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Crime Media and its Influence on Venturing Beyond the Collegiate Gates

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Crime Media and its Influence
on Venturing Beyond the Collegiate Gates

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology

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Abstract

Previous research has shown a significant relationship between consumption of crime-related stories in the media and fear of crime. Such a relationship has been recognized to prompt avoidance behaviors, any preventative actions one takes to avoid troubling thoughts, feelings, and or outcomes, within individuals who fear becoming the victim of a crime. In the current study, I aimed to answer the question, “Does the amount of crime-related media consumed through TV crime dramas, televised news, and social media and the racial composition of the neighborhood surrounding a college produce fear within college-aged students to venture off-campus?” I hypothesized that (a) more time spent consuming crime-related media will lead to less time off-campus, (b) individuals who less resemble the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood will spend less time off-campus, and (c) men will spend more time off-campus than women. 300 students at the participating school were recruited to participate in an anonymous survey which measured their (1) comfort in the neighborhood surrounding their college, (2) perceptions of crime on campus, (3) perceptions of crime off campus, (4) on campus crime news information sources, (5) off campus crime news information sources, and (6) crime-related media consumption. The results of the survey completed by 51 participants revealed no significant relationship between crime-related media consumption and time spent off-campus. A significant relationship was, however, found between the race/ethnicity of a participant and their time spent off-campus in activities related to academics, social activities, and personal needs, generally confirming the hypothesized pattern. No significant relationship was found between the gender of a participant and time spent off-campus.

“It’s such a shame that Nigerian men are physical abusers like the father character in your novel” was a comment made to novelist Chimamanda Adichie when she spoke as a guest at a university. Adichie references this statement in her 2009 Ted Talk “The Danger of a Single Story”, in which she discusses how vulnerable and impressionable we are as people when presented a story, especially one that has been told repeatedly across different art forms. In this eye-opening Ted Talk, Adichie examines the danger of a single story through different anecdotes from her life - one related to her college roommate being shocked that she spoke English well; another the fact that she listened to Mariah Carey instead of tribal music (Adichie, 2009).

Rather than criticizing the discussed individuals for the ideologies they cultivated from a single narrative, Adichie instead dives into why the cultivation of such ideologies is understandable, while not acceptable. As Adichie explained, if you depict a group of people in one particular way, and only that way, eventually that is what they become (Adichie, 2009). Showcase Nigerian men as abusers across art forms, and that is how we will most visibly remember them. Depict African people as one homogeneous group lacking verbal skills, and that is how we will think of them in everyday life.

Adichie’s belief regarding the danger of a single narrative is not a novel realization. In 1969 psychologist George Gerbner developed the cultivation theory centered around the hypothesis that those who spend more time watching TV are more likely to perceive the real world in relation to the messages garnered from the TV (Gerbner, 1969). More specifically to this particular study, Gerbner theorized that those who watch higher quantities of TV are more likely to perceive their neighborhoods as unsafe, to assume an increase in local crime rates, and to overestimate the likelihood of becoming a victim of a crime (Glassner, 1999, p.44)

Prior research has not only supported Gerbner's theory but has also led to the discovery of a disproportionate amount of coverage surrounding crime, particularly in news media. It has been reported that between the years of 1990 and 1998, the number of stories pertaining to murder showcased on network news stations increased by 600% despite the national murder rate declining by 20 percent (Glassner, 1999, p.xxi). On a similar note, when interviewing a sample of women in New York City about their fear of specific crimes, investigator Esther Madriz repeatedly received the response, "I saw it in the news" (Madriz, 1997). Such findings allude to the idea that news programs thrive off of scaring their viewers.

In October of 1970, the *New York Times* released an article about the risks children may face if they eat the candy they obtained through trick or treating. The article made claims of apples having razor blades hidden inside them and bubble gum being coated in lye, which naturally produced fear within parents of their children trick or treating. More articles and newscasts similar to the *New York Times* article continued to circulate through the media, despite there being findings against these statements. In 1985, sociologist Joel Best discovered that between 1958 and 1985, there had not been a single death or injury due to Halloween candy obtained from a stranger. The only two reported cases where a child did die due to Halloween candy was when the candy had been tampered with by family members (Glassner, 1999, p.30). In a more recent tracking of Halloween candy-related incidents, only four cases of tampered candy have arisen between the years of 2008 and 2019, but none has resulted in death (Miller, 2019). The account described above showcases the danger of a single narrative repeatedly told across time - a fictitious story that has created fear within parents to the point where they do not participate in a holiday.

The news also tends to hold a spotlight on narratives involving White victims and Black criminals. Prior research has revealed that crime-related media focuses more on White people and women as victims, despite Black individuals and, more specifically, Black males having a higher likelihood of being a victim of a crime. In 1999, A Black male was eighteen times more likely to be murdered in comparison to a White woman (Glassner, 1999, p.112). In the year 2019, 6,446 Black men were reportedly murdered in contrast to the 1,759 White women murdered (FBI.gov, 2020). While the death of both populations of people is unsettling, it begs the question of why the sources of crime media continually showcase Black individuals as criminals when they are just as likely, if not more, to be a victim of a crime when compared to their White counterparts. Having a disproportionate number of stories about black-on-white crime ultimately triggers White people to fear for their lives when in the presence of Black people.

Decades since the development of Gerber's theory, society has progressed through the means from which we can cultivate messages. Instead of depending on a newspaper, TV, or radio, people can now count on the internet and, by extension, social media, to provide instant news from anywhere in the world, meaning there are now more sources for people not only to cultivate prejudicial ideologies but also ones of fear. Past research has reported that individuals of an elderly age are so traumatized by the horrific stories depicted on their TVs that they are afraid to leave their homes. It also theorized that since elderly people are spending more time at home, they spend more time watching TV, generating more fear within the individual (Glassner, 1999, p.45). This study is meant to examine if the sentiments residing in elderly people regarding hesitancy to leave their home due to fear of crime apply to college-age students. It also

incorporates the question whether the racial composition of their college's neighborhood plays a role in their hesitation to venture beyond their institutional gates.

Cultivation of Crime Related Media

TV News

A majority of the research encompassing fear of crime and the cultivation of crime-related media has focused on TV news. In an early study dating back to 1997, Chiricos et al. set out to determine if there was a correlation between a person's fear of crime and the amount of televised news they viewed (Chiricos et al., 1997). Chiricos et al. surveyed 2,092 participants about their level of fear of a particular crime (being robbed at gunpoint, having their car stolen, etc.). Participants were then asked to rate the frequency of how often they listen to the news, read the local paper, and listen to the radio weekly. Chiricos et al. also asked their participants how much they could recall about three crime events: a truck driver being attacked in Los Angeles, the murder of tourists in Florida, and a mass shooting that occurred on a train. Through this survey, Chiricos et al. learned that there is a significant correlation between watching TV news and fear of crime (Chiricos et al., 1997).

Chiricos et al.'s findings were supported in a study conducted by Romer et al. in 2003. Like Chiricos et al., Romer et al. hypothesized that fear of crime is evoked by exposure to crime media within TV news. To test their hypothesis, Romer et al. analyzed three surveys. One was a national risk survey conducted in 1997, which revealed the connection between news outlets and people's perceptions of crime. The second survey was a general social survey; it granted Romer et al. access to participants' beliefs about personal crime risk within urban and suburban neighborhoods, in addition to the contrast in television news stories within these same neighborhoods. The final survey was conducted in 1998 and pertained to concerns amongst Philadelphia residents about the crimes in their neighborhood (Romer et al., 2003). In analyzing

these three surveys, Romer et al. concluded that the cultivation of crime-related media within TV news increases fear of crime within viewers. In particular, the national risk survey revealed that those who spent more time watching the news rated crime-associated risks to a graver extent than those who spent less time watching the news. The analysis of the general social survey showed that cities and towns where the local news showcased higher coverage of crime led to an increase in fear within the cities and towns. The final survey pertaining to individuals in Philadelphia highlighted the individual differences amongst a community of people in reference to their fear of crime and the amount of local news that they watch (Romer et al., 2003). The analysis of these three surveys conducted by Romer et al. showcases the extensive amount of power news channels have over viewers via the stories they tell.

