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Does neighborhood crime matter? A multi-year survey study on perceptions of race, victimization, and public safety

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ABSTRACT

Using multiple large datasets over time from Kansas City, Missouri, hypotheses drawn from theories of racial stereotype amplification, violence desensitization, and dissimilar group threat are tested. The results show that White Americans that live in Black or Hispanic neighborhoods tend to feel less satisfied with public safety, even after controlling for actual crime rates, physical signs of disorder, and a neighborhood's socioeconomic context. However, racial minority residents living in White or minority neighborhoods do not have the same inflated fear. Further, on the issue of race-of-victim effects, the White victimization rate in neighborhoods is found to be negatively associated with public safety perception, whereas the victimization of Blacks has no statistically significant impact. We also found that individuals in Black neighborhood show lower levels of sensitivity to fear of victimization, implying that chronic exposure to neighborhood crime may lead to desensitization.

1. Introduction

Fear of criminal victimization remains a significant public concern in the United States, and the majority of American perceive that crime is getting worse (Cooke, 2015; Salem and Lewis, 2016; Wolfers, 2014), even though violent crime rates have been steadily declining since the early 1990s (Baumer and Wolff, 2014; Colen et al., 2016; Spelman, 2005). The public has not only not caught up with overall national trends in crime, but also often misperceives the safety conditions of neighborhoods— the actual likelihood of becoming a victim in a neighborhood is not typically known by average individuals, and, as a result, an individual's perception of victimization risk tends to link contextual factors with criminal activities in a neighborhood (Austin et al., 2002). For example, certain social and visible characteristics of neighborhoods, such as graffiti and other “broken windows” problems, are found to have strong and negative impacts on individuals' feelings of safety (MacDonald, 2015; Scarborough et al., 2010).

In contextualizing crimes and personal risk, public discourse has been increasingly racialized (Fagan, 2017; Mastrofski, 2012; Reisig et al., 2007; Ridgeway, 2017). Some equate criminality with “blackness” (Dixon and Azocar, 2007; Gilliam et al., 2002; Stinchcombe et al., 1980), which is the tendency to over-associate the Black face more with crimes (Eberhardt et al., 2004; Feagin, 2014). It is true that neighborhoods with higher crime rates tend to have a larger proportion of Black Americans (DeLisi, 2011; Spelman, 2005). However, these neighborhoods also have social and economic challenges that correlate with criminal activities (Austin et al., 2002; Couch and Fairlie, 2010). Even though these problems are not necessarily racial issues, an individual's cognitive processes can racialize this statistical relationship between minority neighborhoods and crimes by stereotyping Black Americans, particularly young Black males, as more dangerous (Quillian and Pager, 2001). The mass media exacerbates such crime racialization

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further due to its tendency to portray Black males as criminals (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Stabile, 2006; Unnever and Gabbidon, 2011). As a result, a "spoiled collective identity" is often attached to Black Americans and as such they are often perceived as contributing more to criminal activities in the U.S. than other racial groups (Mears et al., 2009; Soss et al., 2003).

This study explores how the negative impact of criminal activities on personal safety perceptions changes in different neighborhood settings. Specifically, we are interested in exploring whether White Americans' personal safety concerns tend to be inflated by racial bias, one that goes beyond rational expectations given the characteristics of a person's place of residence. Although sociologists and criminologists have long studied the racial stereotyping of crime, past studies seldom have had large multi-year datasets available at the individual level to understand the racial contextualization of crime and its impact on public safety perception. Using a citizen survey dataset from Kansas City, Missouri that spans multiple quarters and two different city administrations, merged with other administrative datasets of neighborhood conditions, this study attempts to test different hypotheses of racial stereotype amplification, dissimilar group threat, and violence desensitization effects that past studies have not explicitly explored.

2. Literature & background

2.1. Racial information processing and stereotype amplification

Individuals repeatedly face situations in which they have to make judgements with limited information. In response, the cognitive processes of humans generate stereotypes by putting people or situations into categories and then generalize specific characteristics from these categories. Stereotyping provides a cognitive shortcut in information processing (Drakulich, 2012; Hilton and Von Hippel, 1996). Expectations are formulated based on the traits of these mental categories so that humans can respond to people or situations more rapidly (Macrae and Bodenhausen, 2000).

Hence, it can be expected that stereotyping occurs when individuals evaluate their risk of crime victimization. From a rational choice perspective, individuals gather and process information about different crime contexts and events from various sources, and then use the information to make assessments of the likelihood of criminal victimization. If individuals can make generalizations from statistically accurate evidence then they, theoretically, can improve the accuracy of their decision making under conditions of uncertainty (Ewens et al., 2014; Judd and Park, 1993; Koenig and Eagly, 2014; Uhlmann et al., 2010).

One source of information individuals may use to generalize their personal safety risk from is the crime rate. A recent study of state-level racial stereotype found that US States with higher rates of violent crime perpetrated by Black individuals showed a stronger Black-violence stereotype (Johnson and Chopik, 2018). Some studies have confirmed that neighborhood crime rates are also significantly associated with perceptions of safety, asserting that individuals indeed conduct "statistical discrimination" to evaluate their personal safety situation (Bjerk, 2007; DeLisi and Regoli, 1999; Quillian and Pager, 2001).

However, as economists and social and cognitive psychologists point out, human judgments are susceptible to complex biasing factors (Kahneman and Egan, 2011; Quillian and Pager, 2010; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974), and individuals are often careless about the validity of the information that they use to make judgments from (Dowler, 2003; Drakulich, 2012; Im et al., 2014; Mears et al., 2009; Peffley et al., 1997). For example, accurate statistical discrimination requires access to the correct information (National Research Council, 2004; Schwab, 1986; Starr, 2014), but if reliable crime rate information is not easily accessible, or if the transaction costs to obtain "true stereotyping" are high, individuals may resort to other means to estimate crime risk (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997)—in other words, perception of neighborhood safety is *not* a direct reflection of reality, even if it is influenced by reality.

An easy alternative is to use the social factors associated with crime, because they are readily observable, accessible, and abundant. Unfortunately, this also leads to racial stereotyping of crime, as neighborhood racial makeup is a more observable characteristic, particularly in the U.S., where many neighborhoods fall into the category of either dominantly Black or dominantly White (Farley and Frey, 1994; Hacker, 2010). As mentioned above, it is factually correct that more crimes happen in minority neighborhoods because of concentrated poverty problems, lack of economic opportunities, poor access to social services, and degradation of communities (Vaughn et al., 2017). When the public see only an oversimplified reality in the mass media that crimes happen in certain minority neighborhoods, individual perceptions can be influenced by a simplistic bivariate correlation between race and crime. Studies on cultivation theory (Gerbner and Gross, 1976) and audience effect theory (Chiricos et al., 1997) have accumulated extensive evidence that exposure to media gradually cultivates audiences' perceptions of reality, and that this long-term media effect varies depending on audience traits (Chiricos et al., 1997; Goidel et al., 2006; Kort-Butler & Hartshorn, 2011; Roche et al., 2016). .

