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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Social Science Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch

Are Hispanics the new ‘Threat’? Minority group threat and fear of crime in Miami-Dade County[☆]

David Eitle^{a,*}, John Taylor^b^aDepartment of Sociology and Anthropology, Montana State University, Wilson 2-128, P.O. Box 172380, Bozeman, MT 59717-2380, USA^bDepartment of Sociology, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2270, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 24 June 2008

Keywords:

Minority group threat
Fear of crime
Race and ethnicity

ABSTRACT

Research examining the determinants of fear of crime has arguably raised more questions than it has answered. This exploratory study addresses one of the compelling questions that remains unanswered: what is the role of ethnicity, both at the community and individual levels, in understanding variation in fear of crime? Guided by racial or minority group threat theory, we examine the relative sizes of both the Black and Latino populations as indicators of minority group threat to determine their role in understanding individual fear of crime in a city where Latinos represent a much larger proportion of the population than Blacks (Miami-Dade County, Florida). Furthermore, the race and ethnic backgrounds of the respondents are also considered to evaluate their role in understanding variation in the fear of crime. Using both Census tract-level data and data collected from a NIDA sponsored grant that was part of a larger study about physically disabled residents, our findings reveal that in Miami-Dade County where Blacks are highly segregated from whites, the relative size of the Latino population is a predictor of fear of crime among white residents. Implications of this finding are considered, including a call for more nuanced research focusing on the predictors of fear of crime within multiethnic communities.

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1. Introduction

Public opinion surveys have consistently revealed that crime is one of the top concerns for Americans. This concern over crime and its consequences has spawned a plethora of research inquiries, including a substantial body of research that has investigated the determinants of the emotional component of our concern over crime, the ‘fear of crime’. Despite the voluminous nature of this research, it can be argued that past inquiries have generated more questions than answers (Garofalo, 1981), particularly when attempting to determine the antecedents of fear of crime. Yet there is growing evidence that fear of crime, regardless of its determinants, is associated with an array of adverse consequences, including a fractured sense of community, restricted behavior, anxiety, distress, and distrust of others, and overall reduction in the quality of life that people experience (Box et al., 1988; Garofalo, 1981; Skogan, 1986). What makes fear of crime such a compelling issue for many social scientists is that such fear appears to be only loosely associated with actual risk of being a victim of crime (Ferraro, 1996). There is not consistent evidence supporting an association between prior criminal victimization and fear of crime (Rountree, 1998).

[☆] This study was supported by Grant RO1DA13292 to R. Jay Turner from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, Bethesda, Maryland, and a Scholarship and Creativity Grant from Montana State University to David Eitle.

* Corresponding author. Fax: +1 406 994 3177.

E-mail addresses: deitle@montana.edu (D. Eitle), jrtaylor@fsu.edu (J. Taylor).

While the processes that generate fear of crime are clearly complex, one factor that plays a salient role in understanding anxiety about crime is race and ethnicity. There are (at least) two dimensions of interest that have emerged from this research perspective: (a) the perceived criminal threat posed by Blacks and/or other ethnic minority groups for individuals and (b) differences in the fear of crime experienced by white individuals vs. Blacks and other ethnic minorities. With regards to the first dimension, Chiricos, McEntire and Gertz suggest that "...the typification of crime as a Black male threat has reached iconic proportions" (2001, p. 322). While somewhat limited in nature, research examining an association between the racial composition of place and fear of crime has been largely supportive of a link, with respondents reporting greater fear of crime when residing in places with relatively higher proportions of Black residents (e.g., Liska et al., 1982; Taylor and Covington, 1993) or when respondents perceive that they reside in communities with relatively high proportions of Black residents (Chiricos et al., 1997). With regards to the second dimension, several studies have found that nonwhite respondents are more fearful of crime than white respondents (e.g., Chiricos et al., 1997; Houts and Kassab, 1997; Thompson et al., 1992). Additionally, there exists some evidence that the associations between various risk factors and fear of crime are moderated by race (Chiricos et al., 1997).

While such studies represent an important foundation for making sense out of the entangled interrelationship between race and fear of crime, there are additional questions that have yet to be broached. Two interrelated questions that this paper seeks to examine concern the role of Latinos/Hispanics,¹ both as respondents and as a 'threatening' group. Few studies have examined both micro and macro-level influences on Hispanic respondent's fear of crime, and only one published study to date has examined the potential role of the relative size of the Latino population as a measure of minority crime threat (Chiricos et al., 2001). There are, however, a number of compelling reasons for expanding our scope of inquiry into the fear of crime by including Latinos/Hispanics, both as individuals who experience fear and as a potential threatening group. First, recent Census results (Grieco and Cassidy, 2001) demonstrate that Hispanic/Latinos now outnumber Blacks in the United States. Indeed, non-Hispanic whites will constitute only 50% of the population by 2050 (Frey, 1999) and the Census Bureau predicts that Latinos will eventually surpass non-Hispanic whites in population (United States Bureau of the Census, 1999). Furthermore, public opinion polls suggest that non-Hispanic whites perceive Hispanic immigration as a major social problem, and their concerns include the fear of immigrant crime (Cooper, 2000; Lane and Meeker, 2000, 2003). Finally, Peterson and Krivo (2005), among others, have noted that Latino/Hispanic groups have been relatively neglected in criminological research. Given these persuasive reasons, the present study is organized to address the following two questions:

1. *What is the role of racial and ethnic composition at the neighborhood level in shaping fear of crime? Is the relative size of the Latino population related to fear of crime?*
2. *What is the role of respondent race and ethnicity in shaping fear of crime? What (if any) are the important intersections between the race/ethnicity of the respondent and the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood that produce variation in fear of crime?*

Using both 2000 Census and survey data from respondents in Miami-Dade County, we extend prior research by considering the role of Hispanic ethnicity, both as a potential threatening group, and as a potential moderating socio-demographic characteristic that conditions associations between both community and individual level predictors of fear of crime.

2. Background

One major issue that has been the subject of debate among scholars concerns how the fear of crime is conceptualized and measured. Indeed, a number of scholars have suggested that a major source of the inconsistency of findings regarding the predictors of fear of crime is due to the failure to consider its multidimensional nature (Ferraro, 1995; Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Rountree, 1998; Ward and Stafford, 1983). One notion that has gained momentum is the idea that there exist two important dimensions: the cognitive component, which captures the respondent's evaluation of one's safety or the risk of criminal victimization; and the emotional dimension, which captures the respondent's actual fear of being victimized. There is considerable evidence that perceived risk mediates the relationship between several antecedents and fear of crime (Chiricos et al., 1997; Ferraro, 1995; Liska et al., 1982; Rountree, 1998; but see also Rader, 2004) and that perceived risk and fear may have different predictors (Ferraro, 1995; LaGrange and Ferraro, 1989; LaGrange et al., 1992; Rountree and Land, 1996). Gender and age characteristics in particular have demonstrated different patterns of association with perceived risk and fear, with females and the elderly reporting greater fear, but similar levels of perceived risk than their counterparts (e.g., Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Rountree and Land, 1996).

