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Racialization of Drug Use and Gang Involvement: Racial Crime Stereotype of Minorities, Fear of Crime and the Impact of Sex

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Abstract: This study examines how racialized crime and drug stereotypes of African Americans and Hispanics affect the fear of crime. Based on racial threat theory, which argues that members of the majority racial group perceive the increasing minority group population as threatening, and labeling theory, which argues that labeling someone as "deviant" reinforces that behavior and affects how they are treated, this study examines the effect of African American and Hispanic racial crime stereotypes on fear of crime. In addition, it investigates the sex variation in the fear of crime among individuals who possess stereotypes against these minorities. Using the Seattle neighborhoods and crime survey data, we found that those who stereotyped African Americans and Hispanics with criminality tended to have higher levels of crime fears as compared to those who did not have such beliefs. In addition, we found that females who hold crime stereotypes of Hispanics do not fear crime as much as those who hold stereotypes of African Americans. Furthermore, males who hold the criminal stereotype towards African Americans and Hispanics had a similar degree of heightened fear of crime in their neighborhood.

Keywords: Racial Crime Stereotypes, Fear of Crime, African Americans, Hispanics, Sex

Introduction

The fear of crime has received significant attention among criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, public health scholars, and policymakers over the past decades (Scheingold, 1995; Misun and Nasar, 2014; Ditton and Farrall, 2017; Prieto and Bishop, 2018; Heath and Petraitis, 1987; Jing *et al.*, 2023; Martin-Howard, 2023; Glas, 2023). Even though crime itself has been plummeting during the 2000s (not including the recent rise in crime in the 2020s), as the available US data suggests, the fear of crime is still high among many segments of our population (Ferguson and Mindel, 2007; Drakulich, 2009; Prieto Curiel and Bishop, 2018; Heath and Petraitis, 1987; Martin-Howard, 2023; Glas, 2023). This fear can be explained in part by the fact that accounts of crime are heavily publicized through both traditional and social media outlets. These accounts and reports, as some scholars have noted, have had some profound effects on many people in the U.S. (Scheingold, 1995; Drakulich, 2009).

One outcome of media crime reporting is that it has also generated strong perceptions of risks and fears among

many people (Cordner, 2008). People generally draw on the direct and indirect indicators of crime within their neighborhoods or communities to derive conclusions about the threat of crime (Ross and Mirowsky, 2001; Sampson *et al.*, 1997). For instance, neighborhoods with environmental physical disorders such as abandoned buildings, graffiti, and filth have a significant impact on perceptions of crime and safety (Ross and Mirowsky, 2001; Sampson *et al.*, 1997; Hur and Nasar, 2014; Skogan, 2012; Massey, 2001; Lytle *et al.*, 2022).

When it comes to the contextualization of crime and personal risks in the US, public discourse has been highly racialized (Fagan, 2017; Mastrofski, 2012). For the most part, racial minorities, especially African Americans and Hispanics, are those who are often associated with criminality (Drakulich, 2009; Quillian and Pager, 2001; MacLin and Herrera, 2006). While minority groups are more likely to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods with high crime rates, it is also important to point out that such neighborhoods also face social and economic problems that correlate with criminal activities (Fagan, 2017). According to some scholars, the individual cognitive mind can be socialized to the point of viewing minority

neighborhoods as crime-ridden areas (Fagan, 2017; Welch, 2007). This, in turn, perpetuates the stereotyping of residents of such neighborhoods as extremely dangerous and criminally minded (Austin, 2002; Couch and Fairlie, 2010; Drakulich, 2009). According to Quillian and Pager (2001), there is a misconception and overrepresentation of racial minorities in the media as criminals or perpetrators.

Though several studies exist on racial stereotypes (Drakulich, 2009; Quillian and Pager, 2001), racial bias (Quillian and Pager, 2001; Gearhart *et al.*, 2019), and victim-blaming (Johnson, 2007), there is a need for more studies on the criminal stereotypes of minorities to help our understanding of the fear of crime. The current study attempts to add to our understanding of racial stereotypes and their potential links to the fear of crime. In addressing these issues, the paper draws its orientation from labeling theory (Becker, 2003), which posits that the mere labeling of the individual as a "deviant" eventually reinforces that behavior in the person labeled and in turn influences how he or she is treated and from racial threat theory (Blalock, 1967; Wang and Todak, 2016), which holds that members of the majority group see members of the minority population as threatening in the neighborhood. This study examines the perceptions of people who hold racial crime stereotypes of minorities as being involved in gangs and drugs, specifically Blacks and Hispanics, and how this influences their fear of crime in the neighborhood. In addition, it investigates the sex variation in the fear of crime of individuals who possess these stereotypes against African Americans and Hispanics, using data from the Seattle Neighborhoods and Crime Survey. This study is significant because it adds to the literature currently available on racial crime and stereotypes, as well as their relationship to fear in neighborhoods by sex.