The simplistic racial stereotyping of crime is further reinforced by different social institutions. Theories of stereotype amplification posit that the real association between crime rates and social factors such as race is distorted by the influence of cultural legacies, skewed media coverage, and other biased channels of information (Quillian and Pager, 2010). For example, it is difficult for the general public to judge the accuracy of media reports on crime, or to recognize the bias in reporting, that tend to focus disproportionately on Black Americans (Gilliam et al., 2002; Stabile, 2006). Crime events portrayed by the media often associate violence with Blacks—people of color may be viewed, especially by Whites, as a potential criminal threat, resulting in racial demonization (Barkan and Cohn, 2005; Mears et al., 2009; Steffensmeier et al., 1998). As such, the crime-race relationship is distorted and biased (Quillian, 2008; Soss et al., 2003). Even in the aforementioned study that shows racial stereotype is actually linked to violent behavior (Johnson and Chopik, 2018), the authors also found, in the same data, that Black Americans are always more strongly associated with weapons even when Whites perpetuate more violent crime, concluding that the stereotyping of Blacks reflects a complex association influenced by beliefs as well. These all suggest that individuals with an amplified stereotype may have an exaggerated or inaccurate mental picture of crime risk (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Dixon, 2015). Hence, we hypothesize the

following,

Hypothesis 1. *An individual in a racial minority neighborhood feels less satisfied with public safety, even after controlling for violent crime rates and crime-related physical signs of disorder in a neighborhood,*

2.2. Desensitization to violence: chronic exposure problem in Black communities

Desensitization to fear of victimization is potentially experienced by racial minority communities and neighborhoods with lower levels of income and education (Franklin et al., 2008; Grohe et al., 2012). Socio-economically marginalized minority individuals tend to disproportionately live in crime-prone Black neighborhoods, where the risk of victimization is higher. However, people who are rooted, or have spent lengthy periods of time, in these Black neighborhoods are likely to view their crime-prone surroundings as normal—the consequence being lower levels of fear of crime (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2016). As individuals in Black neighborhoods become desensitized to their surroundings, they may also experience lower levels of actual worry or fear of crime when cognitively responding to violence in a high-risk neighborhood.

This argument is further reinforced by the cognitive condition in which people have differential sensitivities to violence risk (Jackson, 2011; Warr, 1987). Similar levels of actual risk do not necessarily produce similar levels of fear (Ng-Mak et al., 2002), because the degree to which a crime is feared is also dependent on individual's "sensitivity to risk" (Warr, 1987). Previous approaches to risk sensitivity modeling posit that likelihood of victimization and fear of crime are separate constructs, and differential sensitivity to the risk of victimization explains differences in fear (Jackson, 2011)—the hypotheses of previous research focus on the degree to which different crimes are feared (severity of consequence) and the degree to which individuals feel they have control over a crime's occurrence (perceived control), but they haven't explicitly dealt with the desensitization to fear by chronic exposure to crime in the context of neighborhood conditions.

Residents in economically-disadvantaged communities experience more chronic exposure to violence in their neighborhoods at proportionately higher levels than others (Hill and Madhere, 1996; Scarborough et al., 2010). For example, studies show that more than 75 percent of people in Black neighborhoods reported that they experienced or witnessed community violence, such as aggravated assault or even murder others (Bell and Jenkins, 1993; Fitzpatrick and Boldizar, 1993; McCart et al., 2007). Individuals living in low-income Black neighborhoods, particularly in urban areas, are exposed to significantly higher levels of violent crimes than those living in White middle-class suburban neighborhoods (Gladstein et al., 1992; Krivo and Peterson, 1996). The literature suggests that individuals in Black neighborhood are more chronically exposed to crime problems regardless of socioeconomic situation (Schwab-Stone et al., 1995).

As a result of this differential exposure to crime, individuals in Black neighborhood become desensitized and begin to "adapt" to violence (Gaylord-Harden et al., 2016; Ng-Mak et al., 2002). Individuals who are chronically exposed to violence are more likely to respond to violence with cognitive numbing (Latzman and Swisher, 2005; Ng-Mak et al., 2004). This desensitization process is problematic because desensitized individuals are more likely to let themselves remain vulnerable to violence and may under-report crimes.

When the general public expects Blacks and Black neighborhoods to experience more crime (and as a result become desensitized), there is a risk that society may become less motivated to take collective action to help Black neighborhoods address the deep-rooted socio-economic problems contributing to crime. Past studies on the mass media support the assertion that society tends to pay less attention to Black victimization—for example, studies have found that Black victimization is reported less than White victimization (Entman, 1994) and White victims are more likely to be provided primary space in news media outlines than Black victims are (Weiss and Chermak, 1998)—there are racial myths in the news media and racial minorities are virtually ignored and marginalized (Campbell, 1995).

Based on the above understandings, this study is interested in testing the following hypotheses about racial desensitization to neighborhood crimes.

Hypothesis 2. *The (negative) impact of violent crimes on an individual's public safety perception is weaker in a Black neighborhood than in a non-Black neighborhood.*

Hypothesis 3. *The White victimization rate in neighborhood violent crime has a higher negative impact on an individual's public safety perception than the Black victimization rate.*

2.3. Dissimilar group threat & racial segregation

Fear of crime is at the core of social threat relationships in the United States (Eschholz et al., 2003; Liska, 1992)—minority threat, and contemporary social conflict, theories are often rooted in frameworks that explain the tendency to associate racial minorities with crime. These perspectives suggest that ethnically or culturally dissimilar minority groups are perceived as a threat (Blauner, 1972; Stults and Baumer, 2007). Sociologists have shown that this perceived minority threat of criminal danger is very salient in the United States since criminality has been highly racialized (Beckett, 1999; Beckett and Sasson, 2003). Some other studies argue that racial majority members use their dominant position to generate more aggressive crime control towards racial minority members because they hold deep-seated feelings of out-group dislike and antipathy toward minority groups (Allport, 1979; Giles and Evans, 1985; Manning, 2015; Stewart et al., 2009; Stults and Baumer, 2007).