In addition to invoking general fear of crime, televised news can also produce crime-specific fear. Nellis and Joanne (2012) examined whether the perceived risk and fear of terrorism are correlated to the cultivation of crime-related media. To answer their question, Nellis and Savage conducted a series of telephone surveys of 532 participants. From these interviews, Nellis and Savage discovered that increased exposure to terrorism-related news increased a participant's fear for one's family, perceived likelihood of a terrorist act occurring, and the risk of terrorism upon others. These results perpetuate the notion that the news is not only powerful enough to instill fear of crime within viewers but also has enough power to make viewers fearful of specific crimes, based on how they tell stories and how often.

More recent research has compared TV news to other forms of news media (newspapers, crime dramas, radio, etc.) to determine which news forms elicit the most fear within their viewers. Kohm et al. (2012) asked participants to rate their level of fear of a variety of crimes, then proceeded to ask participants to estimate how often they watched TV, or read the

newspaper, and so forth. In addition to the measures originally incorporated in Chiricos et al., Kohm et al. also asked their participants to state their primary source of crime news out of local TV news, internet news, national news, and newspapers. This study revealed that local television news was the strongest influence in invoking fear of crime compared to other media forms. Participants who declared local TV news as their primary source of crime-related news were more fearful of crime (Kohm et al., 2012). When considering why local television news produces the most fear within viewers compared to other media forms, one of the more novel reasons is the idea of seeing something terrifying and knowing that it is lurking outside of your door. Such a realization would cause worry in the bravest of people. Another explanation is that a person can be selective of the type of news they are consuming when reading the newspaper. The same cannot be said when an individual watches televised news. While you can choose which news outlet to obtain information from and turn on and off your TV if the story becomes too graphic, you can't, however, dictate which stories fill your screen as you watch the broadcast. Ergo, viewers are entrapped in a disproportionate cycle of stories at the discretion of news broadcasters.

Newspapers

Unlike TV news, crime-related reports within newspapers have been frequently reported not to correlate with fearing crime. O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987), set out to determine if the depictions of crime on TV and in newspapers affect an individual's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors concerning crime and crime prevention. O'Keefe and Reid-Nash conducted a series of interviews focusing on the amount of time a participant spent watching and reading crime-related stories. Like other researchers of the subject, O'Keefe and Reid-Nash found that the more an individual pays attention to televised crime stories, the more fearful they are of crime. In regard

to reading crime stories in the newspaper, O'Keefe and Reid-Nash discovered that an increase in attention to crime stories within the newspaper did not lead to greater fear of crime. O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987) hypothesized that the lack of correlation between fear of crime and reading the newspaper was because those who read the newspaper tend to be more educated, and with more education stems more knowledge of how to protect one's self in the face of crime.

While many studies on the subject of crime media coverage in newspapers found no correlation to fear of crime amongst readers, a study conducted by Liska and Baccaglioni (1990) found no evidence to support the prior finding. Liska and Baccaglioni set out to examine specific characteristics within newspaper crime coverage that inflicts fear of crime within their readers. They analyzed a national crime survey conducted between the years of 1974 and 1975, in addition to the most popular newspaper in each of the 26 cities that the national crime survey sampled participants from. By conducting this analysis, Liska and Baccaglioni found that when a newspaper covers crime in a town that the reader does not live in, the reader is more likely to feel safe. However, if the reported crime is listed in a paper that is local to their place of residence, the individual will cultivate a fear of crime (Liska & Baccaglioni, 1990). Liska and Baccaglioni's findings are significant because they highlight the concept of proximity in reference to crime and how a person may only fear crime when they perceive it to be in their community. When applying these findings back to the study conducted by O'Keefe and Reid-Nash, who hypothesized that being more educated can equate to less fear of crime, one can hypothesize that maybe these educated people didn't fear crime because with education stems wealth and an opportunity to live in a safer neighborhood where less crime occurs.

Liska and Baccaglioni's results aligned with those in a study conducted by Heath (1984), who also set out to research if there were specific components within the newspaper that led to a

fear of crime amongst readers. In her study, Heath set out to examine specific characters within newspaper crime coverage that inflict fear of crime within their readers. Similar to Liska and Baccaglioni, Heath (1984) found that newspapers that released more stories of local crimes instilled more fear in readers than newspapers that printed stories of crime in distant towns. The findings of both Liska and Baccaglioni (1990) and Heath's (1984) research are important when considering how college students may react to their college newspaper covering both on-campus and off-campus news.

TV Crime Dramas

Fox's *9-1-1*, *Chicago Fire*, *Law and Order SVU*, and so many others, are crime dramas that are dominating our screens. Despite the sometimes gory and horrific imagery and storylines, fans can't help but watch so much that television companies continue to produce them effortlessly. The Hollywood Reporter reported that in the 2013-2014 TV circuit, out of 101 scripted shows on the air, 29 of those shows were crime dramas making up 28.7% of primetime TV. In a more recent television circuit, 2019-2020, out of 97 scripted shows, 19 of those shows were crime-based, making up 19.6% of scripted tv coverage (Porter, 2020).

Romer and Jamieson (2014), explored whether historical changes in the depiction of violence in scripted television influences an individual's perception of local crime and their fear of crime. To explore this question, Romer and Jamieson conducted a content analysis of the top 30 prime-time drama episodes, released between 1972 and 2010. They chose 1972 as starting point because that was when the national data survey, which contained data on crime issues, started to be released annually (Romer & Jamieson, 2014). When analyzing each episode, Romer and Jamieson tracked each instance of violence, which was defined as:

"Physical acts where the aggressor makes or attempts to make some physical contact with the intention of causing injury or death" and "intentional acts where the aggressor makes or attempts to make some physical contact that has potential to inflict injury or harm." (Romer & Jamieson, 2014, pg 34).

Romer and Jamieson then moved on to compare the information gathered from their content analysis to information obtained from FBI Crime reports which contained the national violent crime rate for each year since 1972 and a count of specific crimes (manslaughter, robbery, etc.) reported to the police. In comparing these two sources of information, Romer and Jamieson found that TV violence is directly correlated to fear of crime (Romer & Jamieson, 2014). Romer and Jamieson interpreted their findings within the framework of the transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000). Green and Brock theorized that when people become captivated by a story, their attitudes shift to reflect the story (Green & Brock, 2000). When watching a show, viewers can't help but empathize with their favorite characters and imagine what they would do if they experienced what the character was experiencing. If the show happens to be a crime drama filled with horrific and tragic crimes, a viewer may begin to fear crime as a result of transporting themselves into the story.

Chadee et al. (2019), set out to examine the influence of watching fictional, reality-based, and crime-related news media on one's fear of crime. Taking place in Trinidad, Chadee et al. interviewed 3,003 participants. Similar to past studies, Chadee et al. asked participants to rate how fearful they were of being a victim of a particular crime. Participants were also asked to rate how likely they were to be a victim of a certain crime. In addition to being asked to recall the number of hours spent watching crime dramas, both fictional and reality-based, participants were asked various statements to assess the level of perceived realism of crime-related media. In

conducting these interviews, Chadee et al. (2019) found that all three media variables they analyzed (TV crime dramas, reality-based crime dramas, and televised news), do not correlate to a fear of crime.

The findings of Chadee et al's research is congruent with the findings of a study conducted by Doob and Macdonald (1979). Doob and Macdonald conducted a study to test Gerbner's theory that people who watch more television are more likely to fear their environment, as well as to discern if other factors, such as level of crime in a participant's neighborhood can explain this correlation. Doob and Macdonald conducted a door-to-door survey asking their participants to rate the likelihood of themselves becoming victims of a specific crime and recall the television programs they watched within the previous week, as seen in other research studies. Doob and Macdonald conducted their survey in four different neighborhoods: a high and low crime neighborhood in downtown Toronto and a high and low crime neighborhood in the suburbs of Toronto. Interestingly, in the midst of conducting their survey, Doob and Macdonald learned that those residing in a high crime neighborhood tended to watch more violent TV than those living in a low crime neighborhood (Doob & Macdonald, 1979). Despite this finding, the results of Doob and Macdonald's survey were that Gerbner's theory is only replicable when one does not attempt to control for another variable (amount of crime in the neighborhood), in turn alluding to the idea that viewing television is not related to fear of crime amongst viewers (Doob & Macdonald, 1979). It should also be noted that the two studies that found no relationship between crime-related media consumption and fear of crime were conducted outside of America -Trinidad for Chadee et al. (2019) and Toronto for Doob and Macdonald (1979). This is a significant fact to keep in mind when considering how a person's

location and or cultural identity helps shape their fear of crime in reference to the amount of crime-related media they consume.