Literature Review

Rise of Racial Crime Stereotype

Studies have underlined the role that acquired perceptions of disorders play when it comes to fear of crime in the neighborhood (Drakulich, 2012; Ross and Mirowsky, 2001; Gearhart *et al.*, 2019). For instance, Drakulich stated that the individual may not have had an actual encounter with crime but may possess some opinion on crime based on observation of a neighborhood. Disadvantaged neighborhoods with visible signs of disorders such as run-down buildings, litter, and graffiti give clues that directly influence perceptions of safety and promote stereotyping of residents in those neighborhoods, who are mostly racial minorities, generally African Americans and Hispanics (Drakulich, 2012; MacLin and Herrera, 2006; Unnever and Cullen, 2012). Some research has asserted how racial composition and neighborhood

disorders are utilized as markers of threat and lack of social control (Covington and Taylor, 1991; Quillian and Pager, 2001; Unnever and Cullen, 2012). This is similar to how individuals assess the safety of their neighborhood based on its racial composition, regardless of the occurrence of actual crime (Drakulich, 2012). Minorities are viewed as violent crime perpetrators and suffer from a spoiled collective identity (Loury, 2009; Goffman, 1963; Unnever and Cullen, 2012).

Racial Crime Stereotypes and the Fear of Crime

Individuals develop crime stereotypes when they assess their risk of being victimized or when they have been victimized (Koenig and Eagly, 2014). The individual gathers information on different crime contexts and events and uses this acquired knowledge to predict their likelihood of being victimized (Koenig and Eagly, 2014; Judd and Park, 1993). A major source of information for stereotypes to emerge and proliferate is the reporting of crime rates by media outlets. A typical example is the Johnson and Chopik (2019) study on state-level racial stereotypes, which shows that US states with higher rates of minorities, particularly black violent crime offenders, are more likely to have stronger black violence stereotypes, which are strongly associated with residents' safety concerns and fear of crime. This also reinforces how crime is prevalent in minority neighborhoods, where they are faced with challenges such as poverty, a lack of economic opportunities, and access to social services (Cho and Ho, 2018). Also, it reflects how residents of poor neighborhoods are highly exposed to violence and are more likely to have less fear of crime compared to those living in wealthier neighborhoods. As a result of this violent exposure to crime, individuals in Black neighborhoods become desensitized and begin to "adapt" to violence by responding to it with sensitization and becoming less fearful (Cho and Ho, 2018; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Research has shown that when there was a decrease in actual crime incidents, fear of crime would sometimes rise (Covington and Taylor, 1991). For decades, criminality has been racialized (Holt, 2013) and, in turn, has become a core social threat perceived by U.S. citizens (Glassner, 1999; Cho and Ho, 2018). For instance, Koenig and Eagly (2014) emphasized how members of the majority group have a dominant position that enables them to initiate hostile crime controls against minority members (Judd and Park, 1993; Johnson and Chopik, 2019) in the name of "safety."

In relation to racial stereotypes, African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to be associated with crime in American society (Quillian and Pager, 2001; Drakulich, 2012). An individual's typical observation based on visual cues of a place and its racial composition can easily trigger labeling or stereotyping of such

residents, as well as the likelihood of evoking fears among neighborhood residents (Quillian and Pager, 2001; Genevieve, 1990). The mere presence of minorities, especially Blacks, in a particular area influences the perceptions, prevalence, and risk of crime among whites and, subsequently, their increased calls to the police (Jackson, 1989; Liska and Chamlin, 1984). Racial stereotypes impact the way of life of racial minorities, and this is parallel to the concept of "double consciousness." According to Du Bois (1903), double consciousness is caused by the power of white stereotypes against African Americans. This has an impact on the lives of African Americans because they live in a society that sees their race as a "problem," which leads to fears in their neighborhoods (Du Bois, 1903; Thibodeaux, 2013).

Individuals who encounter victimization, either personally or through the knowledge of someone who has been victimized, frequently generate potential threats and fears. For instance, argued that risky victimization from racial tension could possibly increase the negative stereotype of Blacks by Whites and evoke fear of crime. Also, Russo and Roccato (2010) established this claim with their study, which found that experiences with crime tend to elevate individuals' fear of crime.

Sex Variation of Racial Crime Stereotype and Fear of Crime

Although there are other predictors of fear of crime (such as age, race, and victimization history), sex is possibly the most well-documented indication of fear of crime. When controlling for other variables, sex is the most constant predictor of a person's fear of crime, according to research (Day, 1994; Ferraro, 1996; Quillian and Pager 2001; Drakulich, 2012). Women are much more likely to report fear of crime than men, even though women are substantially less likely to be victims of crime (with the exceptions of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment) (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Hollander, 2009; Rader, 2008). This disparity is commonly referred to as the "gender-fear paradox," as women's fear of crime is inconsistent with their actual victimization (Ferraro, 1996; Hanslmaier, 2013; Matthews, 2011). These elevated fear levels elevate women's risk perceptions and may enhance their likelihood of engaging in constrained behaviors, such as reliance on male protectors (Wendy and Rigakos, 2002; Gardner, 1989; Hollander, 2009; Rader, 2008).