On the other hand, the racial isolation perspective suggests that race-based residential segregation has caused a lack of sustained connection with mainstream resources for Blacks and other disadvantaged minority groups in urban communities (Hall et al., 2015; Massey and Denton, 1993; Sampson and Wilson, 1995). This process of social isolation is linked to cognitive responses such as a more hostile view of relationships, moral disengagement, and negative emotions (Burt and Simons, 2015; Burt et al., 2012; Unnever and Gabbidon, 2011). Geographical and political isolation between racial groups supports why skewed media reports might be an important source of intergroup communication (Gilliam et al., 2002; Lange et al., 1969).

Several studies have indeed argued that Whites' fear of crime is higher when amongst non-Whites or in racially segregated communities (Covington and Taylor, 1991; Liska et al., 1982)—for example, Whites living in mostly Black neighborhoods show a greater fear of crime (Moeller, 1989). However, not much has been done to estimate this cognitive differential by race and to understand whether dissimilar group threat is only perceived by Whites, or is a commonly shared feeling among all racial groups when they live in racially dissimilar neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 4. *An individual feels less satisfied with public safety in a racially dissimilar neighborhood but feels more satisfied with public safety in a racially similar neighborhood.*

3. Research design

3.1. Data

This study uses data from Kansas City, Missouri to analyze the dynamics between crime rates, race, and perceptions of public safety. Kansas City is a diverse, mid-sized city in the American Midwest. It has a population of about 450,000, with about 55 percent of its population being Whites, 30 percent Blacks, and about 10 percent Hispanic or Latino. About 19 percent of the city population is below the federal poverty level, which is about the same as the national urban poverty rate for the 2011–2012 period (Nichols, 2013). Like many urban areas in the US, crime is a major policy challenge in the city. Also, urban poverty, gun-related violence,[1] poor education, and economic opportunities for minority residents are major public concerns.

This study uses data from a multi-year, quarterly citizen survey conducted by Kansas City, Missouri. Since the late 2000s, the city has contracted with a professional survey company to conduct regular random-sampled resident surveys to track public perception of the quality of life in the city. About 13,000 individual survey responses in the quarterly surveys for the period from 2011 to 2014 were geocoded.[2] The survey data shows that 90.23 percent of respondents have lived in Kansas City, Missouri, for more than 5 years, 78.74 percent of them for more than 10 years, and 50.66 percent of them for more than 25 years. Then the data were joined with the police incident data and citizen service request (and nuisance complaint) data in each census block group by months from 2009 to 2014. We also merged the survey data with block group level demographic data from the 2010 Census, and used the household median income data from the American Community Survey. The merged data covered over 240 neighborhoods, more than 400 census block groups, and a time span of 12 quarters.

3.2. Dependent variable

The dependent variable in our analysis is the safety feeling of local residents, measured by a survey question—"How satisfied are you with the overall feeling of safety in the city?" While the question might not fully capture the public's fear of crime or the perceived risk of victimization, it reflected their subjective feeling about public safety in Kansas City. Responses to this question were on a Likert scale, with 1 being "very dissatisfied," 3 being "neutral," and 5 being "very satisfied." Original surveys included responses of "don't know" but these responses were about only 1.29 percent of the total responses. Hence, we grouped these responses with the "neutral" category. The descriptive statistics of the dependent variables are presented in the Table 1. About 38 percent of the citizens were satisfied or very satisfied with the public safety condition of the city, while less than 30 percent of them were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

3.3. Independent variables

We have included an extensive list of variables identified in the literature at individual and neighborhood levels (Austin et al., 2002; Cho, 2017; Hipp and Kane, 2017; Krivo et al., 2009; Quillian and Pager, 2001). These variables can be grouped into the following categories: crime factors, physical sign factors, racial factors, racial dissimilarity or segregation factors, racial moderation

[1] Underlying some of these issues is the tension between race and crime. A recent incidence of racially motivated shooting in the City of Olathe, a city in the Kansas City metropolitan area, is an example of the racial tension and hostility toward minorities that is held by some residents in the region (New York Times, 2017)—A 52-year-old man fatally shot three people in a bar and federal authorities alleged that the victims were targeted because of their ethnicity and race, resulting in the perpetrator facing federal hate crime charges.

[2] Survey data were collected in different months—July 2011 (N = 1200), October 2011 (N = 1140), January 2012 (N = 1249), June 2012 (N = 1111), September 2012 (N = 1036), December 2012 (N = 1015), March 2013 (N = 1048), June 2013 (N = 1001), September 2013 (N = 1049), December 2013 (N = 1027), March 2014 (N = 1173), June 2014 (N = 1036), using stratified random sampling by city council districts.

Table 1
Dependent variable: Satisfaction with overall feeling of public safety.

Original Measures			Recoded Scale			
Feeling safe	Frequency	(%)	Ordered	Frequency	(%)	Geocode Missing
Very dissatisfied	1241	(9.46)	1	1236	(9.45)	5
Dissatisfied	2680	(20.42)	2	2667	(20.38)	13
Neutral	4029	(30.70)	3	4189	(32.01)	9
Don't know	169	(1.29)				
Satisfied	4198	(31.99)	4	4188	(32.01)	10
Very satisfied	807	(6.15)	5	805	(6.15)	2
Total	13124	(100.00)	Total	13085	(100.00)	39

factors, socio-economic factors, demographic factors, and time fixed effects.

To measure the level of criminal activity in neighborhoods that might impact public safety perception, we calculated the number of incidents of homicide, sexual assault, and armed robbery for twelve months before each quarterly survey in each census block group, and then created a standardized factor score for the occurrence of these violent crimes.[3] Number of victims by race is also standardized.[4]

The physical sign factors were based on the literature on neighborhood disorder and Broken Window theory (Ho and Cho, 2017; Keizer et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2018; Wilson and Kelling, 1982). The urban sociologists' long-standing hypothesis is that dwellers in city estimate risk of victimization based heavily on visual cues, including not just the racial makeup of a neighborhood but also the physical signs of disorder (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004). The physical sign factors in this study include the percentage of housing built before 1970, the percentage of vacant housing in the census block group, and the number of citizen complaints about physical disorder in their neighborhoods—physical disorder was calculated by the number of complaints about graffiti, illegal dumping, property nuisance, and vacant properties in each census block group for three months before each of the quarterly surveys. These variables were rescaled as standardized scores for easier impact comparison later.