Heath and Petraitis (1987) challenged the findings of Doob and Macdonald's study on the premise that while television viewing may not affect an individual's perception of crime in their own neighborhood, it may have the potential to affect a person's perception of crime in a distant neighborhood. Heath and Petraitis conducted two studies. In the first study, Heath and Petraitis conducted 372 telephone interviews with participants all over the country. In these interviews, participants were asked how many hours they had spent watching TV on the previous day and the typical amount of viewing beyond a day. Participants were also asked to rate how often they watch TV dramas, comedies, and so forth. And lastly, participants were asked a series of questions to assess how each participant feared and perceived crime in their own and distant neighborhoods. The results of the first study revealed as Heath and Petraitis hypothesized. The more TV an individual watches, the more likely they will be to fear crime in a distant urban neighborhood, despite not fearing crime within their own city. These findings were supported in Heath and Petraitis' second study, where they examined if their results can be applied to less distant urban cities. Based on a survey of 192 participants, Heath and Petraitis found that while TV viewing may not produce fear of crime within one's neighborhood, it does, however, instill fear of crime in less distant urban neighborhoods as well as distant urban neighborhoods (Heath & Petraitis, 1987).

Heath and Petraitis' findings are noteworthy because they contradict what Heath found in her previous study. As previously mentioned, in her study conducted in 1984, Heath found that stories about local crimes instilled more fear of crime than stories in distant towns. It seems to be

the opposite when an individual watches TV, showcasing that different crime-related media types produce different types of crime-related fear.

Social Media

In 2019, the average American spent 144 minutes a day on social media (Broadband Search, 2020). In a day made up of 24 hours, two of those hours and 24 minutes were spent liking and uploading pictures, retweeting messages, and or mindlessly watching endless amounts of Tik Toks. Social media has become a fundamental part of day-to-day life, especially for young adults who utilize it as a platform to share and attain information at an accelerated rate. With more than half the world's population using social media (Broadband Search, 2020), it begs the question of how social media can lead to a fear of crime, especially since it's growing to be a more radicalized space used to display moments of injustice and criminal activity such as police brutality, kidnappings, and other crimes that occur in society.

Nasi et al. (2020), examined how consuming different media types (social media, TV crime dramas, televised news, etc.) affects one's fear of crime. Nasi et al. surveyed 6,201 participants in Finland, asking them if there is a specific area near their home that they avoid out of fear of crime. Nasi et al. also asked their participants to rate how often they hear about crime from a variety of media sources. In conducting this study, Nasi et al. concluded that social media has contributed to producing fear of crime within users, like watching the news or listening to the radio. Nasi et al. study also revealed that while the news and other traditional forms of news ascertainment are still used as primary sources for most participants, 1 in 5 participants stated that they used Facebook and Twitter to gather crime-related news (Nasi et al., 2020). These findings are significant because they showcase how social media is growing as a hub of knowledge for people, as well as the effects it has on people once they reenter the real world.

In 2017, Intravia et al. conducted a study to examine if social media affects an individual's fear of crime. Intravia et al. released a survey to students at three different colleges. The survey asked participants to rate how fearful they are of becoming a victim of a particular crime, consistent with previous studies on media cultivation and fear of crime (Doob & Macdonald, 1979; Chiricos et al., 1997). Participants were also asked to rate how much time they spend on social media and how often they read, watch, or interact with crime-related stories across social media platforms. The Intravia et al. survey revealed that greater social media consumption was related to fear of crime in users. Intravia et al. (2017) also discovered that social media consumption of crime-related media instills more fear in people who feel safe in their neighborhoods compared to those who feel unsafe, alluding to the idea that social media has a greater influence on those who have never been a victim of a crime or have rarely worried about becoming a victim of a crime.

Prieto-Curiel et al. (2020) examined if the real-time information aspect of social media is correlated to one's willingness to commit a crime as well as one's fear of crime. To answer this question, Prieto-Curiel et al. spent 70 days acquiring a substantial number of tweets from the 18 largest Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (Prieto-Curiel et al., 2020). Once obtaining the tweets, Prieto-Curiel et al. categorized the tweet as either crime-related or not crime-related. Prieto-Curiel et al. then compared the crime-related tweets to data listed in the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime and the Latin American public opinion project, which contained the murder rate in each country and individual's perceptions of crime. In conducting this cross-analysis, Prieto-Curiel et al. first learned that 15 out of every 1000 tweets were messages about crime. Furthermore, the results of their study revealed that while there isn't a relationship between trends in crime and social media usage, frequency of social media use is positively

correlated to fear of crime (Prieto-Curiel et al.,2020). These results are interesting, seeing that when looking at Twitter alone, crime-related messages aren't as prominent, generating the question of how these results would look differently when examining multiple social media platforms instead of one.

Audience Traits & Avoidance Behaviors

When studying the relationship between fear of crime and the cultivation of crime-related media, many researchers have made it a point to address the avoidance behaviors that stem from having such a fear. Avoidance behaviors, which are any preventative actions one takes to avoid troubling thoughts, feelings, and or outcomes (Star, 2020), have been frequently associated with the diversity of the neighborhood one lives in, an individual's race, and their gender.

Diversity of Neighborhood

In a study conducted by Hignite et al. (2018), the research team examined students avoidant behaviors at an urban university in a major southern city, and more specifically, determined if certain demographic attributes (exposure to on-campus crime media, confidence in campus police, and experiences with crime on campus both direct and vicarious) foretold avoidance behaviors amongst students. In a survey completed by 990 participants, Hignite et al. first asked participants to admit if they ever performed a particular behavior (avoiding certain areas of campus either during the day or night, carried a self-defense item/weapon, etc.) as a means to measure avoidance behaviors. The remainder of the survey contained a series of questions meant to measure each participant's confidence in their campus safety officers, fear of victimization on campus, how they received information about crime on campus, and lastly, campus victimization experiences. A key finding of Hignite et al. survey was that a substantial number of participants did not have confidence in their campus safety officers to prevent crime

on campus. Such lack of confidence in campus safety officers led to a quarter of participants admitting that they carry a weapon on campus. Reported weapons were mace/pepper spray, a knife, a gun, and some even admitted to carrying multiple weapons. Hignite et al. survey also revealed that females, White students, students who have been victimized on campus, students with less confidence in campus safety, and students who know of past acts of on-campus crimes partook in more avoidance behaviors on their college campus (Hignite et al., 2018). While Hignite et al. research doesn't speak much of the surrounding neighborhood of the participating college, it is important to note that the participating school in Hignite et al. study is an urban school, meaning that it is located within a large city. This is important to highlight, especially when considering how the media portrays crime in large urban cities. While it is not stated nor measured in Hignite's et al. study, it is possible that the reason why students have little faith in their campus safety officers and engage in avoidance behaviors such as carrying weapons is because they are afraid of the community and people that are outside of their ivory gates. Hence prompting the question of how the surrounding neighborhood of one's school in accordance with their crime media intake affects their perception and or fear of crime.

Race

As seen in the study conducted by Hignite et al. (2018), race was a predictor of avoidance behaviors amongst college-aged students and, more specifically, White college students. In a study conducted by Truman (2005), the psychologist set out to examine if a person's fear of crime is related to their gender, race/ethnicity, age, media exposure, and perceived risk. To test her question, Truman released a survey at the University of Central Florida, in which 315 students completed it. Truman's survey contained questions on demographic characteristics, fear of crime, past experiences of crime victimization, and beliefs on crime occurrences. The results

of Truman's survey revealed that the fear of crime amongst non-white participants was significantly higher than the fear of crime within White participants (Truman, 2005).