Research examining the predictors of fear of crime has generally explored the issue at either the individual or the community/structural level, with only a few recent studies simultaneously examining predictors of individual-level variation in fear of crime at *both* the micro- and macro-level (e.g., Rountree, 1998; Rountree and Land, 1996; Wilcox et al., 2003). Of the research that has examined community (or larger jurisdictions) antecedents of fear of crime, most studies have been predicated on the insights of one of two structural explanations: racial threat theory or social disorganization theory.

¹ In previous work, many scholars have used the terms Latino/a and Hispanic interchangeably. While we will also employ this method, we do distinguish Cuban-American from non-Cuban Hispanic respondents in our analyses.

2.1. Minority group threat theory and fear of crime

The central theoretical basis for examining whether neighborhood racial composition is a determinant of individual fear of crime is racial or minority group threat theory. This thesis traditionally has been employed to explain how dominant groups use state apparatuses, including the criminal law, to control subordinate groups who threaten their interests (Blalock, 1967). This hypothesis asserts that social control measures directed against Blacks intensify as the Black population grows larger in size. Several studies, inspired by the minority group threat thesis have found that the relative size of the Black population is predictive of the mobilization of punitive and law enforcement responses, including such factors as police use of deadly force (Chamlin, 1989), police force size (Jacobs, 1979; Jackson and Carroll, 1981; Greenberg et al., 1985), arrest rates (Brown and Warner, 1992; Liska and Chamlin, 1984), incarceration rates (Myers, 1990; Tittle and Curran, 1988) and executions (Phillips, 1986). Other scholars have used the racial threat thesis to explain informal punitive actions including lynchings (Corzine et al., 1983), hate crimes (Green et al., 1998) and interracial killings (Jacobs and Wood, 1999).

While the racial (or minority) threat thesis has been conceptualized as multidimensional (Eitle et al., 2003), one conceptualization emphasizes the *criminal threat* of Blacks and other minorities in understanding the actions of the state against minorities (Liska and Chamlin, 1984). One core proposition of the racial threat thesis then is that “aggregate measures of punitiveness will vary with aggregate measures of racial composition because the presence of Blacks creates a fear of crime that helps to mobilize punitive resources” (Chiricos et al., 2001, p. 323). Thus, at the individual level, the racial threat thesis implies a positive relationship between perceived risk and proximity to racial/ethnic minorities (Chiricos et al., 2001).

Of the studies that have examined the association between the relative size of the minority population and fear of crime/perceived risk of victimization, most have found support for the minority threat thesis (Liska et al., 1982; Covington and Taylor, 1991; Taylor and Covington, 1993; Thompson et al., 1992 and Ward et al., 1986²). The relative size of the minority population varies with the fear of crime reported by respondents. Further, three other studies have found support for a relationship between *perceived* racial composition and fear of crime (Chiricos et al., 2001; Moeller, 1989;³ Skogan, 1995). While the measurement of fear of crime has been the subject of considerable discussion and debate (Dubow et al., 1979; Ferraro, 1995; Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Gabriel and Greve, 2003; Rountree, 1998; Rountree and Land, 1996), the research that has explored the relationship between racial composition and either emotional-based measures capturing fear of crime (Moeller, 1989; Skogan, 1995; Thompson et al., 1992) or indicators of safety or victimization risk (Chiricos et al., 2001; Covington and Taylor, 1991; Liska et al., 1982; Taylor and Covington, 1993; Ward et al., 1986) have revealed that both indicators of perceived risk of crime are associated with the relative size of the minority population.

Few studies in this vein, however, have considered the potential fear producing effects of the relative size of the Latino population. In fact, most prior studies examining the role of racial and ethnic composition in understanding fear of crime have either failed to include Hispanics as a potential threatening group or have combined Blacks with Hispanics as a pan-ethnic measure of minority group threat. While there is some evidence that whites view all minority groups as threatening (e.g., Stein et al., 1998), there are compelling reasons for distinguishing between Blacks and Hispanics as separate threatening groups. First, some evidence exists that whites are less hostile towards Hispanics than Blacks (Link and Oldendick, 1996). If whites see Hispanics with less hostility, it is possible that whites would also perceive Hispanics as less of a threat. Second, we have very little insight into whether Hispanics perceive Blacks as a threatening group—almost all prior research has examined the threat of Blacks to whites’ political and economic power.⁴ Third, prior research has examined only Blacks as the threatening group because African-Americans have tended to be the largest minority population in urban centers. Has the nature of the threat changed, however, with Hispanics now surpassing Blacks in number in the United States and in many metro areas? In particular, the question of whether Hispanics are seen as a distinct threat relative to Blacks may be particularly salient in cities where Hispanics constitute a large minority, or even a majority, of residents.

Despite these reasons, we are aware of only one study that has examined the possible effects of the Hispanic population, and that study examined the respondent’s *perception* of the size of the Hispanic population, not a measure of the actual size of the Hispanic population (Chiricos et al., 2001). Further, that study also examined perceived risk of criminal victimization, rather than fear of crime (the focus of the present study). Hence, no published study has examined the role of the relative size of the Hispanic population, independent of the percentage of Black residents, either objectively or perceived, on respondent fear of crime.

2.2. Social disorganization theory and fear of crime

While racial threat theory has been proffered by a number of studies as a macro-level explanation for understanding fear of crime, arguably the most often utilized theoretical framework for explaining fear of crime/perceived risk is social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay, 1942). While there are a couple of variants on the original model (see Markowitz et al., 2001), social disorganization theory emphasizes the role that urbanization, industrialization, and (traditionally) immigration

² Ward et al. (1986) only found the racial composition-fear of crime association to be statistically significant for those experiencing health or mastery limitations among a sample of predominantly white, elderly respondents.

³ Moeller found that perceived racial composition of neighborhood had influence on fear of crime among whites only.