Race-related factors included the variables generated by the race of individual respondents and the racial composition of the respondents' census block groups. In addition, a racial dissimilarity or segregation measure was created, which is a dummy variable indicating whether an individual survey respondent lived in a neighborhood that had the majority (> 50 percent) of residents of the same racial background to that of the respondent. To capture the contrary, a dummy variable of racial dissimilarity was used to indicate if an individual survey respondent lived in a neighborhood that had the majority of residents who did not have the same racial background. Amongst White respondents (n = 8559), 86.75 percent live in White (> 50 percent) neighborhoods while only 9.11 percent live in Black (> 50 percent) neighborhoods, and 26.27 percent live in Hispanic (> 50 percent) neighborhoods. Amongst Black respondents (n = 3317), 66.22 percent live in Black neighborhoods while only 7.20 percent live in White neighborhoods, with 18.69 percent living in Hispanic neighborhoods. Finally, amongst Hispanic respondents (n = 1127), only 7.89 percent live in Hispanic neighborhoods, while the majority (54.92 percent) live in more ethnically diverse neighborhoods (no single ethnic group over 50 percent of the neighborhood's racial makeup). Finally, interaction terms between the percentages of different racial groups and the violent crime factor score were included in the regression models to capture the racial moderating effect.

The socio-economic factors included the income level of the survey respondent, dummy variables for their home ownership status (renters and homeowners), the median household income of the residing census block group, the percentages of single parent households and renter households, and the number of the unemployed in the residing census block group. Demographic control variables included age, gender, and the age composition and the population size of the residing census block group. To control for other unknown year-specific factors that caused changes in public safety perception, the yearly fixed effects were included. Also, a dummy variable for the summer was used since the previous literature has pointed out that weather and seasons have significant association with criminal activities (Hipp et al., 2004).

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the above variables. Since the analysis used ordered logit models, we standardized all continuous variables to make the substantive impacts across variables more comparable. In the summary statistics table, we have included the original unstandardized values in parentheses.

Fig. 1 plots the percentage of Black residents in a neighborhood and the levels of violent crime and income in those neighborhoods. The figure shows that neighborhoods are racially segregated—neighborhoods are clustered on the left or the right side of x-axis (Black percentages). This is also confirmed in Table 2—the most homogeneously Black neighborhood has 96.50 percent Black

[3] We used the criterion of a 12-month-period before each survey, as information about the crime conditions of a neighborhood may not be known by the general public until sometime later if criminal incidents are not reported in the mass media, given the transaction costs involved in knowing what happens in a community (such as through word-of-mouth and neighborhood informal meetings). Our reasoning for using a factor-loaded crime score, rather than just using incident summations of the three violence categories, is the possible distinctive nature of each type of violent crime in a neighborhood.

[4] As to the multicolineality of victim counts variables, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values range from 1.95 to 2.15 depending on different model specifications. Although there is little consensus in acceptable levels of VIF, we tend to only get concerned when a VIF is greater than 2.50 (corresponding to an R-squared of 0.60).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics: Independent variables.

	Mean	STD	Min	Max
Violent crime factor score, NBHD	0 (4.32)	1 (11.04)	−0.35 (0)	12.4 (168)
Dummy variable for crime victim experience, INDV	0.13	0.34	0	1
Number of White victims of crime, NBHD	0 (2.30)	1 (5.61)	−0.41 (0)	18.14 (104)
Number of Black victims of crime, NBHD	0 (3.54)	1 (11.06)	−0.32 (0)	14.97 (169)
Disorder factor score, NBHD	0 (39.36)	1 (53.9)	−0.73 (0)	9.2 (535)
Percentage of housing built before 1970, NBHD	0 (34.62)	1 (27.03)	−1.28 (0.00)	2.37 (98.70)
Percentage of vacant housing, NBHD	0 (11.34)	1 (8.40)	−1.14 (1.80)	5.03 (53.60)
White respondent, INDV	0.65	0.48	0	1
Hispanic respondent, INDV	0.09	0.28	0	1
Age 34 or younger, INDV	0.20	0.40	0	1
Age 65 or older, INDV	0.16	0.37	0	1
Income less than $30 k, INDV	0.22	0.42	0	1
Income $100 k or more, INDV	0.20	0.40	0	1
Female, INDV	0.51	0.50	0	1
Renters, INDV	0.18	0.38	0	1
Percentage of Blacks, NBHD	0 (27.22)	1 (31.89)	−0.85 (0.10)	2.17 (96.50)
Percentage of Hispanic, NBHD	0 (7.49)	1 (9.84)	−0.71 (0.50)	7.89 (85.20)
Percentage of single-parents, NBHD	0 (10.15)	1 (7.27)	−1.33 (0.50)	5.84 (52.60)
Median household income, NBHD	0 (54625.60)	1 (31081.68)	−1.49 (8420)	4.77 (202918)
Percentage of renters, NBHD	0 (35.51)	1 (25.54)	−1.37 (0.4)	2.49 (99.1)
Population of census block group, NBHD	0 (1275.22)	1 (693.9)	−1.42 (288)	3.92 (3995)
Number of unemployed NBHD	0 (56.85)	1 (33.57)	−1.52 (6)	3.49 (174)
Population percentage younger than 35, NBHD	0 (41.68)	1 (9.03)	−3.12 (13.50)	4.64 (83.6)
Population percentage at 65 or older, NBHD	0 (11.99)	1 (6.58)	−1.69 (0.90)	4.64 (42.50)
Dummy variable for the summer	0.33	0.47	0	1
Dummy variable for 2012	0.34	0.47	0	1
Dummy variable for 2013	0.32	0.46	0	1
Dummy variable for 2014	0.17	0.37	0	1

Note: figures in parentheses are the unstandardized values of the original data. NBHD neighborhood level variable, INDV individual level variable.