When considering both Truman's findings on the relationship between race and fear of crime and Hignite et al. findings on avoidance/protective behaviors, which stems from fear of crime, and its correlation to race, it perpetuates the concept of how being a part of the minority as opposed to the majority in reference to the other race bias, can instill a fear of crime and unease within individuals. Prior psychological research has revealed that individuals are more inclined to trust others who resemble them in terms of race and other familiar stimuli (DeBruine, 2005), which would explain the distinct findings in Hignite et al. and Truman's studies. As previously stated, the participants in Hignite et al. study were students at an urban school located in a large city, meaning that there was a high chance that the surrounding neighborhood was diverse in terms of race and ethnicity (Hignite et al., 2018). As for Truman's study, her participants attend a school in Orange County, Florida, where 68% of the town's population is White, 22.8% Black, 5.7% Asian, and 32.7% Hispanic, regardless of race as reported in 2019 (Census.Gov, 2019). The contrasting experience of attending a college in a diverse neighborhood as opposed to a homogeneous neighborhood would explain why the White participants of Hignite et al. study who were used to being the majority race, were found to engage in more avoidance behaviors being as that they were currently residing in a neighborhood where they could be considered a minority. The same applies to the non-white students in Truman's study who are just as much of a minority off campus in the neighborhood surrounding their college, as they are on campus. This result showcases how race can affect a person's willingness to spend time off campus.

Truman's findings can also be validated when considering the effects of COVID-19 and its activation of anti-Asian sentiments throughout the country. As stated in a journal by Ren et al.

(2020), the mixed messaging and lack of knowledge about the COVID-19 pandemic has led people to target the Asian community out of anxiety and prejudices due to the virus originating in Wuhan, China. It has been reported that in the past year that people would find malicious ways to attack Wuhan citizens, such as purposefully hitting another person's car if they saw that the driver's plate was from Wuhan. Discrimination against Wuhan citizens has grown beyond physical acts of violence and has made its way into news coverage as early as January 2020 when a Danish newspaper released a cartoon of a Chinese flag with virus-like imagery edited onto it (Ren et al., 2020).

Over a year has passed since COVID regulations have gone into effect in the United States. And since then, the prejudices and anti-Chinese sentiment has expanded beyond Wuhan citizens to the entire Asian community. It has been reported that since January 2020, there has been an increase in hate crimes and violence towards people of Asian descent (Usher et al., 2020). While there is minimal research on how COVID has affected an individual's perception of crime, it is safe to assume that the growing anti-Asian sentiment that is a byproduct of misinformation and prejudicial news stories has led those part of the Asian community to worry about becoming a victim of a hate crime, and or engage in avoidance behaviors to decrease the chances of becoming a victim of a hate crime.

Another study that has examined the effects of race on fear of crime and, more specifically, the differences between White people and people of color was conducted by Parker (1988). To further examine the relationship between race and fear of crime, Parker recruited participants who previously participated in a more extensive survey on crime in Mississippi in 1983. Focusing on the participants of the prior survey that still resided in Mississippi, Parker sent a questionnaire to 2,830 eligible participants and received 1,835 usable responses. Along with

obtaining particular demographic characteristics (race, age, etc.) Parker also asked his participants to declare if they are fearful of potential situations, using a series of prompts:

When I am away from home, I worry about the safety of my property; There is reason to be afraid of becoming a victim of crime in my community.

The results of Parker's questionnaire revealed that Black people were more fearful than White people, promoting the idea that race affects fear of crime (Parker, 1988). Parker's findings make sense even more so when we consider our society regarding police brutality and Black Lives Matter.

Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Breonna Taylor are a few names of Black people who were murdered unjustly at the hands of the police. It has been reported that in the first eight months of 2020, 164 Black people were killed by a police officer (Cohen, 2020). It should also be mentioned that these horrific deaths are starting to become more frequently recorded and shown on news outlets and social media. In a more recent video, viewers can witness George Floyd fighting for life as a police officer kneels on his neck for nine and half minutes which ultimately takes his life (Forliti, 2021). Seeing such a video on social media about a Black woman or man who has lost their life to a police officer instills fear within Black people and people of color like no other. Not only is there the idea of will I be the next Black person to lose my life at the mercy of a police officer, but also the fear of being associated with anything crime-related out of worry that the situation will be misread and ultimately end in tragedy. Parker's research findings and findings alike help paint the picture of why a person of color may fear becoming a victim of crime and partake in avoidance behaviors at a higher rate than White people, especially after consuming crime related media across different media platforms.

Gender

Along with race, gender and its effect on fear of crime have frequently been examined in past research. In a study conducted by Cobbina et al. (2008), the psychologists set out to explore how gender affects African American youths' perception of risk, avoidance strategies, and perceptions of neighborhood dangers. Cobbina et al. interviewed 72 African American youth in St. Louis, Missouri. The interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to probe into other aspects of the participants' life. For example, participants were asked to describe what their neighborhoods were like and if they felt safe within them. Cobbina et al. also incorporated a series of questions to measure for gender differences, such as if they believed their neighborhood was safer for males or females and whether they faced any specific risks based on their gender. The interview concluded with participants being asked what strategies they utilize in their neighborhood to stay safe (Cobbina et al., 2008).

The key findings of Cobbina et al. interviews were that the male participants described their neighborhood in a way that implied that they were active in the community through the use of we and I statements, while female participants described their neighborhood in a way that suggested less active engagement through the use of they statements. The results also revealed that male participants utilized staying within the boundaries of their neighborhood to stay safe and avoid violence. While female participants reported preferring to stay home as a result of that being the place where they felt safest. However, if they ever were to go outside, they utilized staying out of public spaces, especially at night, and traveling with others, primarily men, as a form of safety (Cobbina et al., 2008). Cobbina et al. study highlights the stark contrast in avoidance behaviors between boys and girls.

A study conducted by Gainey and Payne (2009) looked at gender and its effect on attitudes towards police in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Gainey and Payne interviewed 418 individuals who resided in impoverished neighborhoods. The interview started with participants first rating the police performance in their neighborhood using a 6 point Likert-scale ranging from poor to excellent. To measure participants' perception of risk in their neighborhood, Gainey and Payne asked participants to rate how comfortable they felt in their neighborhood within the last 12 months, using a 5 point Likert scale ranging from very unsafe to very safe. The interview concluded with Gainey and Payne asking participants if they experienced certain situations, such as being confronted by a drug dealer in the last 12 months, that aligned with crime victimization and social issues in their neighborhood. The key findings of Gainey and Payne's series of interviews were that women are more likely to feel at risk in their neighborhood, which Gainey and Payne correlated to a negative perception of police performance (Gainey & Payne, 2009).

Gainey and Payne also made note of the fact that while women are more likely to feel at risk in their neighborhood, they are less likely to be confronted by a drug dealer when compared to their male counterparts (Gainey & Payne, 2009). It has also been reported that women are more likely to be victimized by people they know in intimate private spaces, while men are more likely to be victimized by people they don't know in public spaces (Cobbina et al., 2008). These findings are important because it showcases the variance in levels of fear of crime between men and women in relation to the probability of such a crime occurring.

A study conducted by Wilcox et al. (2007) examined prior instances of crime victimization, perceptions of campus danger, and emotional worry amongst a group of college-aged women. To learn more about these crime-related experiences, Wilcox et al. conducted a telephone survey with 1,010 women at a state university located in an urban setting

in the southeast region of the United States. In their survey, Wilcox et al. first asked participants questions intended to measure fear of crime on campus for specific types of crime (stalking, sexual abuse, physical abuse, etc.). Participants then divulged past victimization experiences by answering 34 yes or no questions that highlighted specific events. Using a four-point Likert scale ranging from very unsafe to very safe, participants rated their perceived safety of their school. Wilcox et al. also measured for avoidance behaviors amongst participants by asking participants how often they avoid specific places on campus out of concern for safety (Wilcox et al., 2007). In conducting their survey, Wilcox et al. discovered that despite 35.6% of participants reporting that they have experienced situations of either stalking, sexual or physical assault, and or all three, only 15.5% of participants stated that they felt that their campus was unsafe. Additionally, when examining the relationship between prior experiences of victimization and worry about crime, Wilcox et al. found that the percentage of participants who have previous experiences of crime victimization was significantly lower than the percentage of participants worried about stranger perpetrated crimes. Wilcox et al. found the opposite to be true when focusing on acquaintance perpetrated crimes, discovering that the percentage of participants with crime victimization experiences was significantly higher than the percentage of participants worried about acquaintance perpetrated crime (Wilcox et al., 2007). The results of Wilcox et al. research are important because they showcase that women are understandably more worried about stranger perpetuated crime, which can ultimately lead to hesitancy to venture into the neighborhood surrounding their college.