Most of this literature explains why women have a higher fear of crime, and few researchers have examined men's fear of crime. Possibly, the gender bias in the interpretation of the research has led to the conclusion that women fear crime excessively, as compared to the contrasting conclusion that males fear crime less than they logically should. Even in studies that examine men's fear of crime, the emphasis is often on men's fear of crime for

others as opposed to men's fear of crime for themselves (Ferraro, 1996; Snedker, 2012; Warr, 1992; Warr and Ellison, 2000).

Males may fear crime more than they report it because society views fear as a feminine trait, sending cultural cues to males that fearing crime (or expressing that fear) is unacceptable (Brownlow, 2005; Goodey, 1997). This stigma may lead men to express less fear of crime in surveys (Sutton and Farrall, 2005). Others link women's fear of crime with perceptions of violence against women and the social control of women via systems of patriarchy (Lawton and Clark, 2015; Schur, 1986).

While studies have shown that women are more afraid than men of crime in their neighborhood, the crime stereotype of minorities has also been identified as a predictor of fear of crime. Studies have underlined that racial crime stereotypes of minorities are influencing perceptions of neighborhood crime levels and fear of crime (Quillian and Pager, 2001; Drakulich, 2012; McLeod, 2015). However, there are limited studies on how gender variation in the possession of crime stereotypes by minorities influences their fear of crime. In light of these considerations, the purpose of this study is to investigate the gender (male and female) variation in the possession of the crime stereotype of Blacks and Hispanics, as well as how these influence individual fear of crime.

Theoretical Perspective

Labeling Theory

According to Becker (2003) labeling theory, individuals identify with and act in accordance with the label attributed to them. Becker maintains that nothing is inherently deviant, but behaviors are labeled as acceptable or not by those in power. Individuals who are labeled as deviant are individuals to whom a label is given. When it comes to race, it is the racial majority versus the minorities. Often, it is the majority group that determines whether or not a behavior conforms to the societal norm and labels those who do not as deviants (Knutsson, 1997).

Further, Becker's theory underlines the effect of the complex dynamics of labeling on the labeler and the labeled. Becker recounts that labeling has two effects on the individual. First, it changes the individual's social situation, and second, it impacts the individual's self-image. The two combine to develop a deviant identity. The mere labeling of the individual as a "deviant" eventually reinforces that behavior in the person labeled and, in turn, influences how he or she is treated. The label becomes an indelible mark that is difficult to remove, which in turn discredits the individual (Goffman, 1976; Bernburg, 2019). Likewise, the labelers, in defining deviance, are likely to have biases, prejudices, and stereotypes that may emerge in their definition of who is deviant, and this is likely to impact how

they respond to and treat the labeled deviant (Knutsson, 1997; Goffman, 1976).

This notion of deviance predisposes the dominant racial group to view other racial outgroups' characteristics as abnormal or unacceptable. Racial minority groups (African Americans and Hispanics), particularly Blacks, are mostly perceived, labeled, and stereotyped as being associated with criminality, even if they have not engaged in actual crime incidents (Couch and Fairlie, 2010; Peralta, 2010). Just as Becker asserts that the deviant is the person to whom the label has been effectively applied, so is the case with blacks, who are mostly labeled as criminals in society.

Research has shown how powerful words are and how they affect how people are put into groups and how they interact with other people (Watson, 2016). Words, for example, were described by Bosmajian (1983) as a powerful metaphorizing tool used to infer stigmatization labels on groups in society, which construct and suppress marginalized groups. People become antisocial or deviant because of the treatment they receive and how they, in turn, internalize and perceive such treatments (Bosmajian, 1983; Goffman, 1976; McCann, 2002; Shelton *et al.*, 2006). Lippmann (1965) emphasized the insensitivity of projected labels on a specific group and how the manifestations of contradictory information about that group are difficult to even disprove. In such situations, new members of the group get to inherit the group brand, or the label imposed on them (Watson, 2016; Sigelman and Welch, 1993).

Individuals often categorize sections of society based on the distinctive characteristics of the groups that live in such places. The distinctive characteristics turn into negative categorization that discourages interactions among the various racial categories (Goffman, 1976; McCann, 2002; Shi-xu, 2009; Mears and Stewart 2010) emphasizes the ramifications of labeling and its likelihood to translate into power manifestation, a situation where the privileged and powerful groups always classify and stereotype marginalized individuals. For instance, giving labels potentially discredits, alienates, and exaggerates a group's or individual's characteristics (Goffman, 1976; McCann, 2002). These negative beliefs and perceptions about an individual's personality are likely to translate into a generalization of the person's personality and stereotyped behavioral expectations (Watson, 2016; Goffman, 1976).