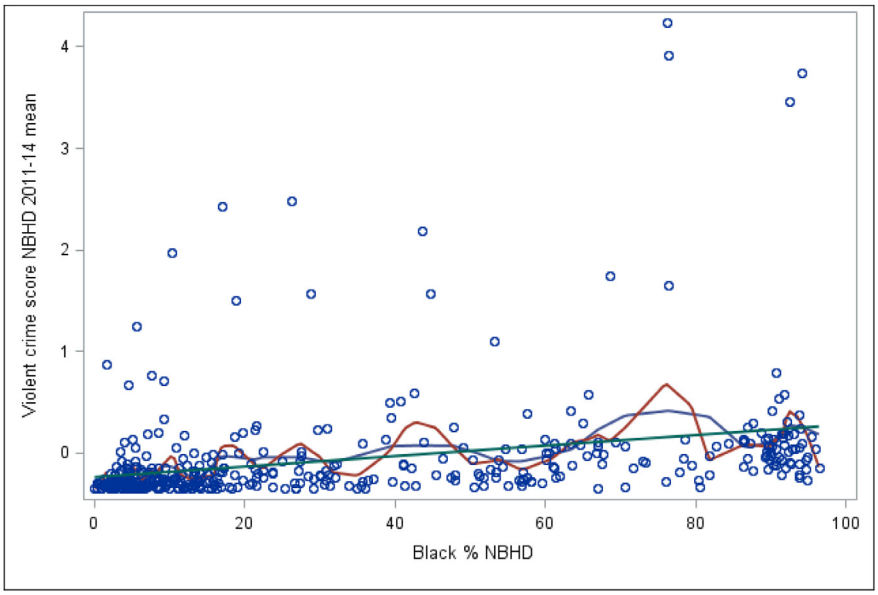

Fig. 1. Neighborhood Black American percentage and violent crime factor score.
Note: Smooth curves are computed by LOWESS (locally weighted scatterplot smoothing).

residents, while the least homogeneously Black neighborhood has only 0.10 percent Black residents. The scatter plot in Fig. 1 also shows a possible association between the percentage of Black residents and the level of crime activities—that is why it is tempting to stereotype criminal activities by race. However, Black neighborhoods are also more economically marginalized, hence, the relationship between crime and race is more complex than a simple linear relationship, and previous research has shown that this link goes away after controlling for other socioeconomic factors. On the other hand, non-racial socioeconomic factors and poverty levels are a lot more difficult to gauge based only on observable physical appearance, while other visual cues such as racial makeup and

Table 3
Segregation model results.

(DV: satisfaction with overall feeling of public safety)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Crime factors				
Violent crime factor score, NBHD	-.050 (.018)**			-.049 (.018)**
Crime victim experience, INDV	-.759 (.049)***	-.760 (.049)***	-.750 (.049)***	-.755 (.049)***
White victim counts, NBHD		-.082 (.022)**	-.074 (.022)**	
Black victim counts, NBHD		.020 (.023)	.006 (.022)	
Physical signs factors				
Disorder factor score, NBHD	-.019 (.020)	-.018 (.020)	-.035 (.019)	-.031 (.019)
Housing % before 1970, NBHD	-.079 (.021)**	-.080 (.021)**	-.074 (.021)**	-.070 (.021)
Vacant housing %, NBHD	-.056 (.027)*	-.060 (.027)*	-.088 (.026)**	-.068 (.026)**
Racial factors				
White, INDV	.076 (.042)	.075 (.042)		
Hispanic, INDV	.034 (.061)	.032 (.061)		
Black %, NBHD	-.096 (.036)**	-.109 (.037)**		
Hispanic %, NBHD	-.042 (.022)	-.030 (.022)		
Segregation(> 50% NBHD) factors				
White INDV in Black NBHD			-.287 (.075)**	
White INDV in Hispanic NBHD			-.400 (.187)*	
Hispanic INDV in Black NBHD			.122 (.147)	
Hispanic INDV in white NBHD			-.021 (.068)	
Black INDV in Hispanic NBHD			.398 (.330)	
Black INDV in White NBHD			-.078 (.063)	
Black INDV in Black NBHD				.149 (.059)*
White INDV in White NBHD				.310 (.040)***
Hispanic INDV in Hispanic NBHD				.472 (.199)*
Socio-economic factors				
Income less than $30 k, INDV	.022 (.044)	.024 (.044)	.008 (.044)	.007 (.044)
Income $100 k or more, INDV	.111 (.043)*	.111 (.043)*	.115 (.043)**	.110 (.043)
Renter, INDV	-.053 (.045)	-.050 (.045)	-.058 (.045)	-.043 (.045)
Single-parent household %, NBHD	-.038 (.028)	-.043 (.028)	-.076 (.025)**	-.056 (.026)
Median household income, NBHD	.008 (.031)	.005 (.031)	.026 (.030)	.019 (.030)
Renter %, NBHD	.058 (.029)*	.065 (.029)*	.055 (.029)	.057 (.029)
Unemployed counts, NBHD	-.016 (.023)	-.014 (.024)	-.032 (.023)	-.028 (.023)
Demographic factors				
Age 34 or younger, INDV	.086 (.041)*	.085 (.041)*	.093 (.041)*	.093 (.041)
Age 65 or older, INDV	.114 (.045)*	.113 (.045)*	.105 (.045)*	.117 (.045)
Female, INDV	-.096 (.032)**	-.095 (.032)**	-.101 (.032)**	-.107 (.032)
Population size, NBHD	.058 (.025)*	.061 (.025)*	.080 (.024)**	.070 (.024)
Age 34 or younger %, NBHD	-.064 (.033)	-.064 (.033)	-.038 (.032)	-.046 (.033)
Age 65 or older %, NBHD	-.007 (.030)	-.007 (.030)	-.009 (.029)	-.010 (.030)
Time fixed-effect factors				
Summer	-.038 (.035)	-.036 (.035)	-.029 (.035)	-.035 (.035)
Year 2012	-.037 (.048)	-.038 (.048)	-.042 (.048)	-.038 (.048)
Year 2013	.039 (.048)	.037 (.048)	.030 (.048)	.037 (.048)
Year 2014	.218 (.055)***	.228 (.055)***	.216 (.055)***	.209 (.055)
−2 Log-Likelihood	37211.113	37201.901	37197.38	37170.314
Max-rescaled Pseudo R^2	0.0536	0.0543	0.0546	0.0567
Likelihood Ratio (Pr > F)	26.14*** df = 26	25.52*** df = 27	23.91*** df = 29	28.82*** df = 25

Note: figures in parentheses are standard errors. Statistically significant at * < 0.05 ** < 0.01 *** < 0.0001. NBHD neighborhood level variable, INDV individual level variable.

disorderly environment can be a strong proxy for nonracial neighborhood safety factors. This gives us a reason to take into consideration the extensive list of various variables that this study specifies.

4. Results

4.1. Racial stereotype amplification

Table 3 (segregation models) and Table 4 (racial moderation models) present the ordered logistic models. Segregation models (models 1–4) focus on the safety perceptions in racially segregated neighborhoods (> 50 percent), and racial moderation models (models 5–8) look at interactions between neighborhood racial compositions and crime-related variables. Table 5 summarizes the odd ratios of the statistically significant variables in various models. As expected, the violent crime standardized score is statistically significant and negatively associated with the public safety feeling ($p < 0.01$ or $p < 0.0001$). However, its substantive association is relatively weaker (see Table 5 for odd ratios of other standardized variables).

