in most of their reviewed experiments (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Emotions can also affect memory recall. Researchers have found that negative emotional content (Kensinger & Corkin, 2003) or negative emotions (Helton, Kern, Walker, 2009) result in better memory recall.



Hypotheses

I hypothesized that participant gender and fear of crime would interact such that when fear of crime was high, men would score higher on memory recall than women, but when fear of crime was low, women would score higher than men.

Method

Participants

- 40 participants
- 32 females, 7 males

Materials

- Informed Consent Form
- Demographic Questions
- Fear of Crime Scale
- Graphic depicting a Crime
- Memory Recall Questions

Procedure

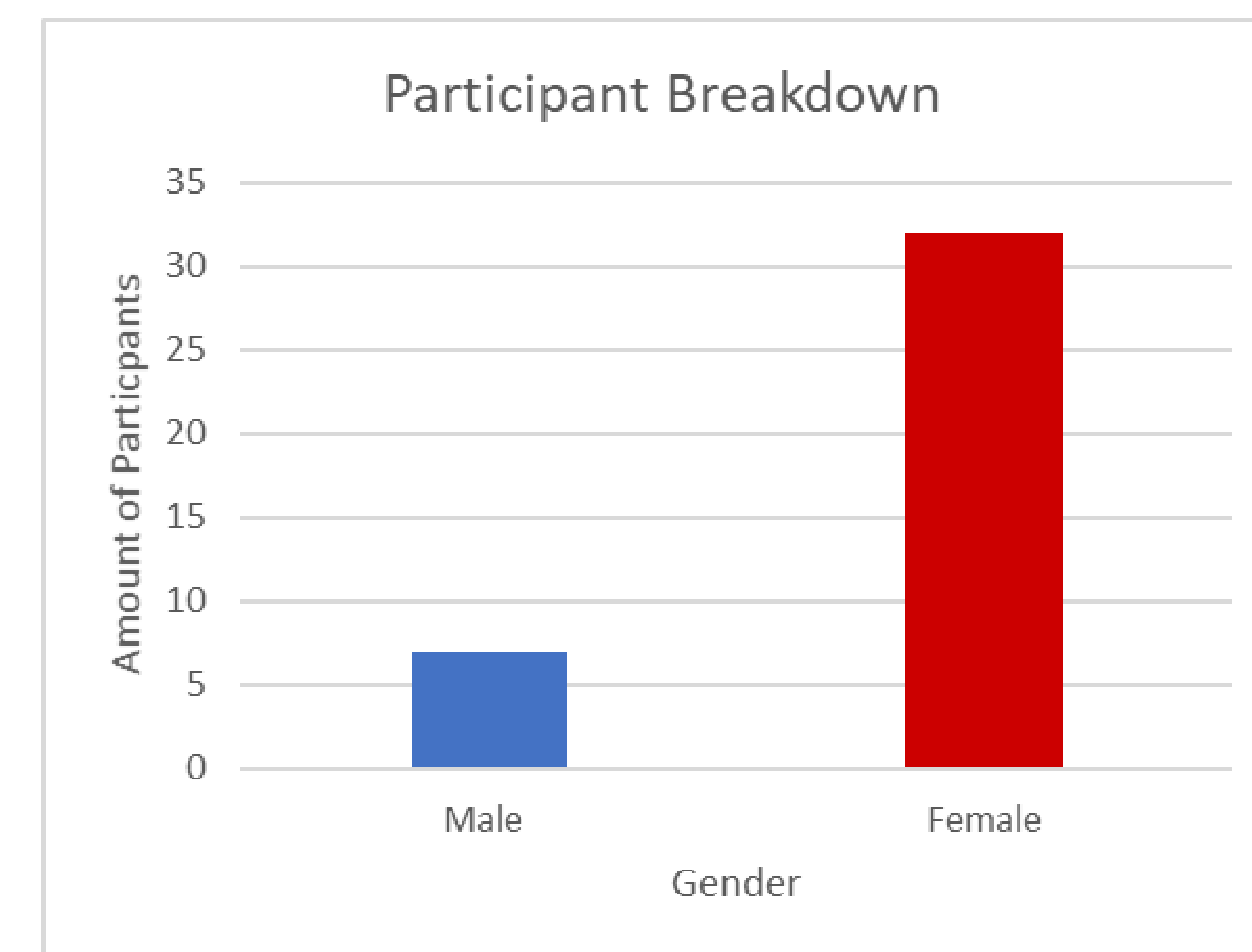
1. Informed consent forms signed and collected.
2. Participants answered questions about themselves.
3. Participants then answered questions regarding emotion during certain crimes.
5. Participants given 15 seconds to look at a photo depicting a crime
6. Participants were then asked to answer detailed questions about the picture they previously saw.

Discussion

Hypothesis was not supported. Possible reasons include:

- The sample size was too low.
- Mostly females participated in the study, so there was a limited number of male participants.
- Participants were mostly residential college students who are living in a safe neighborhood.
- Age group was limited.

Future research should be broader in its audience when it comes to age and gender. Sample size was very low, and participants were majority females, so having a wider range on both categories could have skewed the data. Other variables that should be investigated are sexual orientation, age, and social economic status to see the effect they have on memory recall of a crime.



Results

- There were no significant main effects and no significant interactions between the variables.

References are available upon request.