Racial Threat Theory

According to racial threat theory (Blalock, 1967), members of the majority group perceive the proportionate size and increasing minority population as threatening and, as a result, take steps to reduce their perceived threat (Wang and Todak, 2016; Stolzenberg *et al.*, 2004). Over time, scholars have attempted to broaden the racial threat theory, and some have specifically examined blacks as a

perceived threat. An example is the criminal threat proposition from Wang and Todak (2016), which states that a greater black population raises fear of crime.

The assigned categories place individuals in a group and consider them troublemakers or problematic, which in turn influences the actions of law enforcers and policymakers in ensuring safety and protection in the neighborhoods. For instance, Watson (2016) examined the cultural implications and dimensions of labels assigned to specific neighborhoods and the consequences of these labels, as well as the level of interaction that police officers have with civilians. The results of the study depict how formal labeling is likely to undermine the police-civilian relationship, affecting social control as police may use harsh adaptive strategies to facilitate interactions with residents of high-crime areas. This also affects how they view and explain the community to outsiders and influences how the specific area and its residents are branded in the community (Watson, 2016; Goffman, 1963).

Existing empirical research has contributed to our understanding by establishing a link between racial composition, racial crime stereotypes, and actual crime. This study, on the other hand, is interested in the differences and similarities of people who have crime stereotypes of minorities (Blacks and Hispanics) and how that affects their level of fear of crime. Following that, this study investigates how minorities, particularly Blacks and Hispanics, are perceived to be involved in gangs and drugs and how this affects their fear of crime in their neighborhood. Also, the study explores gender differences in the fear of crime among those who hold similar stereotypes about African Americans and Hispanics. These research questions are examined to see if they are consistent with the racial threat and labeling theories' dispositions.

Materials and Methods

Data and Sample

The data used for this study is from the Seattle Neighborhoods and Crime Survey, 2002–2003. The survey is a statewide representative sample of citizens' reporting of both direct measures of racial crime stereotypes and more general measures of prejudice. In addition, it includes the measure of positive interactions among neighbors of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. The data contains relevant predictors and indicators of relative racial stereotypes, perceptions of the fear of crime, and neighborhood context characteristics that can be used to construct objective measures for the study. Besides, it has measures on crime, victimization, attitudes, neighborhood conditions and characteristics, and fear of crime that are relevant to

this study. Other measures deal with demographic data such as race, gender, residential mobility, the age distribution of the household, and income. Using telephone interviews, a sample comprising 1145 females and 1075 males was randomly selected for the study.

Measure of Variables

Many previous studies on the concept of crime fear have been criticized for using only one item to measure it. Those who argue against a single measure of fear of crime contend that it is not reflective of both the judgment of the likelihood of victimization of crime and emotional response to crime (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987). Partly in reaction to some of the criticisms leveled against the use of a sole measure, multiple measures were used to capture the fear of crime in this study. To measure our dependent variable of *fear of crime*, two items were combined, and a summated scale was created from it. The first item asked the respondents the following question: "Do you worry or think about being physically attacked by a stranger in the neighborhood?". The second asked: "Do you worry about someone breaking into your home and stealing property?" Responses for these two items comprise "Less than once a month", "Once a month", "About once a week" and "Every day". These two items were coded and added together to form a scale, with higher values indicating greater fear and lower values indicating less fear. The *racial crime stereotype* variable was constructed following the approach used by Drakulich (2009). The items used to measure the racial crime stereotype of minorities ask the respondent their views on what race they think is more likely to be involved in criminality. The questions were: "Hispanics tend to be involved in drugs or gangs," and "African Americans tend to be involved in drugs or gangs." These items had responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." All items were dummy coded; positive responses were coded as 1 and negative responses as 0 to measure the racial crime stereotype for Hispanics and African Americans, respectively. Those who responded negatively were used as a measure of those with no racial crime stereotypes. Other neighborhood predictors of fear of crime were included in the studies. Physical neighborhood disorders were measured using three items, following the approach of other studies, for example (Kelling and Wilson, 1982; Ross and Mirowsky, 2001). The first item asked respondents, "If they have a problem with abandoned houses and run-down buildings?" The second item asked if there is a "problem with spray-painted graffiti on buildings and streets?" The third asked if there is a "problem with litter, garbage, or trash on the streets?" With all questions having responses ranging from "not a problem," "a small problem," to "a big problem." Those who indicated they have a problem with physical neighborhood disorder were coded 1 and 0 for those with no problem with it. The victimization experience is based

on two questions: "How many times in the last two years have you been physically attacked, beaten up, or threatened?" and "Number of times other members of your household have been physically attacked, beaten up, or threatened in the last two years." Responses range from 0-97. The variable was dummy coded such that having no victimization experience is recoded as "0," and those who have experienced victimization are recoded as "1."