⁴ Although non-Hispanic whites clearly are the superordinate group in most urban centers, Hispanics in the research setting of the current study, Miami-Dade County, enjoy a numerical majority and considerable economic and political power.

plays in producing neighborhoods that are unable to come together to collectively solve their problems, including crime. Population instability, concentrated disadvantage, and racial heterogeneity serve to reduce neighborhood cohesion, which provides the context (i.e., the socially disorganized community) for the problems of disorder, incivilities, crime, and fear of crime to emerge. There is also some evidence that the core structural aspects of social disorganization produce a feedback loop with fear of crime—population instability and heterogeneity produce more fear of crime, which in turn produces greater population turnover and greater subsequent heterogeneity (Liska and Bellair, 1995; Markowitz et al., 2001). There is also considerable evidence that social disorganization variables are strong predictors of fear of crime (Lewis and Maxfield, 1980; Lewis and Salem, 1986; Markowitz et al., 2001; McGarrell et al., 1997; Skogan, 1990; Taylor and Hale, 1986), even stronger than indicators of crime itself (Rountree, 1998, p. 342; see also Taylor and Hale, 1986). Clearly a comprehensive examination of the contextual determinants of fear of crime should incorporate structural indicators of both racial threat and social disorganization theory.

2.3. Individual level explanations for fear of crime

At the individual level, there are two predominant models that have been advanced to explain variation in fear of crime. The first, the victimization model, posits a relatively direct basis for experiencing fear of crime: people who have been victimized by crime, either directly or vicariously, experience higher levels of fear as a result of their victimization. While most of the research has supported the victimization model (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Taylor, 1995; Skogan, 1990), there are some scholars who argue that the strength of the association between victimization and fear of crime may be weaker than expected (Liska et al., 1988; McGarrell et al., 1997).

The second model, the vulnerability hypothesis, is a bit more nuanced. This model proposes that personal characteristics are a contributory factor in people's fear of crime. Some people such as females and the elderly see themselves to be physically vulnerable to attack and thus (perceive) that they are unable to resist an attack on them or their property. Others, such as the impoverished, perceive themselves as being socially vulnerable. They are unable to take the necessary actions to reduce their likelihood of victimization because of a lack of resources. Both theses have garnered empirical support. There is a large body of evidence demonstrating that gender, income, and age are predictive of fear of crime (Baldassare, 1986; Braungart et al., 1980; Cook et al., 1978; Clarke and Lewis, 1982; Fattah and Sacco, 1989; Ferraro, 1995; Hill et al., 1985; Pain, 2000; Rountree, 1998; Warr, 1984; Whitley and Prince, 2005; Will and McGrath, 1995; but see also Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Rountree and Land, 1996). The results, however, have been far from unequivocal, leading scholars to begin exploring the conditions and factors that may mediate or moderate the associations between these predictors and fear of crime.

One important variable that may predict vulnerability is the race/ethnicity of the respondent. While some evidence exists that Black respondents experience greater levels of fear of crime than whites (Braungart et al., 1980; Covington and Taylor, 1991; Garolfalo, 1977; Parker et al., 1993; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981), few studies have examined the association between Hispanics and fear of crime. In one study, Parker et al. (1993) examined differences in fear of crime among a sample of 2235 Black and Hispanic New York City respondents. They found that Hispanics reported higher levels of fear of crime than Blacks. There are also reasons to expect that Hispanics would experience higher levels of fear of crime than either whites or Blacks. Walker et al. (2007, p. 115) report that a 2001 Bureau of Justice Statistics report found that Hispanics were less likely to initiate contact with the police than either whites or Blacks (see also Skogan, 2005; Walker, 1997). Indeed, Davis and Erez (1998) found that immigrants were less willing to report crimes to the police because of a number of factors: language barriers, cultural beliefs (e.g., reporting a rape brings shame to the family), and ignorance and apprehension of the American criminal justice system, including fears based on their (or others in their neighborhoods) immigration status (Walker et al., 2007). Further, Menjivar and Bejarano (2004) found that some Hispanic immigrants may be particularly fearful of retaliation if they contact the police. To the extent that Hispanic immigrants are more hesitant or unwilling to call the police (relative to whites and Blacks), the perceived lack of police protection may exacerbate fears of crime and victimization.

While most studies have employed explanations of variability in fear of crime based largely on whether the focus of the inquiry was on contextual or individual factors, some recent studies that have examined both micro- and macro level influences on fear of crime have employed a different theoretical framework. Rountree (1998) posited that multilevel explorations of the factors associated with fear of crime can be derived from a general opportunity or routine activities framework (Felson, 1998; see also Miethe and Meier, 1990). Rountree argued that a combination of personal experiences (e.g., prior criminal victimization) and characteristics (being female and/or elderly), lifestyle differences, and cues derived from their social environment (crime rates, social disorganization cues, lack of social integration) generate differential levels of fear of crime. In this regard, fear of crime is theorized to be a relatively rational response to the threat of/or vulnerability to crime. Moreover, Rountree has suggested prior characterizations in which some individuals exhibit "irrational" fear of crime are amiss, because scholars have failed to consider lifestyle and contextual factors simultaneously with individual characteristics, like gender or age. While Rountree does not explicitly incorporate a racial threat argument into her work, she does find that the racial composition of the community conditions the association between gender and fear of crime, finding that the gender "effect does not hold in non-White communities where the vulnerability to violent victimization of young men appears particularly heightened" (1998, p. 365). However, Rountree did not specifically differentiate between Blacks and Hispanics in her analyses of community racial composition's role as a moderating variable.

Of the limited number of studies that have examined both micro and macro-level predictors of fear of crime/risk perceptions simultaneously (e.g., Rountree, 1998; Rountree and Land, 1996; Wilcox et al., 2003) one study is particularly salient to

our present inquiry. Chiricos et al. (2001), is the only study we are aware of that differentiated between Blacks and Hispanics, both as a threatening group and as threatened respondents. They found that both Hispanic and white respondents believed that they were more at risk of crime victimization (not fear of crime) when they lived in neighborhoods with relatively large numbers of Blacks or Hispanics. That study, however, included only one contextual indicator, the city crime rate and investigated the respondent's *perception* of the percentage of Blacks and Hispanics in a neighborhood. Hence, no published study has examined the role of objective measures of the Black and Hispanic composition of neighborhoods, in the context of other neighborhood factors (including social disorganization-based measures), as determinants of the fear of crime.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Research site

For a number of reasons, Miami-Dade County represents a provocative location for testing the core hypotheses of this research. First, Miami-Dade County is very large; it is larger than 16 states and the District of Columbia, and is the largest metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. Second, it is as ethnically diverse a population as can be found in urban America, particularly with regards to a burgeoning Hispanic population. Approximately 45% of Dade County residents were foreign born during the 1990s (Fernandez et al., 1999) and up to 51.4% by 2000, giving Miami-Dade County the highest percentage of foreign born residents of any major U.S. city and the highest in the world, according to the United Nations Development Program (2004). According to the 2000 Census, over 57% of the population in Miami-Dade County is Hispanic, yet there were few Hispanics (approximately 5.3% of the population) residing in the county as late as 1960. Clearly, Miami has undergone, and continues to undergo, a radical transformation in terms of its racial and ethnic composition. Like other metropolitan areas undergoing such dynamic changes, Miami-Dade County suffers from a number of social problems, including being ranked as the 2nd most dangerous metropolitan area in the United States, according to official crime reports (Morgan, 2006).