Current Study

The current study explored the relationship between crime-related media consumption (TV news, social media, and televised crime dramas) and demographic attributes of an individual

(race, gender, and the racial composition of their neighborhood) on a person's willingness to venture off their college campus.

In conducting this study, three hypotheses were posed :

H1: More time spent consuming crime-related media will correlate to less time spent off-campus.

H2: Individuals who less resemble the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood will be less likely to spend time off campus in social activities, academic activities and activities related to personal needs.

H3: Men will be more willing to spend time off campus than women.

The first hypothesis is based on Chiricos et al. (1997), Romer and Jamieson (2014), and Nasi et al. (2020), who each showed that their measured media type (TV news, TV crime dramas, and social media) instills fear of crime within their consumers. The second hypothesis is based on the findings of Truman (2005) and DeBruine (2005) under the idea that people consider those who resemble them to be more trustworthy. Seeing as that the participating school is located in a prominently Latinx urban neighborhood, the concepts presented in both Truman and DeBruine's research may impact some of a particular race more than others. The third and final hypothesis is based on Cobbina et al. (2008), whose study showcased that when within a perceived unsafe community, girls tend to prefer to stay home as opposed to venturing into their community as a means of safety, while boys utilized staying within boundaries of areas that they deemed safe as a means of safety.

This study adds to the plethora of existing literature on the relationship between crime-related media and fear of crime. While an extensive amount of prior research has examined how an individual's race affects the focal relationship (Crime-related media and fear of crime), there has been limited research on how the racial composition of a neighborhood shapes

one's perception and fear of crime. Additionally, while a majority of past research has been conducted on college students and their perceptions and fear of crime on campus, there has been a lack of research as to how such a relationship can affect a college-aged student's perception of the neighborhood surrounding their college and their willingness to venture into said neighborhood. Beyond adding to the existing body of literature, it is hoped that these results will help college personnel better understand students' perceptions regarding their college campus and the surrounding neighborhood and find solutions to combat unwarranted and inaccurate perceptions.

Method

Participants

I contacted a random sample of 300 students 18 years and older, in their sophomore year and above, and residing on campus or near campus housing at a small liberal arts college in an urban neighborhood via email to participate in an online survey about their perception of safety on and off-campus. First-year students were excluded from participating in the study due to them lacking a college experience free of Covid regulations.

The study received IRB approval from the participating college, and participants gave consent on the landing page of the Qualtrics survey. A total of 51 students completed the survey. 13 students identified themselves as male, 37 as female, and one as non-binary. Of the 51 survey respondents, 13 were sophomores, 20 were juniors, and 18 were seniors. With the exception of one respondent, all participants resided in on-campus housing during the Spring 2021 semester. As for race and ethnicity, 39% of the sample were White/European American; 22% Hispanic; 20% Asian/Asian American; 18% Black/ African American; and 2% identified as mixed race.

And lastly, 59% of participants attended high school in the Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania); 14% the Midwest (North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin); 6% in the South (Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, DC, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas); 6% in the West (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California); and 16% reported attending high school outside of the United States.

Students who completed the survey were able to enter themselves in a drawing for one of four \$50 Amazon gift cards as a form of compensation for their time.

Survey Measures

Comfortability in Surrounding Neighborhood of College

To assess participants' level of comfortability within three miles of their college, participants were asked to rate how likely they are to spend time in the immediate area of their campus *in activities related to a course being taken, in social activities with classmates (sitting in a park, going out to dinner, etc.), and in activities related to personal needs (food shopping, personal grooming, etc.)* using a scale of 0 to 100 percent. A principal components analysis showed that three items were uni-dimensional, so a single composite (mean) score was created, Cronbach's alpha = .70.

Participants were also asked to rate how likely they were to use the following modes of transportation; *public transportation (bus or train), college shuttle, private car (owned by self or friend), ride for hire (Uber, Lyft, etc.), biking, and walking*, to reach destinations within three

miles of their college campus using a scale of 0 to 100 percent. A principal components analysis showed that these six measures were multi-dimensional, so no composite score was built.

It should also be noted that when answering this question, participants were asked to base their answers on a Covid free world to avoid answers based on Covid regulations.

Perception of Crime on Campus

Participants were asked to rate the likelihood of a particular crime occurring on their college campus for a series of eight crimes.

- 1) A person having his/her/or their residence broken into.
- 2) A person being mugged.
- 3) A person being attacked by someone else with a weapon.
- 4) A person being sexually assaulted.
- 5) A person having his/her/or their car stolen.
- 6) A person having his/her/or their property stolen.
- 7) A person having his/her/or their property vandalized.
- 8) A person being murdered.

These eight specific crimes were taken from prior research conducted by Chricos et al (1997). However, some statements were reworded in order to fit a college context. A principal components analysis showed that these eight measures were uni-dimensional, a composite (mean) was built, Cronbach's alpha = .89.

Perception of Crime Off Campus

The same eight crimes (a person having his/her/or their residence broken into, a person being mugged, a person being attacked by someone else with a weapon, etc.) were used to measure participants' perception of crime in the surrounding neighborhood of their college

campus. Using a scale ranging from 0 to 100 percent, participants were asked to rate how likely they believe each crime was to occur within three miles of their college campus. A principal components analysis showed that these eight measures were unidimensional, so a composite (mean) was built, Cronbach's alpha = .95.

On Campus Crime News Information Sources

Participants were asked to rate how often they receive information about crime from a particular source using a five-point Likert-type scale. A rating of one equated to "never," while a score of five equaled "always." The five sources measured were :

- 1) Word of mouth
- 2) Campus newspaper
- 3) Local newspaper
- 4) News Apps
- 5) Social Media
- 6) Campus safety reports

A principal components analysis showed that these six measures were unidimensional, so a composite (mean) was built, Cronbach's alpha = .66.

Off Campus Crime News Information Sources

Participants were also asked to rate the frequency of how often they receive information about crime occurring off-campus within three miles, by word of mouth, campus newspaper, local newspaper, news apps, social media, and campus safety reports. Once again, ratings were made using a five-point Likert type scale where a rating of one equaled "never," and a rating of five equaled "always." A principal components analysis showed that these six measures were unidimensional, so a composite (mean) was built, Cronbach's alpha = .76.

Crime Related Media Consumption

To measure the amount of crime-related media consumed by each respondent, participants indicated how much time they spent on social media ranging from 60 mins or less to 240 mins or more. Based on their answer to the initial question, participants were then asked to indicate how much time spent on social media is dedicated to reading or watching stories related to crime, once again ranging from 60 mins or less to 240 mins or more. The same measures were used to gauge participants' consumption of crime-related media within TV crime dramas and televised news. A principal components analysis showed that these six measures were not unidimensional, so no composite was built.

Results**Time Spent with Crime Related Media in Relation to Time Spent Off Campus***Differences in Media Type Consumption.*

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for time spent with various media focused on crime. A repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant association between media consumption and time spent consuming crime related media, $F(5,230) = 64.62, p = <.001$, partial eta - squared = .584. While social media was the most consumed media type ($M = 3.8, SE = 0.2$), TV crime dramas were the most consumed type of crime related media ($M = 1.6, SE = 0.1$). TV news was the least consumed media type ($M = 1.3, SE = 0.1$), even when focusing on crime related news only ($M = 1.1, SE = 0.04$).

Crime Related Media Consumption & Time Spent Off-Campus.