Control Variables

Our analysis used controls for key variables mostly used in research on perceived risk and fear of crime (Chiricos *et al.*, 1997; Chiricos *et al.*, 2001; Covington and Taylor, 1991). Included in the analysis are gender, race, education, and religion. The sex of the respondent is a dichotomous variable, with females coded as 1 and males as 0. A dichotomous variable was created for the racial groups, and "race" included African Americans, Hispanics, and non-Hispanic Whites. We also examined education because of its association with fear of crime; see examples (Chiricos *et al.*, 2001; Covington and Taylor, 1991). The level of education of respondents includes those with graduate degrees, college degrees, vocational, high school, and primary education. Also, we included religion because past research has shown how it plays a role in shaping attitudes and perceptions of crime (Matthew *et al.*, 2011; Lamptey, 2017). Respondent's religious affiliation had seven different categories of (Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, others, and None). It was recorded such that those with no affiliation were coded as "0," representing non-religious people, and those affiliated with any religious group were coded as "1," representing religious people.

Analytic Strategy

This study employs descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis utilizing Stata (version 15.1). In the first stage, descriptive statistics such as means, proportions, and standard deviations were used to summarize the variable of interest. Next is the bivariate analysis using correlation and chi-square to determine the association of independent variables by sex, and the last is the multivariate analysis.

In the second stage of the analysis, ordered logistic regression is used to establish the relationship between the crime stereotypes of minorities (African Americans and Hispanics) and their fear of crime. Using ordered logistic regression, three main equation models are estimated for each research question addressed in this study, and each model has its own sub-models.

The first model evaluates the individual's racial crime stereotype of African Americans and their level of fear of crime without controls; the second model includes controls; the third looks at that of Hispanics without controls; and the fourth has controls. The

second and third models investigate sex differences in racial crime stereotypes of African Americans and Hispanics, as well as their relationships to crime fear. Included in the models are predictor controls and the social-demographic variables described above. Regarding the race variable, only whites were included in the regression analysis due to the argument of the racial threat theory that majority groups are likely to view minorities in the neighborhood as threatening (Blalock, 1967; Wang and Todak, 2016), and since the study focuses on minorities, it makes sense to exclude minorities from the regression analysis. This study determined the validity of this proposition of the theory by excluding non-whites from our analysis.

Results

Table (2) presents descriptive statistics by racial groups by respondents comparing means with regards to race variables in this study, reported crime stereotypes against African Americans are highest among African American ($\bar{x} = 0.71$) and Hispanics ($\bar{x} = 0.71$), followed by

Whites ($\bar{x} = 0.57$). When it comes to crime stereotypes against Hispanic are highest among Blacks ($\bar{x} = 0.65$), followed by Hispanics ($\bar{x} = 0.61$) and the lowest being Whites ($\bar{x} = 0.49$).

Table (3) shows the bivariate correlation associations of the major variables. The result shows that variables are linked in a way that is both significant and positive. The relationship between physical disorders and fear of crime is significant ($r = 0.1814$, $p = 0.001$). The correlation between victimization and fear of crime was also significant and positively correlated ($r = 0.1474$, $p = 0.001$).

This implies that the presence of physical disorders in the fact that residents have been victimized evokes fear among residents. When it comes to crime stereotypes of minorities, the correlation between crime stereotypes of Hispanics ($r = 0.0840$, $p = 0.003$) and African Americans ($r = 0.1061$, $p = 0.001$) is positively related to fear of crime. This suggests that possessing the crime stereotype of African Americans and Hispanics increases an individual's fear of crime.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of study variables (N = 2220)

Variables	Entire sample N (%)	Mean	Range	Standard deviation
Female income	1145(51)	0.52	0-1	0.50
Below \$25000	293(14.9)	0.15	0-1	0.36
\$25000 to \$75000	984(50.1)	0.50	0-1	0.50
\$75000 up	689(35.1)	0.35	0-1	0.48
Level of education				
Primary	23(1.04)	0.01	0-1	0.10
High school	231(10.44)	0.10	0-1	0.31
Vocational skills	62(2.8)	0.03	0-1	0.81
College graduate	1198(54.13)	0.54	0-1	0.49
Graduate degree	669(31.59)	0.32	0-1	0.46
Race				
Whites	1887(85)	0.85	0-1	0.36
Blacks	90(4.1)	0.41	0-1	0.20
Hispanics	97(4.37)	0.04	0-1	0.20
Religiosity	147(66.2)	0.66	0-1	0.47
Racial crime stereotypes				
African Americans involvement in drug use and gang involvement	1224(59.56)	0.56	0-1	0.49
Hispanics involvement in drugs use and gang involvement	997(49.43)	0.51	0-1	0.50
Victimization experience	469(33.19)	0.33	0-1	0.33
Physical neighborhood disorder				
Problem with litter, garbage, or trash on the street	-	0.46	0-1	0.66
Problem with spray graffiti on building	-	0.34	0-1	0.47
Problem with abandoned and rundown buildings	-	0.22	0-1	0.41
Fear of crime				
Worry about being physically attacked by a stranger	-	1.45	1-4	0.82
Worry about someone breaking into home and stealing property	-	1.79	1-4	0.97