A recent public opinion survey sponsored by the Knight Foundation (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2002) included questions regarding fear of crime, social trust (distrust), and race relations in Miami-Dade County. While the researchers reported that the majority of respondents reported feeling *very* or *somewhat* safe from crime in their homes and neighborhoods, only 33% reported feeling secure when they were downtown at night. Overall, African-Americans reported the lowest levels of feeling safe in their home/neighborhoods, followed by Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. Furthermore, 64% of respondents reported social distrust—that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people, with African-Americans reporting the highest levels of distrust. According to the Knight Foundation report, this level of distrust is considerably higher than the national average (44%) in like studies. Finally, approximately 6 out of 10 respondents reported that the tension between different racial and ethnic groups was a problem in the community. Overall, this report reaffirms the attractiveness of Miami-Dade County as a research setting to examine the role of ethnicity and race in explaining fear of crime in a racially and ethnically diverse urban area.

There are other factors that also make Miami-Dade County somewhat unique as a multiethnic metropolitan area. Martinez et al. (2004) suggested that the stark differences in their findings linking structural conditions, including ethnicity and immigration, and drug violence across the cities of Miami and San Diego were largely due to the differential experiences of Cubans in Miami compared to Mexicans in San Diego. They argued that Cubans (in Miami) have been advantaged relative to Mexicans (in cities such as San Diego) because of the differences in resources that the initial Cuban immigrants possessed, the differences in federal government assistance for Cuban immigrants, and the resulting social capital differences derived from such advantages (Martinez et al., 2004, p. 153). Indeed, there is some evidence that second generation Cuban-Americans compare favorably to the average American in income levels (Boswell, 2002, p. 21). On the other hand, Cubans who reside in Miami have been found to be of lower socioeconomic status than Cubans who reside elsewhere in the United States, primarily due to the limited resources of first generation immigrants (Boswell, 2002). Further, Cuban-Americans represent only half of the Hispanics living in the greater Miami area, with large communities of Central and South American immigrants also residing in the County. Overall, the distinctiveness of Miami-Dade County must be considered when considering how the findings of the present study would apply to other multiethnic cities.

3.2. Data

The purpose of the larger study, from which the present study was derived, was to identify a representative sample of physically disabled Miami-Dade County community residents, and a comparison sample of non-disabled study participants who were matched on age, gender, ethnicity, and area of residence. We use data collected in the first of two waves (initially consisting of 1986 individuals, of whom 900 were self-identified or identified by someone who resided with the respondent as disabled). In order to identify a random sample of the disabled, stratified equally by four racial/ethnic groups (Cuban, other Hispanic, African-American, and non-Hispanic whites), a complex sampling design was employed. Further details of the sampling design are described comprehensively elsewhere (Turner et al., 2006). The interview success rate was 82%, and 1467 respondents provided complete answers to all of the questions measuring the variables of interest for the current

study and are included in the present analyses. Since the research design was not structured to draw a random sample of Miami-Dade County residents, the results gleaned from our ensuing analyses should be regarded as exploratory in nature.

3.3. Measures

Fear of crime. Fear of crime is a 10 item scale ($\alpha = .97$) based on the work of Ferraro and LaGrange (1987). As mentioned previously, this measure captures the emotional component of being a potential crime victim. Examples of these items include “How afraid are you of being physically attacked?” and “How afraid are you of being conned or cheated out of your money?” The response categories for these questions were “very afraid”, “moderately afraid”, “mildly afraid”, and “not at all afraid”. Responses were coded such that higher values indicate a greater fear of crime. Because of evidence of heteroskedasticity, we transformed this measure by taking its natural log.

3.4. Individual level variables

We consider both individual and contextual level predictors of the dependent variable in this study. Sociodemographic characteristics in the analyses include age, gender (female = 1), socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity. Ethnicity is based on respondents' self-report and includes four categories: White, non-Hispanic, Black, Cuban-Americans, and Other Hispanics. Socioeconomic status is estimated using a composite score based on household income level, occupational category (Hollingshead, 1965), and educational attainment. Scores on the three status dimensions were standardized, summed, and divided by the number of status dimensions for which data were available.

In addition to the sociodemographic characteristics, we include other characteristics and experiences that have been found to be salient predictors of fear of crime. Twelve items assessing level of physical impairment measured daily activity limitations. All respondents were asked how much difficulty, if any, they had doing tasks ranging from “turning faucets on and off” and “lifting ten pounds” to more strenuous activities such as “lifting heavy objects” or “running.” Physical limitations may be associated with perceived vulnerability.⁵ Prior criminal victimization is also considered; our measure captures the respondent's experience with four different criminal events: rape, assault, robbery, and physical attacks, with scores ranging from 0 to 4 on this measure. We also include a measure of vicarious victimization, which assessed whether or not the respondent witnessed one or more of four different criminal events. These events include robbery, rape, homicide, and physical attacks. Three hundred and thirty eight respondents (43%) reported that they had witnessed one or more of these events. Prior research has found that both direct and vicarious victimization may be predictive of fear of crime (Mesch, 2000). Further, vicarious victimization may be a proxy for the perception a respondent has regarding the amount of serious crime in their neighborhood.

We also include reports of crime as a measure. This captures information that the respondent has received about violent events that he or she did not witness, namely hearing about a rape, murder, or non-lethal shooting of someone the respondent knew. This three item measure sums the number of affirmative responses, ranging from 0-3. As is the case with vicarious victimization, we suggest that reports of crime may be a proxy for the respondent's perception about the amount of serious crime in their community.

3.5. Contextual level variables

At the neighborhood (measured at the Census tract) level, the following contextual variables are considered: racial composition, a disadvantage index, comprised of three measures (poverty rate, unemployment rate, and percent of female headed households) and residential stability. Two measures of racial composition are considered—percentage of black and percentage of Hispanic residents. Consistent with racial threat theory, we expect that the greater the percentage of black and/or Hispanic residents in a neighborhood, the greater the fear of crime. This relationship may be conditioned though by the race of the respondent. The other contextual measures have each been employed in past studies as antecedents of a community's degree of social (dis)organization. We consider three interrelated variables to capture neighborhood disadvantage. The poverty rate is calculated as the percentage of households below the poverty rate. The unemployment rate is calculated as the percentage of unemployed men and women, divided by the total civilian workforce (100 times). The measure percent female-headed households is calculated by dividing the number of female-headed households by the total number of households in the neighborhood. A principal components analysis revealed that these three measures produce high factor loadings, suggesting redundancy. Thus, z-score transformations of each of the three measures are summed to form an overall disadvantage index (see also Land et al., 1990). Finally, residential stability is defined as the percentage of residents who have lived in their current household for 5 years or longer. Residential instability has been a core factor in the development of socially disorganized communities.