The percentage of Black residents in neighborhoods is found to be negatively associated with safety perception in Model 1 and

Table 4
Racial moderation model results.

(DV: satisfaction with overall feeling of public safety)	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Crime factors				
Violent crime factor score, NBHD	-.050 (.018)**		-.102 (.023)***	
Crime victim, INDV	-.750 (.049)***	-.751 (.049)***	-.754 (.049)***	-.751 (.049)***
White victim counts, NBHD		-.077 (.022)**		-.073 (.022)**
Black victim counts, NBHD		.015 (.023)		.012 (.023)
Physical signs factors				
Disorder factor score, NBHD	-.025 (.020)	-.024 (.020)	-.037 (.023)	-.037 (.023)
Housing % before 1970, NBHD	-.070 (.021)**	-.072 (.021)**	-.066 (.021)**	-.070 (.021)**
Vacant housing %, NBHD	-.066 (.027)*	-.069 (.027)*	-.069 (.027)*	-.066 (.027)*
Racial factors				
White INDV	.095 (.042)*	.094 (.042)*	.092 (.042)*	.095 (.042)*
Hispanic INDV	.051 (.061)	.049 (.061)	.042 (.061)	.044 (.061)
Black %, NBHD	-.012 (.039)	-.027 (.039)	-.021 (.039)	-.034 (.039)
Hispanic %, NBHD	.024 (.028)	.034 (.028)	.060 (.030)*	.067 (.030)*
Racial Moderation factors				
White INDV* Black % NBHD	-.234 (.044)***	-.229 (.044)***	-.216 (.044)***	-.221 (.044)***
White INDV* Hispanic % NBHD	-.114 (.035)**	-.114 (.035)**	-.110 (.035)**	-.111 (.034)**
Violent crime score* Black % NBHD			.061 (.017)**	
Violent crime score* Hispanic % NBHD			-.001 (.028)	
Disorder score* Black % NBHD			.021 (.016)	.021 (.016)
Disorder score* Hispanic % NBHD			-.036 (.015)*	-.037 (.015)*
Socio-economic factors				
Income less than $30 k, INDV	.012 (.044)	.015 (.044)	.011 (.044)	.012 (.044)
Income $100 k or more, INDV	.105 (.043)*	.106 (.043)*	.106 (.043)*	.107 (.043)*
Renter, INDV	-.052 (.045)	-.050 (.045)	-.051 (.045)	-.049 (.045)
Single-parent household %, NBHD	-.031 (.028)	-.035 (.028)	-.033 (.028)	-.031 (.028)
Median household income, NBHD	-.004 (.031)	-.007 (.031)	.006 (.031)	-.001 (.031)
Renter %, NBHD	.071 (.029)*	.076 (.029)**	.085 (.030)**	.076 (.030)*
Unemployed counts, NBHD	-.012 (.023)	-.009 (.024)	-.027 (.023)	-.015 (.024)
Demographic factors				
Age 34 or younger, INDV	.092 (.041)*	-.061 (.033)	.089 (.041)*	.091 (.041)*
Age 65 or older, INDV	.115 (.045)*	-.015 (.030)	.115 (.045)*	.116 (.045)*
Female, INDV	-.103 (.032)**	-.103 (.032)**	-.105 (.032)*	-.103 (.032)**
Population size, NBHD	.055 (.025)*	.058 (.025)*	.063 (.025)*	.063 (.025)*
Age 34 or younger %, NBHD	-.061 (.033)	-.061 (.033)	-.045 (.033)	-.060 (.033)
Age 65 or older %, NBHD	-.014 (.030)	-.015 (.030)	-.008 (.030)	-.014 (.030)
Time fixed-effect factors				
Summer	-.037 (.035)	-.036 (.035)	-.033 (.035)	-.035 (.035)
Year 2012	-.039 (.048)	-.039 (.048)	-.045 (.048)	-.044 (.048)
Year 2013	.034 (.048)	.032 (.048)	.029 (.048)	.028 (.048)
Year 2014	.208 (.055)**	.217 (.055)***	.210 (.055)**	.211 (.055)**
−2 Log-Likelihood	37174.862	37167.03	37148.165	37155.532
Max-rescaled Pseudo R^2	0.0564	0.0570	0.0584	0.0578
Likelihood Ratio (Pr > F)	25.57*** df = 28	24.96*** df = 29	23.21*** df = 32	23.72*** df = 31

Note: figures in parentheses are standard errors. Statistically significant at * < 0.05 ** < 0.01 *** < 0.0001. NBHD neighborhood level variable, INDV individual level variable.

Model 2 ($p < 0.01$ in both models) after controlling extensive crime-related variables and other socio-economic and demographic factors. Further, the odds ratios show that the racial factor is more substantive than the neighborhood violent crime standardized score (see Table 5). This finding confirms that public perception of public safety in Kansas City has disproportionately associated Blackness with public safety concerns. This confirms Hypothesis 1, showing that racial stereotype is present and has amplified the perception of public safety problems.

4.2. Dissimilar racial group threat

The presence of perceived racial group threat is also found to be significant. Model 3 shows that White individuals in Black neighborhoods feel less safe ($p < 0.01$) after controlling for other factors. They also feel less safe in Hispanic neighborhoods ($p < 0.05$). This dissimilar racial threat hypothesis is further confirmed in models 5, 6, 7, and 8, which show that the interaction terms between White individuals and Black or Hispanic resident percentage are statistically significantly and negative—White residents do not just feel less satisfied with public safety in highly segregated racial minority neighborhoods, but also that this negative feeling is likely to increase as the racial dissimilarity to their own race increases (see Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). On the other hand, Hispanic and Blacks do not have the same feeling when they live in racially dissimilar neighborhoods.

It is interesting to note that while White individuals respond more seriously and negatively to the racially dissimilar context, all races tend to respond positively to racial similarity and feel safer in neighborhoods that have more residents of their own respective

Table 5
Odds ratios of statistically significant variables.