Table 2: Shows descriptive statistics and bivariate race comparison (N = 2220)

	Blacks		Hispanics		Whites	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Racial crime stereotype						
African American involvement in gangs and drug use	0.71	0.45	0.71	0.45	0.577	0.494
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use	0.65	0.476	0.61	0.49	0.49	0.5

Table 3: Shows the correlation of the major variables of interest (N = 2220)

Fear of crime	1	2	3	4	5
Fear of crime1	1.0000				
Physical Disorder 2	0.1814*	1.0000			
Victimization 3	0.1474*	0.1009*	1.0000		
Hispanic Stereotype 4	0.0840*	0.0708*	0.0221	1.0000	
African American stereotype 5	0.1061*	0.0725*	0.0342	0.8260*	1.0000

Table (4) shows the bivariate relationship between variables by sex. The result shows that about 53.43% of women possess a crime stereotype against African Americans, as opposed to 46.57% of men. When it comes to crime stereotyping against Hispanics, men have a higher stereotype of 53.18% than women, who have 46.81%. When it comes to victimization experience, 55.01% of men indicated they had been victimized, as opposed to 44.99% of women who indicated they had been victimized. In addition, 52.29% of women reported living in a physically disordered neighborhood, compared to 47.71% of men.

Table (5) shows the results of the racial crime stereotype of minorities on the fear of crime. The result

indicates the effect of the Hispanic crime stereotype, with intervening variables of physical neighborhood disorder victimization experience and demographic controls, on fear of crime. The result shows that individuals who possess the crime stereotype of African Americans and Hispanics have a higher fear of crime. African American stereotype-bearing individuals have a greater fear of crime compared to those who hold crime stereotypes about Hispanics. In addition, the influence of fear predictors such as individual victimization experiences and the existence of physical neighborhood disorder—on the perception of crime also evokes fear, in the same way as holding racial crime preconceptions about African Americans and Hispanics does. This suggests that the stereotyping of minorities is just as much an integral component of the fear of crime as these other elements.

Tables (6-7) show variations in the fear of crime among males and females who stereotype minorities (African Americans and Hispanics) and how that affects their fear of crime. Table (6) indicates that when it comes to sex variation in crime stereotypes against minorities, females have a higher level of fear when they possess stereotypes against Africans. Americans and not Hispanics. This suggests that while females may have the criminal stereotype of Hispanics, it does not impact their fear in the neighborhood; rather, their holding stereotypes about African Americans increase their fear. In addition to the findings in Table (7), men who hold crime stereotypes against Hispanics and African Americans have a higher fear of crime.

Also, the result indicates that white men who hold crime stereotypes against Hispanics and African Americans show a significant association with fear of crime. This finding highlights an interesting discovery of how the crime stereotype of minorities contributes in part to a higher level of fear of crime; in the same way, being a victim of crime and the presence of physical neighborhood disorder evoke fear of crime among residents.

Table 4: Bivariate relationship of independent variables by sex (2220)

	Female (%)	Male (%)	X2(df)	P value	N
Racial crime stereotype					
African American involvement in gangs and drug use					
Yes	53.43	46.57	8.67(1)	0.001	2055
No	46.81	53.19			
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use					
Yes	52.75	47.25	4.84(1)	0.03	2017
No	47.84	52.16			
Victimization experience					
Yes	44.99	55.01	5.99(1)	0.01	1413
No	51.91	48.09			
Physical neighborhood disorder					
Yes	52.29	47.71	0.53(1)	0.46	2215
No	50.72	49.28			

Table 5: Ordered logistics of regression of racial crime stereotype on the fear of crime (N=2220)

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Racial crime stereotype								
African American involvement in gangs and drug use			1.490***	0.157			1.451***	0.157
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use	1.36***	0.141			1.351**	0.143		
Victimization	1.453***	0.131	1.438***	0.128	1.478***	0.134	1.466***	0.132
Physical neighborhood disorder	1.468***	0.074	1.471***	0.074	1.443***	0.074	1.449***	0.074
Female					1.623***	0.170	1.602***	0.167
Education								
Graduate school					0.173**	0.119	0.225+	0.148
College					0.186**	0.127	0.245+	0.161
Vocational					0.185**	0.143	0.229	0.171
High school					0.192*	0.135	0.264	0.178
Ref: (Primary)								
Race								
Whites					1.095	.1710	1.163	0.178
Religiosity					0.919	0.101	0.921	0.101
LR chi2	92.68***		99.77**		117.81***		122.90***	
Pseudo R2	0.023		0.025		0.031		0.031	