⁵ We also considered whether the person was physically disabled or not, both in addition to the physical limitation measure, and in lieu of it in separate analyses. The results of these analyses indicated that physical limitation was a more robust predictor of fear of crime than the dummy variable capturing physical disability, although there was some evidence of redundancy in the contributions of each measure to explaining the dependent variable.

Table 1Descriptive statistics for variables used in analysis ($n = 1467$; 166 Census tracts)

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Dependent variable</i>				
Fear of crime (original metric)	9.66	10.59	0	30
Fear of crime (natural log)	1.68	1.30	0	3.43
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>				
Socioeconomic status	.04	.99	−2.72	2.70
Age	55.25	17.23	18	93
Gender (female = 1)	.52		0	1
Marital status (married = 1)	.50		0	1
Physical limitations	7.85	10.02	0	40
Unemployed	.50		0	1
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>				
Cuban-American	.27		0	1
African-American	.27		0	1
Other Hispanics	.25		0	1
White Non-Hispanics	.21		0	1
<i>Victimization/exposure</i>				
Personal victimization	.23	.51	0	4
Vicarious victimization	.43	.88	0	4
Reports of crime	.46	.76	0	3
<i>Neighborhood factors</i>				
% African-American	20.77	28.25	0	96.65
% Hispanic	52.32	27.47	1.34	95.25
Residential stability	50.11	12.38	4.99	74.17
Disadvantage index	−.27	3.04	−4.60	9.40

3.6. Analysis strategy

Because we are evaluating the role of both individual and contextual factors on fear of crime, it is appropriate to employ a method that takes into consideration the fact that the respondents who live in the same Census tracts are not independent observations. We employed a survey procedure in STATA that considers the effect of the clustering of respondents into neighborhoods and produces robust standard errors and more accurate t -values. To verify these results, we also estimated hierarchical linear regression models (available upon request). Furthermore, we used hierarchical linear modeling to partition the variance into two components—the variance that can be accounted for by individual factors and the variance that can be attributed to contextual factors. We found that only 7.6% of the variance can be attributed to contextual factors, suggesting that neighborhood factors have a relatively limited role in predicting respondent fear of crime. The overall descriptive statistics of the variables involved in the analyses can be found in Table 1.

4. Results

Before examining the results of the multivariate analyses, we first present Table 2, which has the descriptive statistics for each of the four ethnic and racial subgroups represented in our sample. In order to evaluate the magnitude of the differences in means and proportions, we have included the results of the Scheffe or Adjusted Wald test ($p < .05$) in the far right column of the table. Perhaps the most important finding that can be shown is that race/ethnicity is an important marker for mean differences in fear of crime. Consistent with prior research (Braungart et al., 1980; Covington and Taylor, 1991; Garofalo, 1977; Parker et al., 1993; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981), non-Hispanic whites report, on average, the lowest levels of fear of crime, although their average is not significantly different from the average of Blacks in the sample. Non-Cuban Hispanics have a greater average level of fear of crime than either whites or Blacks, but Cuban-Americans report the highest mean level of fear of crime, significantly higher than any other group. The finding that the two Hispanic groups, Cuban-Americans and other Hispanics, report the highest levels of fear of crime is consistent with the Parker et al., 1993) finding that Hispanics reported the highest levels of fear of crime in New York City. Indeed, an important characteristic that may explain much of the variance is the social class background of the respective ethnic/racial groups. Cuban-Americans have the lowest mean socioeconomic status of the respective groups, although the difference is only statistically significant when compared to white non-Hispanics.⁶

One somewhat surprising pattern is the lack of significant differences in the average personal victimizations experienced by each respective group (see also, Liska et al., 1988; McGarrell et al., 1997). If we expand our definition of victimization,

⁶ Among the other demographic factors, the unemployment rate of the respective groups is rather high, but this is due to the study's focus on sampling the disabled.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for select variables by race/ethnicity ($n = 1467$)

Variable	Whites ($n = 304$)	Blacks ($n = 402$)	Cubans ($n = 391$)	Other Hispanics ($n = 370$)	Scheffe or Adjusted Wald Test ^a
<i>Dependent variable</i>					
Fear of crime (natural log)	1.28 (1.13)	1.51 (1.27)	2.08 (1.29)	1.77 (1.34)	WC; WO; CO; CB; OB
<i>Demographic factors</i>					
Socioeconomic status	.65 (.85)	-.16 (.89)	-.20 (1.02)	-.003	WB; WC; WO; CO
Age	60.19 (17.07)	56.51 (16.05)	57.09 (16.98)	47.88 (16.60)	WO; CO; WB; OB
Gender	48%	55%	52%	51%	WB
Marital status	55%	42%	55%	51%	WB; OB; CB
Physical limitations	7.96 (9.57)	10.32 (11.26)	7.55 (9.79)	5.39 (8.48)	WO; CO; WB; CB; OB
Unemployed	48%	58%	55%	38%	WO; WB; CO; CB
<i>Victimization/exposure</i>					
Personal victimization	.24 (.53)	.22 (.53)	.21 (.46)	.26 (.54)	
Vicarious victimization	.41 (.89)	.68 (1.09)	.26 (.66)	.37 (.77)	WB; CB; OB
Reports of crime	.48 (.72)	.75 (.93)	.24 (.52)	.37 (.70)	WC; WB; CB; OB
<i>Neighborhood factors</i>					
	($n = 96$)	($n = 54$)	($n = 94$)	($n = 98$)	
% African-American	12.28 (19.23)	46.37 (30.98)	15.34 (25.38)	16.15 (23.48)	WB; CB; OB
% Hispanic	51.75 (23.95)	31.67 (21.45)	61.57 (27.05)	59.58 (25.85)	WB; CB; OB
Residential stability	49.05 (12.74)	53.76 (10.91)	51.46 (12.37)	48.96 (13.34)	
Disadvantage index	-1.22 (2.44)	1.52 (3.46)	-.61 (2.80)	-.42 (2.86)	WB; CB; OB

Note: Standard deviations in parentheses.

^a Significant differences in means or proportions are indicated by the following abbreviations: WO (white vs. Other Hispanics); WB (whiter vs. Blacks); WC (white vs. Cuban-Americans); BC (Blacks vs. Cuban-Americans); BO (Blacks vs. Other Hispanics); and CO (Cuban-Americans vs. Other Hispanics).

however, to include vicarious experiences and getting reports about crime from others, we find that some differences do emerge, and in the directions one would expect. Relative to all other groups, African-Americans do report having the most vicarious victimization experiences and receiving the most reports about crime from others. While Blacks may report the greatest exposure to crime, they still were found to have significantly lower levels of fear of crime compared to both of the Hispanic groups. Additionally, the average number of reports of crime experienced by non-Hispanic whites is higher than Cuban-Americans, which again, is somewhat at odds with the fact that whites have significantly lower levels of fear of crime than Cuban-Americans.