(DV: satisfaction with overall feeling of public safety)	Scale (unit)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Violent crime factor score, NBHD	STD	0.952			0.952	0.951		0.903	
Crime victim, INDV	DMY	0.468	0.468	0.472	0.470	0.472	0.472	0.471	0.472
White victim counts, NBHD	STD		0.921	0.928			0.926		0.930
Housing % before 1970, NBHD	STD	0.924	0.923	0.929	0.932	0.932	0.930	0.937	0.932
Vacant housing %, NBHD	STD	0.945	0.942	0.915	0.934	0.936	0.933	0.933	0.937
White INDV	DMY					1.100	1.099	1.096	1.100
Black %, NBHD	STD	0.908	0.897						
Hispanic %, NBHD	STD							1.062	1.069
White INDV in Black NBHD	DMY			0.751					
White INDV in Hispanic NBHD	DMY			0.670					
Black INDV in Black NBHD	DMY				1.160				
White INDV in White NBHD	DMY				1.364				
Hispanic INDV in Hispanic NBHD	DMY				1.604				
Income less than $30 k, INDV	DMY	1.117	1.117	1.122	1.117	1.111	1.111	1.112	1.113
Single-parent %, NBHD	STD			0.927	0.946				
Renter %, NBHD	STD	1.060	1.067			1.073	1.079	1.088	1.079
Age 34 or younger, INDV	DMY	1.090	1.089	1.098	1.098	1.096		1.094	1.096
Age 65 or older, INDV	DMY	1.121	1.120	1.111	1.124	1.121		1.122	1.123
Female, INDV	DMY	0.909	0.909	0.904	0.898	0.902	0.902	0.900	0.902
Population size of block group, NBHD	STD	1.060	1.063	1.084	1.072	1.057	1.059	1.065	1.065
Year 2014	DMY	1.244	1.256	1.241	1.233	1.231	1.243	1.234	1.234

Note: STD standardized continuous variable, DMY dummy variable, NBHD neighborhood level variable, INDV individual level variable.

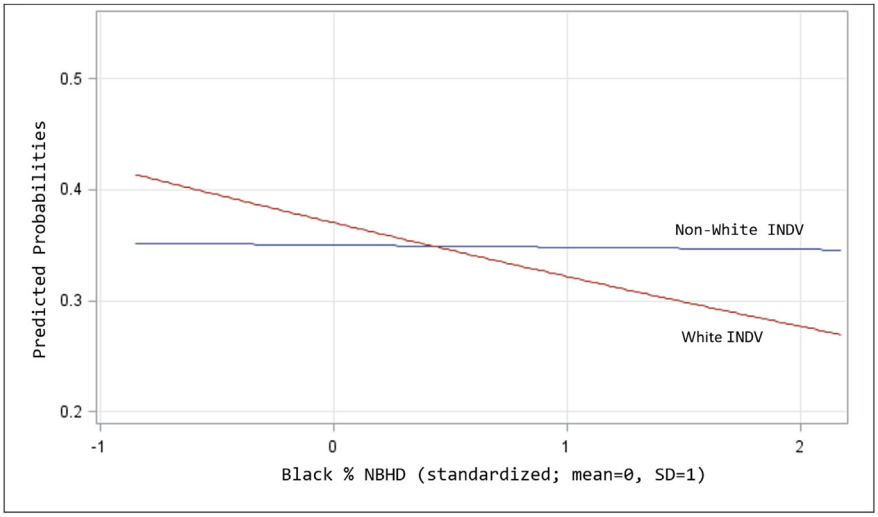

Fig. 2. Interactive Relationship between Black Percentage in Neighborhood and White/Non-White Individual (predicted probabilities: "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with public safety).
Note: Black % NBHD (Mean = 27.22, SD = 31.89) are standardized (Mean = 0, SD = 1).

races (see Table 4). Figs. 2 and 3 show these relationships and compares the responses between Whites and non-Whites by displaying the predicted probability of feeling "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with public safety when the level of minority population percentage changes.

4.3. Desensitization to violence in Black communities

While there is crime stereotyping against Black residents, Model 7 shows that the interaction term between neighborhood violent crime score and the percentage of Black neighborhood is positive and statistically significant. This finding implies that if violent crimes happen in Black neighborhoods, residents perceive this problem less seriously (see Fig. 4), confirming Hypothesis 2—there is desensitization to violent crimes in Black neighborhoods. The desensitization is not found among Hispanic neighborhoods in Kansas City.

Devaluation of Black victimization is also found in the models 2, 3, 6, and 8. While the number of White victims is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and negatively associated with public safety perception, Black victimization has no statistically significant relationship. These findings suggest that either Black victimization may be less reported by the media in Kansas City and given less

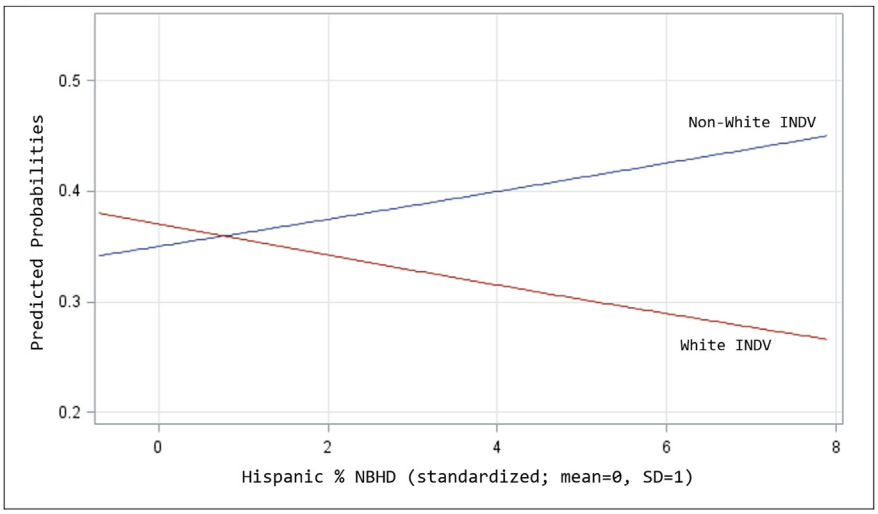

Fig. 3. Interactive Relationship between Hispanic Percentage in Neighborhood and White/Non-White Individual (predicted probabilities: "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with public safety).
Note: Hispanic % NBHD (Mean = 7.49, SD = 9.84) are standardized (Mean = 0, SD = 1).