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.10

Table 6: Ordered logistic regression of sex (female) variation in racial crime stereotype on the fear of crime (n=2220) female (1145)

Independent variables	Model 1		Model 2		Female (1145) Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Racial crime stereotype								
African American involvement in gangs and drug use			1.326***	0.199			1.346*	0.207
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use	1.153	0.169			1.204	0.181		
Victimization	1.829***	0.239	1.807***	0.235	1.85***	0.245	1.83***	0.240
Physical neighborhood disorder	1.434***	0.103	1.447***	0.103	1.402***	0.103	1.418***	0.103
Education								
Graduate school					0.071**	0.071	0.704*	0.089
College					0.068**	0.068	0.068**	0.087
Vocational					0.066*	0.066	0.062*	0.084
High school					0.044**	0.057	0.474**	0.061
Ref: (Primary)								
Race								
Whites					0.752	0.169	0.793	0.175
Religiosity					0.868	0.135	0.888	0.138
LR chi2	54.62***		59.96***		60.98***		64.46***	
Pseudo R2	0.027		0.029		0.0309		0.031	

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.10

Table7: Ordered Logistic Regression of Sex (Male) Variation in Racial Crime Stereotype and the Fear of Crime (N=2220)

Independent variables	Model 1		Male (1075) Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
Racial crime stereotype								
African American involvement in gangs and drug use			1.56**	0.232			1.49**	0.230
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use	1.54**	0.227			1.487**	0.225		
Victimization	1.24+	0.155	1.23+	0.153	1.248+	0.157	1.241+	0.156
Physical neighborhood disorder	1.48***	0.107	1.473***	0.106	1.467***	0.108	1.457***	0.107
Education								
Graduate school					0.187*	0.145	0.247	0.181
College					0.227	0.174	0.301	0.217
Vocational					0.222	0.208	0.286	0.257
High school					0.364	0.292	0.508	0.385
Ref: (primary)								
Race								
Whites					1.506+	0.332	1.605**	351
Religiosity					0.963	0.151	0.951	0.148
LR chi2	43.18***		43.2***		53.48***		54.48	
Pseudo R2	0.0232		0.023		0.028		0.029	

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, +p<.10

It is salient to note that, though both African Americans and Hispanics face stereotypes for drugs and crime, African Americans are highly associated with the stereotype of criminality. These findings are in line with the racial threat theory which posits that members of the minority group are mostly perceived as threatening (Blalock, 1967). Again, this study backs up what Wang and Todak (2016) underlined that the more minorities, especially black people, there are in a neighborhood, the more people are afraid of crime.

It is important to note that people who view minorities as criminals have a higher fear of crime than those who don't, even when they have not encountered actual crime incidents. Also, this study finds that minorities' criminal stereotyping supports the labeling theory, which states that deviance is created because of the way people envision, define, and label deviance. Thus, individuals viewed as deviant are those to whom the labels have been effectively applied (Becker, 2003; Couch and Fairlie, 2010). These negative beliefs and perceptions about an individual's personality are likely to translate into a generalization of the person's personality and stereotyped behavioral expectations (Watson, 2016; Goffman, 1976).

In relation to the argument of the racial threat theory, which posits that (Blalock, 1967; Wang and Todak, 2016), members of the majority group perceive the proportionate size and increasing minority population as threatening and, as a result, take steps to reduce their perceived threat. In relation to the theory argument, we decided to also examine how the majority group, in this case, Whites, who crime stereotype against minorities like African Americans and Hispanics, influences their fear of crime.

The results from the unconditional model indicated in Table (8) show that crime stereotypes against minorities (African Americans and Hispanics) significantly influence White people's fear of crime than those who do not stereotype. We also conducted an unconditional model for the African American and Hispanic racial groups (not shown in the table) and found that both African American and Hispanic racial groups who were stereotyped show no significant association with fear of crime.

Table 8: Unconditional model of whites who crime stereotypes against minorities on fear of crime (N = 2220)

	White (1887) B	SE
Racial crime stereotype		
African American involvement in gangs and drug use	1.384***	0.45
Hispanic involvement in gangs and drug use	1.321***	0.08
LRchi2	2.92**	
Pseudo R2	0.011	

Discussion

The study provides an empirical assessment of the relative role of people's racial crime stereotypes of African Americans and Hispanics, physical neighborhood disorders, and victimization experiences in the fear of crime. In the first phase of ordered logistic regression analyses, we tested whether racial crime stereotypes of minorities African Americans and Hispanics in turn lead to fear of crime among residents in the neighborhood. In the second phase, we included sex in our analysis of individuals who hold racialized stereotypes about criminal offending and how that influences their level of fear of crime.