While there may be some discordance between the individual level factors and mean levels of fear of crime among the different groups, such differences may be due to the differences in the neighborhoods in which the respondents reside. The last four rows of Table 1 present the neighborhood level factors included in the analysis. The most important distinction to take note of is likely the differences in the percentage of Blacks that live in the respondent's respective neighborhoods. While Black respondents report living in neighborhoods that are almost half African-American, the other groups live in communities that have relatively few Black residents. This is not surprising given the level of Black isolation in major American cities, but it is an important contrast to consider when interpreting the results of the upcoming multivariate analyses. It is also important to note that the other three groups report residing (on average) in communities that are ethnically diverse, with Hispanics representing a majority of residents for whites, Cuban-Americans, and other Hispanics alike. Thus, the data presented document high levels of Black segregation and high levels of Hispanic integration with their peers. Finally, the neighborhoods that white respondents reside in are the least disadvantaged, with African Americans residing in communities that have significantly greater disadvantages than any of the other groups.

In order to address the simultaneous contributions of individual and neighborhood factors in explaining variation in fear of crime, we turn our attention to the multivariate models presented in Table 3. Of the demographic characteristics presented in the baseline model (column 1), a relatively expected pattern of associations is found. Socioeconomic status is inversely associated with fear of crime, while gender (being female) and experiencing physical limitations both are associated with greater fear of crime. Somewhat unanticipated is the finding that being married is associated with greater fear of crime, although this may reflect concern for family members as victims (indirectly or directly) of crime. Age was not found to be a significant predictor of the dependent variable, further contributing to the controversy regarding whether or not age is positively associated with fear of crime. Finally, being unemployed was found to be a consistent predictor of lower fear of crime. While this may be somewhat surprising, the association between unemployment and physical limitations (.44) suggests that this finding may be an artifact of the large percentage of physically limited people in the sample, especially when one considers that employment status fails to reach statistical significance in any of the regression models that exclude the physically disabled (Appendix A).

Once we include ethnicity and race into the equation (column 2), we find that as expected, being a minority (versus white non-Hispanic) is a significant predictor of the dependent variable. Indeed, the effect of socioeconomic status appears to be mediated entirely through the ethnicity or race of the respondent. The magnitude of the other coefficients is not greatly altered by the introduction of ethnicity/race into the model. Likewise, the inclusion of each of the victimization/exposure

Table 3
Fear of crime (natural log) regressed on individual and contextual predictors (n = 1467; 166 Census tracts)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>							
Socioeconomic status	-.089+ (.047)	.003 (.041)	-.022 (.039)	-.020 (.040)	-.017 (.038)	-.007 (.039)	-.008 (.039)
Age	-.001 (.003)	.001 (.003)	.004+ (.002)	.004+ (.002)	.004+ (.002)	.005+ (.002)	.005+ (.002)
Gender	.406*** (.058)	.388*** (.060)	.444*** (.059)	.445*** (.059)	.445*** (.059)	.438*** (.060)	.438*** (.060)
Marital status	.216** (.073)	.152* (.066)	.160* (.063)	.165** (.063)	.170** (.063)	.164** (.063)	.165** (.063)
Physical limitations	.017*** (.003)	.021*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)	.018*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)	.017*** (.003)
Unemployed	-.171* (.069)	-.172* (.071)	-.188** (.071)	-.186** (.070)	-.192** (.070)	-.185** (.070)	-.186** (.069)
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>							
Cuban-American		.813*** (.099)	.859*** (.104)	.856*** (.102)	.800*** (.099)	.690*** (.105)	.695*** (.110)
African-American		.195* (.079)	.116 (.081)	.213* (.090)	.397*** (.103)	.312** (.091)	.327** (.104)
Other Hispanics		.547*** (.096)	.563*** (.097)	.547*** (.095)	.518*** (.095)	.430*** (.097)	.434*** (.105)
<i>Victimization/exposure</i>							
Personal victimization			.246*** (.065)	.245*** (.066)	.245*** (.066)	.246*** (.066)	.246*** (.067)
Vicarious victimization			.134** (.044)	.133** (.044)	.138** (.045)	.139** (.044)	.139** (.044)
Reports of crime			.146** (.054)	.148** (.056)	.151** (.055)	.150** (.054)	.150** (.055)
<i>Neighborhood factors</i>							
Residential stability				-.005* (.003)	-.002 (.004)	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)
Disadvantage index				-.002 (.014)	.022 (.020)	.003 (.014)	.005 (.021)
% African-American					-.005* (.002)		-.001 (.003)
% Hispanic						.005** (.002)	.005* (.002)
Constant	1.368***	.840***	.535***	.771***	.675***	.380	.396
R ²	.050	.101	.136	.139	.142	.144	.144

*p < .1, **p < .05, ***p < .01, ****p < .001 (two-tailed tests).

measures also contributes to the explanatory power of the model (column 3). Having a personal experience with crime, witnessing crimes, or even getting reports about crimes from others are each significantly associated with fear of crime, in the expected direction. Moreover, previous victimization accounts for much of the Black/white disparity in fear of crime. As shown, the coefficient for African-American status is reduced by 41% (from .195 in Eq. (2) to .116) and it becomes non-significant.

Column 4 introduces the two control variables at the contextual level—residential stability and the disadvantage index. Consistent with expectations, residential stability reduces the level of fear reported. The measure of community disadvantage is not found to be a significant predictor of the dependent variable. When we consider each of the minority group threat indicators, we discover that percent African-American (column 5) actually serves to reduce fear of crime, contrary to the predictions of traditional racial threat theory. Consistent with our core hypothesis however, we find that living in neighborhoods with a greater percentage of Hispanic residents appears to translate into greater fear of crime for its respondents (column 6). The estimates presented in column 7 include both measures of racial composition. These results suggest that some of the effect of percent African-American is mediated by the inclusion of percent Hispanics, to the point that percent African-American is no longer statistically significant, but regression diagnostics suggest that there is redundancy in the two measures. This is not surprising given the great degree of segregation in this city, where only Blacks are exposed to communities with a large number of Black residents, while the other groups are exposed to varying degrees of Hispanic residents. Because of the severe racial isolation of Blacks in Miami, it is likely that few white non-Hispanics and Hispanics live in communities in which Blacks would reach the proportions where their presence would be translated into a “threat.” Likewise, the very low percentage of African-Americans residing in ethnically diverse neighborhoods is shown here to be a protective factor for fear of crime (Model 5).