No significant correlation was found between crime related media consumption and time spent off campus. Social media: $r = .13, p = .37$; TV crime dramas: $r = -.22, p = .14$; TV news:

$r = -.07, p = .64.$

Race Differences.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for time spent with crime related media and race/ethnicity. A repeated measures ANOVA showed no effect of race/ethnicity on time spent with crime related media, $F(3,42) = 1.52, p = .22$, partial eta-squared = .098, nor was race/ethnicity by media type a significant interaction, $F(6,84) = 0.56, p = .79$, partial eta-squared = .036.

Gender Differences.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for time spent with crime related media and gender. A repeated measures ANOVA showed no effect of gender on time spent with crime related media, $F(1,44) = 0.55, p = .46$, partial eta-squared = .012, nor was gender by media type a significant interaction, $F(2,88) = 1.34, p = .27$, partial eta-squared = .030.

Sources of Information about Crime

Differences in Sources of Information Pertaining to On Campus and Off Campus Crime News.

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for sources of information about crime as a function of location and type of source. A repeated measures ANOVA determined that sources of information about crime were utilized more for on campus news ($M = 2.5, SE = 1.1$) than off-campus news ($M = 2.1, SE = 1.1$), $F(1,44) = 14.0, p < .001$, partial eta - squared = .241. Type of source was also significant, $F(5,220) = 30.65, p < .001$, partial eta - squared = .411. The interaction between location and source type was also significant, $F(5,220) = 17.28, p < .001$, partial eta - squared = .282.

The Relationship between Sources of Information and Time Spent Off Campus.

No significant correlation was found between sources of information and time spent off campus, $r = -.02$, $p = .89$.

Race Differences.

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for sources of information about crime as a function of crime location and race/ethnicity. A repeated measures ANOVA determined no association between race/ethnicity and sources of information about crime, $F(3,42) = 0.20$, $p = .90$, partial eta - squared = .014. Location did not interact with race/ethnicity as a predictor of favored sources of information about crime, $F(3,42) = 0.22$, $p = .88$, partial eta - squared = .016.

Gender Differences.

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics for sources of information about crime as a function of crime location and gender. A repeated measures ANOVA showed no effect of gender on sources of information about crime, $F(1,44) = 0.09$, $p = .77$, partial eta - squared = .002, nor was gender by location a significant interaction, $F(1,44) = 2.72$, $p = .11$, partial eta - squared = .058.

Perceptions of Frequency of Crime on and off Campus*Differences Between Perceived Crime on Campus and off Campus.*

Table 7 & Figure 1 show descriptive statistics for perceived likelihood of crime as a function of location and type of crime. A repeated - measures ANOVA determined that perceived likelihood of crime was higher near campus ($M = 35.6$, $SE = 3.7$) than on campus ($M = 28.3$, $SE = 2.9$), $F(1,38) = 10.31$, $p = .003$, partial eta - squared = .213. Type of crime was a significant predictor of perceived likelihood of crime, $F(7,266) = 32.44$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared = .461. Perceived likelihood of sexual assault was distinctively high ($M = 52.7$, $SE = 3.8$), and perceived likelihood of murder was distinctively low ($M = 13.2$, $SE = 2.8$). The interaction of location and

type of crime was also significant $F(7,266) = 15.67, p < .001$, partial eta-squared = .292.

Perceived likelihood of sexual assault was higher on campus ($M = 62.6, SE = 4.4$) than off campus ($M = 42.8, SE = 4.6$). There was no difference in perceived likelihood of property stolen ($M = 35.9, SE = 3.9$) or vandalized ($M = 34.7, SE = 3.8$) on campus compared to off campus (Stolen: $M = 38.8, SE = 4.5$; vandalized: $M = 40.4, SE = 4.1$). For all other types of crime, perceived likelihood was higher off campus than on campus.

Perceived Crime & Time Spent Off-Campus.

No significant correlation was found between perception of crime on campus and time spent near campus (within 3 miles), $r = .08, p = .57$. As for the perception of crime off-campus and time near campus (within 3 miles), no significant correlation was found, $r = .01, p = .95$.

Race Differences.

Table 8 shows descriptive statistics for perceived likelihood of crime as a function of location and race/ethnicity. A repeated-measures ANOVA determined that perceived likelihood of crime was higher off-campus ($M = 33.1, SD = 23.1$) than on-campus ($M = 27.5, SD = 16.8$), $F(1,42) = 6.02, p = .02$, partial eta-squared = .125. There was no association between race/ethnicity and perceptions of crime $F(3,42) = 1.17, p = .33$, partial eta-squared = .077. Location did not interact with race/ethnicity as predictors of perceived likelihood of crime, $F(3,42) = 1.38, p = .26$, partial eta-squared = .090.

Gender Differences.

Table 9 shows descriptive statistics for perceived likelihood of crime as a function of location and gender. A repeated-measures ANOVA showed no effect of gender on perceived likelihood of crime, $F(1,44) = 1.07, p = .31$, partial eta-squared = .024, nor was the gender by location interaction significant, $F(1,44) = 0.98, p = .33$, partial eta-squared = .022.

Transportation

Transportation and Time Spent Off-Campus.

Table 10 shows significant correlations between methods of transportation and time spent in activities off-campus. Public transportation (bus/train) was positively correlated to time spent off campus in course-related activities, $r = .36$. Use of college shuttles was positively correlated to both course-related activities, $r = .33$, and social activities, $r = .31$. Walking was positively correlated to social activities, $r = .35$.

Race/Ethnicity and Time Spent Off-Campus

Table 11 shows descriptive statistics for time spent off-campus as a function of type of activity and race/ethnicity. A repeated measures ANOVA found a significant effect of race/ethnicity on time spent off campus in course-related activities, social activities, and personal needs, $F(3,46) = 3.68$, $p = .019$, partial eta-squared = .194. Overall, across all three types of activities measured for, participants who identified as Hispanic regardless of race reported spending the most amount of time off of campus ($M = 252.4$, $SE = 57.7$), while participants who identified as Asian/Asian-American reported spending the least amount of time off campus ($M = 161.5$, $SE = 73.3$).

Race/ethnicity by type of activity was also a significant interaction, $F(6,92) = 2.78$, $p = .016$, partial eta-squared = .154 (see Figure 2). When looking at the results of the Asian/Asian - American participants, these participants reported spending significantly more time off campus in activities related to personal needs ($M = 76.9$, $SE = 25.1$) than in social activities ($M = 44.6$, $SE = 26.2$) and course-related activities ($M = 40.0$, $SE = 22.0$).

Black/African-American identifying participants reported spending substantially less time in activities related to personal needs ($M = 61.1$, $SE = 35.2$) than course-related activities

($M = 74.7$, $SE = 30.7$) and social activities ($M = 75.3$, $SE = 20.8$).

Participants who identified as White/European-American reported spending substantially more time in activities related to personal needs ($M = 71.3$, $SE = 28.9$) than course-related activities ($M = 58.2$, $SE = 35.9$) and social activities ($M = 62.6$, $SE = 34.4$).

Lastly, participants who identified as Hispanic, regardless of race, reported spending substantially less time in course-related activities ($M = 74.1$, $SE = 20.7$) than activities related to personal needs ($M = 87.3$, $SE = 21.4$) and social activities ($M = 91.0$, $SE = 15.6$).

Gender and Time Spent Off-Campus

Table 12 shows descriptive statistics for time spent off-campus as a function of type of activity and gender. A repeated measures ANOVA showed no effect of gender on time spent off campus, $F(1,48) = 0.14$, $p = .71$, partial eta-squared = .003, nor was gender by type of activity a significant interaction, $F(2,96) = 1.02$, $p = .36$, partial eta - squared = .021.

Discussion

The current study aimed to explore if consumption of crime-related media across media forms (social media, TV crime dramas, and televised news) and demographic attributes of an individual (race, gender) and the racial composition of their college campuses neighborhood, affected a student's willingness to venture off their college campus. While many researchers have examined the effects of extensive crime-related media consumption amongst college-aged students, there has been limited research that has examined how such consumption of media affects one's perception of the neighborhood surrounding their college campus. This study served as a means to address the gap in scholarship by using an anonymous survey to examine a participant's willingness to venture into the neighborhood surrounding their college campus

based on the amount of crime media consumed, their gender, race/ethnicity, and the types of sources they consult about crime on and off-campus.