According to this study, the presence of magnified racial crime stereotyping of African Americans and Hispanics with criminality evokes fear and an assessment of neighborhood safety. This study is similar to previous studies in establishing that assessments of local safety are tied to perceptions about racial minorities, regardless of the actual level of crime happening (Drakulich, 2012). This research provides empirical evidence for the labeling and the racial threat theories in predicting how racial crime stereotypes influence fear of crime in the U.S. Per the argument of the labeling theory (Becker, 2003), individuals who are labeled as deviant are individuals to whom a label is given, and this in turn influences how they are treated and perceived. The racial threat theory (Blalock, 1967) also argues that, often, racial minorities are perceived as dangerous and threatening when they dominate a particular neighborhood. This study contributes to these theories by emphasizing how crime stereotyping against minorities (i.e., African Americans and Hispanics) affects an individual's fear of crime even without actual crime encounters or crime-prone features in the neighborhood.

In addition, this study also finds support for the conclusion that visual cues of physical neighborhood disorders elevate fear of crime and safety concerns. Consistent with previous research, individuals can draw on indirect indicators of crime and visual signs such as abandoned buildings, graffiti, and litter that perpetuate crime and criminal activities in neighborhoods to derive similar assumptions about the threat of crime (Ross and Mirowsky, 2001; Sampson *et al.*, 1997; Hur and Nasar, 2014; Skogan, 2012; Massey, 2001). It is important to note that individuals who have experienced victimization show a highly significant association with fear of crime. This is consistent with Russo and Rossatos, (2010) studies, which suggest that the experience of victimization imparts to the individual the increased cognitive perception of being threatened, heightens their fear of crime, and increases their anticipation of possible victimization.

These findings have some implications for future social policies, especially regarding those interested in improving perceptions of neighborhood safety and

addressing fear concerns. Firstly, it suggests that not only are neighborhood disorders and victimization experiences associated with fear of crime, but that racial crime stereotypes have a significant impact on fear of crime. Another implication is that racialized stereotypes against minorities African Americans and Hispanics can be self-perpetuating. As found in the study, individuals who possess criminal stereotypes of these racial groups have heightened fears as opposed to those who do not hold racialized crime stereotypes. The findings suggest that policymakers should promote community actions to help residents, especially whites, think about the complexities between race, socioeconomic conditions, fear of crime, and crime itself. Also, they should encourage more public education to defy existing racial crime stereotypes of minorities living in disadvantaged neighborhoods who are already struggling with economic and social problems. Additionally, policymakers should support community-friendly policies that diversify groups to build trust, and respect should be encouraged in the neighborhood.

Despite our findings, this study is not without limitations. The sample was from residents in the city of Seattle, Washington, which may have a different cultural geography and social context compared to other urban settings. It is critical to recognize that it is a single city with its own distinct economic, racial-ethnic, and social context. Nonetheless, the findings may have implications for other community settings.

Although studies indicate a high rate of criminal stereotypes against blacks, it is important to note that not all individuals possess stereotypes against blacks. Further research is needed to investigate the mediating effects that could cause those people not to have stereotypes against blacks. For instance, racial interaction variables can be used for further studies to check if that is a possible mediating effect and how that can be promoted among residents. In addition to that, future studies should consider looking at specific crime types mostly associated with minority racial groups and why and how that can be addressed to help lessen the fear of minorities. Future work can also look at how less privileged neighborhoods, mostly dominated by minorities, can be improved to decrease the fear of racial minorities. Future studies should consider using longitudinal data to see how that will play out since cross-sectional data was used in this study.

Conclusion

This study examines the effect of racial crime stereotypes on the fear of crime among African Americans and Hispanics, as well as sex variation in that fear. The study findings show that racial crime stereotypes of minorities (i.e., African Americans and Hispanics) increase the possibility of fear of crime. Stereotyping

against African Americans is higher than that of Hispanics. Regarding sex, females who stereotype African Americans have a higher fear of crime, but those who possess stereotypes of Hispanics do not. On the other hand, males who are stereotyped have almost the same level of fear when they possess stereotypes of African Americans and Hispanics. These findings have some implications for future social policies, especially regarding those interested in promoting community actions to help residents improve their perceptions of neighborhood safety and address fear concerns.

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Authors Contributions

Veronica M. Ahadzie: Conceived the study, designed the methodology, and contributed to writing the literature review, interpreting the results, and drafting the discussion and conclusion. Also, participated in revisions and final editing.

Robert L. Peralta: Informed the theoretical development of the paper, the analytical methodology and contributed to the interpretation of the results, and the development of the literature review, the discussion and conclusion sections.

Ethics

The authors affirm that this study was conducted in accordance with established scientific protocols and ethical standards, ensuring that all procedures were followed responsibly and without any unethical practices.

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