Overall, the results reported in Table 3 demonstrate that both individual and neighborhood factors contribute to explaining variation in fear of crime. It is also obvious that of the factors considered, the individual factors have greater explanatory power than the contextual level factors, which reinforces the previously reported finding that approximately 7.6% of the variation in the dependent variable could be explained by contextual factors.

In order to further clarify the importance of ethnicity and race in understanding variation in fear of crime, we have included analyses in which separate models are estimated for each of the four ethnic/racial groups (Table 4). We also have included the results of tests of the equality of regression coefficients across the subgroup models (Paternoster et al., 1998), which can be found in the far right column of Table 4.⁷ While there are a number of compelling contrasts, one fascinating difference can be found in examining the importance of personal victimizations as a predictor of crime. Personal victimization is only a significant predictor of fear of crime among white non-Hispanics and other Hispanics, and

⁷ The test for the equality of regression coefficients is $z = (b_1 - b_2) / \sqrt{SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2}$ as discussed in Paternoster et al. (1998). Every possible pairing of the coefficients was evaluated.

Table 4
Fear of crime (natural log) regressed on individual and contextual predictors, by race and ethnicity

Variable	Whites (n = 304)	Blacks (n = 402)	Cubans (n = 391)	Other Hispanics (n = 370)	Test of equality of coefficients ^a
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>					
Socioeconomic status	.022 (.094)	.031 (.043)	-.152* (.063)	.138 (.084)	CO
Age	.010 [†] (.004)	-.009 [†] (.004)	.0002 (.005)	.014** (.005)	BO; WB
Gender	.436*** (.119)	.395** (.126)	.416** (.135)	.410** (.148)	
Marital status	-.247+ (.127)	.099 (.110)	.258* (.120)	.323** (.112)	WO
Physical limitations	.004 (.008)	.019*** (.004)	.020** (.007)	.018* (.008)	
Unemployed	-.232+ (.131)	.035 (.109)	-.257+ (.148)	-.213 (.142)	WB
<i>Victimization/exposure</i>					
Personal victimization	.278* (.120)	.020 (.073)	.074 (.141)	.545*** (.099)	WB; BO; CO
Vicarious victimization	.077 (.064)	.175** (.057)	.036 (.089)	.109 (.078)	
Reports of crime	.356*** (.084)	.211*** (.059)	.008 (.098)	-.001 (.097)	WO; WC; BC; BO
<i>Neighborhood factors</i>					
Residential stability	.005 (.006)	.006 (.009)	-.010+ (.005)	-.002 (.005)	CW; CB
Disadvantage index	.027 (.034)	.044 (.051)	-.045 (.040)	.017 (.044)	
% African-American	-.005 (.005)	-.008 (.009)	.005 (.008)	.002 (.007)	
% Hispanic	.008 [†] (.003)	-.003 (.013)	.010+ (.005)	.001 (.006)	
Constant	-.052	1.407 [†]	1.294 [†]	.540	
R ²	.207	.119	.103	.178	

Significant differences in coefficients are indicated by the following abbreviations: WO (white vs. Other Hispanics); WB (whiter vs. Blacks); WC (white vs. Cuban-Americans); BC (Blacks vs. Cuban-Americans); BO (Blacks vs. Other Hispanics); and CO (Cuban-Americans vs. Other Hispanics).

the effect (for both whites and non-Cuban Hispanics) is significantly different from the coefficient estimated in the Blacks only model. Conjecturally, it may be that the expectations of being a victim in Black America are such that the actual victimization experience does not have a significant effect on the level of fear of crime experienced by Black respondents. Reports of crime differ in the magnitude of the effect on fear of crime. Such reports have a greater influence on white non-Hispanics and African-Americans than Hispanic respondents.

Of the neighborhood factors, only one coefficient reaches statistical significance—percent Hispanic residents for the white, non-Hispanics and Cuban-American sub-samples, respectively. However, the test of equality of coefficients fails to reach statistical significance, meaning that the magnitude of the coefficient for two groups is not significantly different than the other group's coefficients. While it may be somewhat surprising to find that percent Hispanic is positively associated with fear of crime among Cuban-Americans, a couple of caveats need be considered. First, the contextual measure, percent Hispanic residents, is a blunt measure that does not distinguish between Cuban-Americans and other Hispanic groups. It is possible that Cuban-Americans report higher levels of fear of crime in these communities, not because they reside with a high percentage of other Cuban-Americans, but rather they reside with a high percentage of other Hispanic groups, whom the respondents may fear. Second, an inspection of the R²s across models reveals that the amount of variation accounted for in the non-Hispanic white equation is much greater than in the African-American and Cuban-American models (and to a lesser extent the non-Cuban Hispanics). This suggests that the risk and protective factors considered here, including percentage Hispanic, are of greater salience for predicting of fear of crime for whites in Miami than other groups. Third, this finding is consistent with the results of Rountree's (1998) study in which they found that the perceived percentage of Hispanic residents predicted fear of crime among Hispanic residents. This provocative finding merits future attention, where research can explore whether fear of violent crime is associated with the percentage of Hispanic residents generally, or whether such fear is specific to Hispanic residents from different backgrounds than the respondent.

We also estimated models that included each of the racial composition measures separately (not reported), and found that percent African-American is inversely related to fear of crime in the whites-only sample (although the coefficient was not found to be significantly different from the other subgroup coefficients). Largely, these results both reinforce and clarify the findings reported using the overall sample.

In addition to the analyses reported, we also consider the possibility that predictors of the fear of specific crimes may have differential effects, consistent with recent research (e.g., Ferraro, 1995; Rountree, 1998). We re-ran the models, substituting the dependent variable with two, more specific measures (decomposed from the overall measure): violent crimes and property crimes (results available upon request from authors). Contrary to some of the recent studies, we failed to uncover significant differences in the associations between the predictors for the violent versus property fear of crime measure.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Twenty-first century urban America is experiencing a dramatic transformation in its racial and ethnic composition. With Hispanics already outnumbering African-Americans in the United States, an answer to the question of whether non-Hispanic whites will perceive of Hispanics as the 'threatening' population is clearly emerging. There is considerable

evidence that white Americans are fearful of the largely Hispanic immigration to the United States and there is additional evidence that whites perceive of immigrants as a criminal threat. This analysis extends prior research by asking whether ethnicity matters in explaining variation in fear of crime in Miami where Hispanics comprise the majority of residents.