A key finding of this study was no association between an individual's consumption of crime-related media and time spent off-campus. However, I did find differences across race/ethnicity groups and their willingness to spend time in activities related to social activities, personal needs, and course-related activities. As for gender, there was no significant relationship between gender and time spent off-campus. The findings of this study can help college personnel better understand their students' perceptions of safety both on and off-campus and to develop solutions to decrease unwarranted and distorted perceptions.

Crime related Media Consumption and Time Spent Off-Campus

The hypothesis that more time spent consuming crime-related media would lead to less time spent off-campus was not supported. This hypothesis was based on extensive scholarship that found a relationship between crime media consumption and fear of crime (Chiricos et al., 1997; Nasi et al., 2020; Romer & Jamieson, 2014) in addition to George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory. A potential explanation as to why the results of this study didn't align with previous research can be that the participants attend a school that has initiatives in place to push students to venture off-campus. In a typical year, free of COVID, the participating school of this study has been known to provide students with free bus passes every semester so that they can have access to public transportation, whether it is for social or academic needs. In addition, the school has also incorporated educational programs and initiatives that require students to go out into the neighborhood to participate in internships, complete assignments, and attend workshops and lectures. These are two prominent ways that the administration at the participating school has

urged their students to spend time off-campus. Such initiatives, which may have incentivized and or required students to spend time off-campus, could have presented participating students the opportunity to see that the neighborhood surrounding their campus isn't as bad or dangerous as the media makes it out to be. Such an epiphany amongst students can explain the lack of relationship between crime-related media consumption and time spent off-campus.

Despite not being formally addressed in my hypotheses, significant correlations were found between methods of transportation (public transportation, college shuttles, private car, ride for hire, biking, and walking) and time spent in activities off-campus. A positive correlation was found between public transportation (bus/train) and course-related activities. The use of the college shuttles was positively correlated to both course-related activities and social activities. Walking was also positively correlated to time spent off-campus in social activities. These findings support the notion that incentivizing the concept of spending time off-campus through providing free access to public transportation along with a college shuttle has encouraged the idea of spending time off-campus in the minds of students in different fashions, whether academically or socially.

Additionally, although it was not formally addressed in my hypotheses, sources, where participants ascertained information about crime (word of mouth, campus newspaper, local newspaper, news apps, social media, and campus safety reports) were also measured in terms of frequency. Overall, participants reported paying more attention to sources of information on stories about on-campus crime than off-campus crime. Except for the local newspaper and news app, participants used each source to learn more about crime occurring within the collegiate gates. With such a finding, one can infer that the students at the participating school don't have

much access and or attempt to access stories about local crime. This possibility could have potentially altered the relationship between crime media consumption and time spent off-campus that has been presented in past literature.

Another potential explanation for the lack of relationship between crime-related media consumption and time spent off-campus is the restricted sample. With only 51 participants, it is hard to accurately represent what a student body of over 2,000 students may perceive about a particular subject. While it is possible for the findings to remain consistent if every student on campus had participated in the survey, it is currently hard to decipher if the 51 participating students have a commonality that wasn't identified for, that confounded the relationship between crime-related media consumption and time spent off-campus.

Race/Ethnicity Differences and Time Spent Off-Campus

The hypothesis that individuals who less resemble the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood will be less likely to spend time off-campus in social activities, academic activities, and personal needs was supported. This hypothesis was based on research conducted by Truman (2005) and DeBruine (2005) in reference to the idea that people consider those who resemble them to be more trustworthy. Because the participating school is located within a predominantly Latinx neighborhood, it makes sense that the Hispanic participants were reported to spend more time off-campus, as a result of being able to see traces of their own culture, as well as familiar aspects of home communities, which for most will be considered a safe space. On the other end of the spectrum were the Asian/Asian-American participants who spent the least amount of time off-campus for course-related and social activities. However, they

had the second-highest rating for spending time off-campus for personal need activities (food shopping, personal grooming, etc.)

A potential explanation for such a finding is the Anti-Asian sentiment that has grown over the past year due to the COVID pandemic. While participants were advised to base their answers on a COVID-free world, I think it should be acknowledged that when data was being collected, 8 Asian women were killed at a spa in Atlanta on March 16th, 2021. While this hate crime wasn't the only targeted crime against the Asian community to occur during the days of data collection, it was a prominent story that consumed every media outlet so much so that a hashtag, #STOPASIANHATE, was created. Learning of such a horrific crime committed on someone who looks like you could have unconsciously changed the Asian/Asian-American participants' answers to fit the current climate of North America. As previously mentioned, Asian/Asian-American participants reported the lowest scores for time off campus for social and academic activities. However, they reported the second-highest score for time spent off-campus for personal needs. By this alone, it can be inferred that Asian/Asian-American participants are only willing to venture off campus for essential needs as a means to minimize the chances of being the target of an anti-Asian hate crime.

Gender Differences and Time Spent Off Campus

The hypothesis that men would be more likely to spend time off-campus than women was not supported. This hypothesis was based on Cobbina et al. (2008), whose findings were that when within a community perceived to be unsafe, girls tended to prefer to stay home as opposed to venturing into their community as a means of remaining safe, while boys utilized staying within boundaries of areas that they deemed safe. A potential explanation of why the current

study's findings didn't align with prior research may be because of how off-campus was defined within the survey. When measuring for time spent off-campus, off-campus was defined as anything within three miles of the participating school. In saying three miles instead of providing specific street names that serve as boundaries for what was being asked, students may have overestimated how far three miles can take them. In turn, by overestimating what three miles actually is, some participants and, in particular, women may have been thinking of a place they go to frequently that they consider safe, not realizing that the location in their mind is more than 3 miles away. The lack of a clear-cut definition may have resulted in not only female participants but all participants to inaccurately rate their time spent off-campus within three miles in course-related activities, social activities, and personal needs activities.

Although it was not formally addressed in my hypotheses, I also found that for the eight crimes measured (having residence broken into, mugging, attack with a weapon, sexual assault, car stolen, property stolen, property vandalized, and murder) participants perceived crime to be more likely to occur off-campus than on-campus except for sexual assault. It is possible that the perception that sexual assault is more likely to occur on campus than off has led women at the participating school to feel equivalent levels of fear of crime both on and off-campus, which would ultimately not impact their willingness to spend time off-campus.

Limitations & Future Directions

As previously mentioned, one of the goals of this study was to fill the gap in scholarship that has overlooked college students' perceptions of safety off-campus and their willingness to spend time in the neighborhood surrounding their school. As a result of the rarity of this type of research, future research must expand beyond what was revealed in the current study.

Originally, I intended to conduct this study at a variety of liberal arts colleges, comparable in both school and city size, yet which differ in the racial composition of the neighborhood in which they are located. Like my current study, I wanted to examine if the perceived racial composition of a neighborhood and crime-related media consumption produces hesitancy within college students to spend time in the immediate area surrounding their college campus. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, the schools comparable to the participating school of this study did not allow external research.

Once the regulations surrounding external research begin to subside, future researchers should attempt to replicate the current study in the manner that I once envisioned. When conducting research on college students, it is hard to generalize the findings on all college-aged students because every college experience is different. Just attending a school in an urban neighborhood compared to a rural area may change a participant's entire perspective on spending time off-campus in more ways than one. If we genuinely want to understand college-aged students' perception of the community around their school and what factors may deter them from spending time in it, we must examine as many college environments and the students residing within them to gain a fuller and more accurate picture.

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Table 1. Time Spent with Various Media Focused on Crime.

<u>Media Consumption</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>95% Confidence Interval</u>	
			<u>Lower Bound</u>	<u>Upper Bound</u>
Social Media (SM)	3.8	0.2	3.4	4.2
SM dedicated to crime	1.2	0.1	1.1	1.4
TV Entertainment (TV - E)	2.6	0.2	2.2	3.0
TV – E dedicated to crime dramas	1.6	0.1	1.3	1.8
TV News (TV - N)	1.3	0.1	1.1	1.6
TV – N dedicated to Crime	1.1	0.04	1.0	1.2

Note. N = 47. Time spent was coded as <1> 60 minutes or less; <2> 61 – 120 minutes; <3> 121 – 180 minutes; <4> 181 – 240 minutes; <5> 240 minutes or more.