The results of our study provide qualified support for our core hypotheses. First, ethnic background is clearly an important determinant of individual variation in fear of crime, even after controlling for several different factors, including socio-demographic factors, experiences and exposure to crime, and psychosocial resources. While this finding is consistent with other research suggesting minorities experience greater levels of fear of crime than non-Hispanic whites, there is an obvious need for further inquiry into the sources of this difference, beyond such factors as victimization and exposure differences. Second, we find that consistent with our expectations, the relative size of the Hispanic population in a neighborhood is a significant contextual predictor of fear of crime, supporting the hypothesis derived from minority group threat theory. We did fail to find, however, that the relative size of the Black population was a significant positive predictor of fear of crime. Indeed, we found evidence that for white non-Hispanics, percent African-American was inversely associated with fear of crime. We suggest that this peculiar finding is due to the extreme segregation of Blacks in Miami-Dade County. The lack of racial heterogeneity in the typical Miami neighborhood, coupled with the extensive ethnic heterogeneity of many neighborhoods, appears instrumental in explaining these findings. The index of dissimilarity, a commonly used measure of segregation, is calculated as 69 (out of 100), according to 2000 Census data, indicating that Blacks are highly segregated in Miami-Dade County. According to one study, Miami ranked 89th out of the 100 largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the United States in terms of Black-white integration (Quinn and Pawasarat, 2003). In short, Blacks are not seen as threatening because they are isolated from non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics alike, whereas non-Hispanic whites in Miami-Dade are likely to live in neighborhoods with some ethnic diversity. To the extent that Miami-Dade represents ethnically diverse metro areas where the Hispanic population is the largest minority group, Hispanics do appear to be the “new” threatening population, especially for non-Hispanic whites. Our findings reinforce the importance of decomposing racial threat measures into African-American and (at the least) Hispanic populations in cities that have sizable populations of both. In separate analyses (not reported), we found that an oft-used measure of racial threat, percent minority residents, *failed* to reach statistical significance in the estimated model. Such a blunt measure of threatening groups may be obsolete, given the dynamic changes in the racial and ethnic composition of many American cities.

While we believe our findings are provocative, there are important caveats that warrant emphasis. First, the sampling strategy of the overarching research project was designed to identify a stratified random sample of disabled persons, and then match them with non-disabled neighbors in close proximity. Hence, the sample is skewed towards people with disabilities and may not be representative of the general population in Miami-Dade County. In fact, the median age of our sample is approximately 55 years of age, significantly older than the median age in the county (36 years of age). We did employ two approaches to minimize such concerns: a) we included a measure of physical limitation to statistically control for the influence of disability in the models estimated; and b) we ran additional analyses in which those identified as disabled were dropped from the analysis. The results of those analyses (see Appendix A) suggest that the pattern of findings revealed in the reported analyses is largely replicated by the non-disabled subgroup analysis. Nonetheless, the reader should consider this limitation when assessing the results of our analysis. Our study is best viewed as exploratory in nature.

Second, we were unable to provide official crime rate data at the census tract level, primarily because of the number of different law enforcement jurisdictions that exist in Miami-Dade County, including two large urban police departments. We do include, however, two measures that are arguably more salient predictors of one's perception of the neighborhood crime rate—vicarious victimization and reports of crime—that most prior studies of fear of crime have not incorporated. We suggest that future research should strive to include race and ethnic-specific crime rates to more accurately gauge the extent to which the fear of ethnic minorities is driven by aggregate crime rates.

If Miami is a social laboratory as many have described it, then our research suggests that the trend towards increasing ethnic diversity in many urban American centers will be accompanied by fear, distrust, and anguish by white non-Hispanics. While we did not explicitly test the merits of an alternative thesis to the minority group threat thesis explored in this paper, our results do suggest that the contact hypothesis of Allport (1954) and others may not extend into the realm of fear of racial and ethnic minorities. Contrary to the core notion of the contact hypothesis, that large populations of out-groups leads to interracial (and interethnic) contact, which ultimately produces LESs hostility and competition among diverse groups, our findings suggest that white fear of crime is greater in communities with a greater number of out-group (i.e., Hispanic) members. While speculative, one reason our finding may be contrary to the contact hypothesis is the obvious language and cultural barriers that may obfuscate efforts to achieve inter-group contact in Miami. According to the most recent Census, almost 60% of Miami-Dade County residents spoke Spanish as their first language, indicating a potential barrier to improving inter-group relations between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. Clearly, further research is needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of what factors contribute to fear of crime among residents in ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods, including such factors as bilingualism. But if our findings have merit, they reiterate the challenge of integrating urban dwellers in a rapidly changing world.

Appendix A

Fear of crime (natural log) regressed on individual and contextual predictors, non-disabled respondents only ($n = 813$; 137 Census tracts)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>							
Socioeconomic status	-.060 (.066)	.038 (.060)	.007 (.060)	.012 (.063)	.013 (.062)	.024 (.062)	.024 (.061)
Age	-.001 (.004)	.003 (.003)	.004 (.003)	.004 (.003)	.005 (.003)	.005+ (.003)	.005+ (.003)
Gender	.379*** (.083)	.364*** (.083)	.402*** (.080)	.406*** (.080)	.405*** (.081)	.402*** (.081)	.403*** (.081)
Marital status	.231** (.095)	.171* (.091)	.175* (.088)	.178* (.088)	.181* (.087)	.174* (.087)	.175* (.087)
Physical limitations	.033*** (.005)	.034*** (.006)	.030*** (.006)	.030*** (.006)	.030*** (.006)	.029*** (.006)	.029*** (.006)
Unemployed	-.096 (.103)	-.091 (.102)	-.113 (.100)	-.115 (.099)	-.116 (.099)	-.118 (.099)	-.118 (.099)
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>							
Cuban-American		.762*** (.149)	.765*** (.150)	.761*** (.151)	.698*** (.144)	.582*** (.149)	.588*** (.154)
African-American		.244+ (.128)	.182 (.130)	.232 (.149)	.500** (.189)	.364* (.146)	.389+ (.198)
Other Hispanics		.589*** (.128)	.582*** (.127)	.570*** (.131)	.540*** (.129)	.442** (.136)	.448** (.141)
<i>Victimization/exposure</i>							
Personal victimization			.240** (.079)	.242** (.079)	.243** (.080)	.243** (.081)	.243** (.081)
Vicarious victimization			.113 (.072)	.113 (.071)	.116 (.073)	.120+ (.071)	.120+ (.071)
Reports of crime			.058 (.064)	.058 (.065)	.064 (.065)	.066 (.065)	.066 (.065)
<i>Neighborhood factors</i>							
Residential stability				-.003 (.003)	.0001 (.004)	-.0001 (.004)	.0001 (.004)
Disadvantage Index				.004 (.019)	.032 (.022)	.006 (.016)	.009 (.023)
% African-American					-.006* (.003)		-.001 (.004)
% Hispanic						.006** (.002)	.005+ (.003)
Constant	1.298***	.658**	.505**	.636*	.559*	.177	.204
R ²	.059	.102	.120	.121	.126	.129	.129

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$, **** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

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