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity Differences in Time Spent with Crime - Related Media.

<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Media Type</u>					
		<u>Social Media</u>		<u>TV- Crime Drama</u>		<u>TV- Crime News</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Asian/Asian American	9	1.1	0.3	1.6	1.1	1.2	0.4
Black/African American	8	1.5	0.9	1.5	0.7	1.0	0.0
White/ European American	19	1.1	0.3	1.4	0.7	1.0	0.2
Hispanic, regardless of Race	10	1.4	0.5	1.9	1.4	1.2	0.4
Overall	46	1.2	0.5	1.5	1.1	1.1	0.3

Table 3. Gender Differences in Time Spent with Crime - Related Media.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Media Type</u>					
		<u>Social Media</u>		<u>TV- Crime Drama</u>		<u>TV- Crime News</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Male	11	1.3	0.5	1.3	0.9	1.1	0.3
Female	35	1.2	0.5	1.7	1.0	1.1	0.3
Overall	46	1.2	0.5	1.6	1.0	1.1	0.3

Table 4. Sources of Information About Crime.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Location</u>			
	<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Near Campus</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Word of Mouth	3.0	1.2	2.3	1.1
Campus Newspaper	1.9	1.0	1.5	0.7
Local Newspaper	1.6	0.9	2.0	1.1
News Apps	1.8	1.0	2.0	1.1
Social Media	2.4	1.2	2.3	1.2
Campus Safety Reports	4.0	1.0	2.7	1.4

Note. N = 45

Table 5. Sources of Information about Crime as a Function of Crime Location and Race/Ethnicity.

<u>Race / Ethnicity</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Location</u>			
		<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Near Campus</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Asian /Asian American	9	2.4	1.0	2.3	0.8
Black / African American	8	2.0	0.8	2.1	1.0
White / European American	19	2.1	0.6	2.1	0.7
Hispanic Regardless of Race	10	2.3	1.1	2.2	0.9

Note. N = 45

Table 6. Sources of Information about Crime as a Function of Crime Location and Gender.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Location</u>			
		<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Off Campus</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Male	11	2.4	0.9	2.0	0.8
Female	35	2.1	0.8	2.1	0.7

Note. N = 46

Table 7. Perceived Likelihood of Crime as a function of Location and Type of Crime.

<u>Type of Crime</u>	<u>Location</u>			
	<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Near Campus</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Break- in	23.2	27.8	35.9	27.0
Mugging	23.8	25.6	36.1	26.1
Attack with a Weapon	21.3	25.3	35.4	26.6
Sexual Assault	62.6	27.4	42.8	29.1
Car Stolen	18.3	17.3	35.4	25.3
Property Stolen	35.9	24.3	38.8	28.4
Property Vandalized	34.7	23.7	40.4	25.8
Murder	6.7	17.6	19.8	24.2

Note. N = 39

Table 8. Perceived Likelihood of Crime as a function of Location and Race/Ethnicity.

<u>Race / Ethnicity</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Perceived Likelihood of Crime</u>			
		<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Near Campus</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Asian /Asian American	9	20.0	12.4	31.9	12.1
Black / African American	8	21.6	12.6	26.7	18.7
White / European American	19	33.1	18.9	39.6	30.1
Hispanic Regardless of Race	10	28.4	16.7	27.1	16.7

Note. N = 45

Table 9. Perceived Likelihood of Crime as a function of Location and Gender.

<u>Perceived Likelihood of Crime</u>					
		<u>On Campus</u>		<u>Near Campus</u>	
<u>Gender</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Male	11	25.1	13.9	26.7	14.9
Female	35	29.4	18.2	36.1	25.0

Note. N = 46

Table 10. Correlations between Methods of Transportation and Time Spent Off-Campus .

<u>Mode of Transportation</u>	<u>Type of Activity</u>			
	<u>Course-Related</u>	<u>Social Activities</u>	<u>Personal Needs</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Public Transportation (Bus/Train)	.36**	.27	.13	.32*
College Shuttle	.33*	.31*	.14	.34*
Private Car	-.18	-.02	-.18	-.16
Ride for Hire (Uber/Lyft)	.07	.01	.05	.05
Biking	-.15	-.22	-.13	-.21
Walking	.12	.35*	.27	.31*

Note. n = 51 * p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01

Table 11. Time Spent Off-Campus as a Function of Type of Activity and Race/Ethnicity.

<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Type of Activity</u>					
		<u>Course-Related</u>		<u>Social Activities</u>		<u>Personal Needs</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Asian/Asian American	10	40.0	22.0	44.6	26.2	76.9	25.1
Black/African American	9	74.7	30.7	74.3	20.8	61.1	35.2
White/ European American	20	58.2	35.9	62.6	34.4	71.3	28.9
Hispanic, regardless of Race	11	74.1	20.7	91.0	15.6	87.3	21.4

Note. n = 50

Table 12. Time Spent Off-Campus as a Function of Type of Activity and Gender.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Type of Activity</u>					
		<u>Course-Related</u>		<u>Social Activities</u>		<u>Personal Needs</u>	
		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Male	13	57.1	30.4	58.5	31.0	76.5	24.3
Female	37	59.8	33.1	69.2	32.3	72.0	31.4

Note. n = 50

Figure 1. Perceived Likelihood of Crime as a Function of Crime Location and Type of Crime

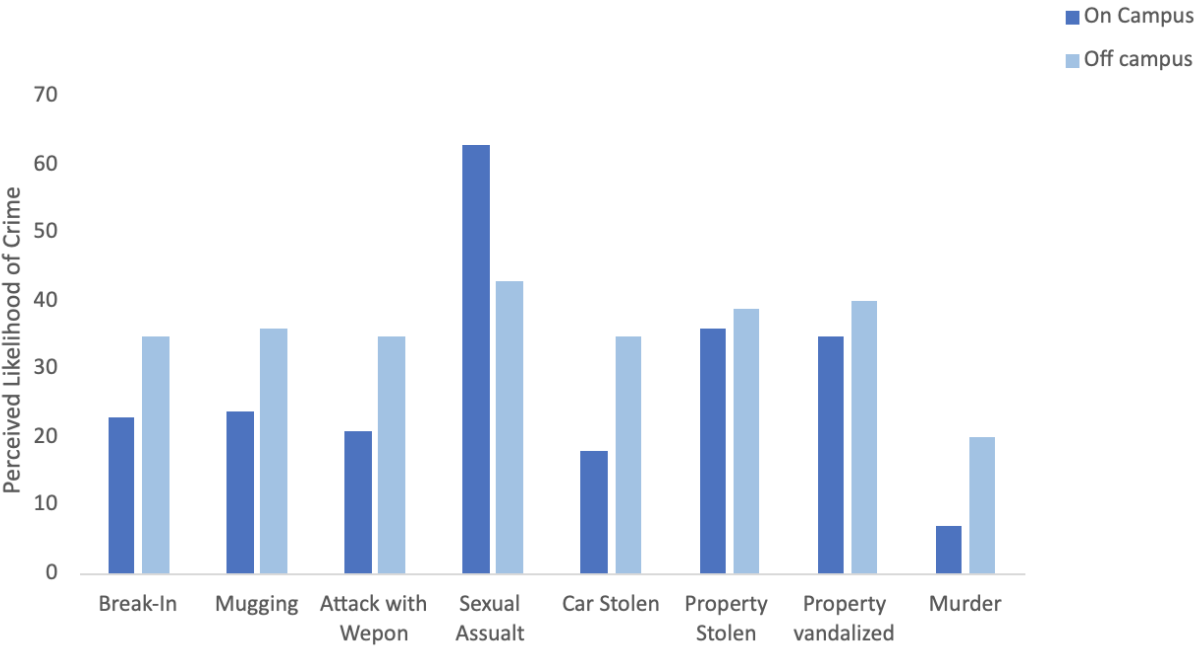


Figure 2. Time Spent Off-Campus as a Function of Type of Activity and Race/Ethnicity