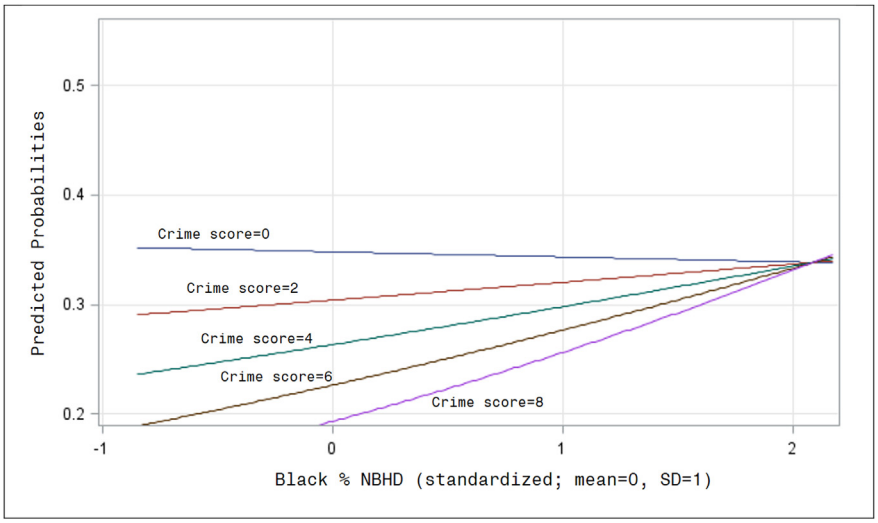

Fig. 4. Interactive Relationship between Black Percentage in Neighborhood and Violent Crime Factor Score (predicted probabilities: "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with public safety).
Note: Black % NBHD (Mean = 27.22, SD = 31.89) are standardized (Mean = 0, SD = 1).

public attention, or people have become 'numbed' and have 'tuned-out' emotionally to Black victimization in violent crimes (Hypothesis 3). They become more on guard, however, if the level of white victimization increases. These results confirm our hypotheses of desensitization of crimes against Blacks and in Black neighborhoods.

5. Discussion: Black villains and white victims?

The results above confirm the presence of amplified racial stereotyping of crimes and support the dissimilar group threat theories that associate personal safety concerns with the presence of (racially dissimilar) minority residents amongst White residents. Hispanics living in Black neighborhoods do not feel less satisfied with public safety, and Blacks living in Hispanic-majority neighborhoods also do not perceive any difference in public safety that is statistically significant. Socioeconomic conditions in a neighborhood, such as median income level and the unemployment rate, do not present any statistically significant association with safety perception, after controlling for racial composition and crime rates. This result is consistent with the long-standing hypothesis in the field that economic and poverty conditions of neighborhoods are hard to gauge based only on appearance, and that people will use other visual clues such as race to estimate the risk of criminal victimization. What is also concerning is the finding that the negative impact of violent crime in Black neighborhoods and among Black victims has had a desensitization effect. This collective cognition

may lead to less emotional energy and motivation to act to fight for changes in Black neighborhoods that structurally face more socio-economic challenges. In the long run, it may reinforce the long-term community degradation and racial segregation in these neighborhoods and create a vicious cycle of criminal activities, poverty, and racial stereotyping of crime.

The disproportional fear of minority groups amongst Whites can also have other long-term structural consequences on communities and policymaking. For example, since Whites as a social group have more economic resources and access to power, they may put more pressure on local police departments to pursue harsher, even punitive, actions in minority neighborhoods to combat crime and require higher rates of vigilance over minority residents. Disproportional patrols (or stop-and-frisk) and racial targeting may in turn lead to more police incidents and reinforce the negative stereotypes of minority residents (Engel and Johnson, 2006; Engel et al., 2012; Fagan, 2017). A recent study on the regional racial biases of residents also showed that the racial biases of White residents are associated with disproportionately more use of lethal force by police officers on Black residents (Hehman et al., 2017).

As a result of this disproportional racial targeting, Black residents may feel unfairly treated and become even more frustrated with the police (Alpert et al., 2005; Hagan et al., 2005; Weitzer and Tuch, 2005). This cycle is likely to hurt the police-minority relationship and lead to public confrontations with the police (Glaser, 2006). Given the presence of racial stereotyping, policymakers and community leaders in urban areas like Kansas City need to recognize the socio-psychological challenge and confront it directly and openly (Ho and Cho, 2017). Only through evidence-based community efforts can biased and misinformed perceptions be corrected to improve the quality of decision-making (Ho, 2011; Porumbescu et al., 2018; Ridgeway, 2017; Sherman, 2013).

It is interesting to notice that the drivers of public safety perceptions seem to differ between racial groups. While there is evidence for minority threat arguments as discussed above, the broken windows factor seems to be more important to Hispanic residents. The findings in model 7 and model 8[5] show that the negative impact of neighborhood physical disorders is augmented in neighborhoods with a larger Hispanic population (see Fig. 5), but such an impact is not statistically significant among neighborhoods that have more Black residents.

6. Conclusion

Despite the presence of extensive literature on perceptions of safety and race, not many studies have examined how different racial dynamics play a role in perceptions of safety. Our findings, using multiple large datasets from Kansas City, confirm hypotheses of racial stereotype amplification, desensitization to violence in Black communities, dissimilar racial group threat, and devaluation of Black victimization of violent crime. The findings have significant social and policy implications that should be addressed. They also illustrate the complexity of racial perceptions of public safety issues in American society.

Our findings also suggest that more policy and community actions are needed to help local residents, especially White residents, understand the complex relationships between race, socio-economic conditions, and crime. More public education and information campaigns are needed to counter existing racial stereotypes and provide a higher degree of understanding and empathy for minority neighborhoods that are struggling with many economic and social problems (Noguera, 2009; Peffley et al., 1997). Without proactive information initiatives on these issues, there is a danger that racial amplification of crime may become perpetual and institutionalized by the economic, social, and political structures of a community.

Future research should consider this study's limitations to further examine the suggested hypotheses. Respondents' perceptions of city-wide safety may be driven by experiences outside of their neighborhood, and the current analysis has limited explanations for this influence. Mostly notably in this regard; the effect of news and media is what we speculate to be beyond our results and data, because our survey did not include questions on respondents' exposure to news and media, although we suspect that the biased image of Blacks therein may be a significant source of racial stereotype amplification. Another limitation is the nature of reported crime data from police department, as well as the reported nuisance variable from the city's administrative data, because a potential critique of these indices may be the problem of not measuring differences in citizens' collective efficacy or advocacy, which may be nested in the levels of crime and nuisance problems ‘reported’ to city administrators. In terms of model specification, future studies may consider developing analyses on more complicated relationships such as three-way interactions between race- and crime-related variables as well as curvilinear relationships. For instance, other than crime- or race-related variables, the survey asked questions about income and age as categorical questions, and a future study may find different linear or curvilinear relationships with variables measured in continuous scale. This research also has limited generalizability since the data we used is from a mid-sized Midwestern city in U.S., and future studies should test the suggested hypotheses in different regional/geographical, administrative, and political contexts.

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[5] In the model 8, the violent crime variable is dropped because the multicollinearity with victim count variables can be problematic (VIF > 2.50).

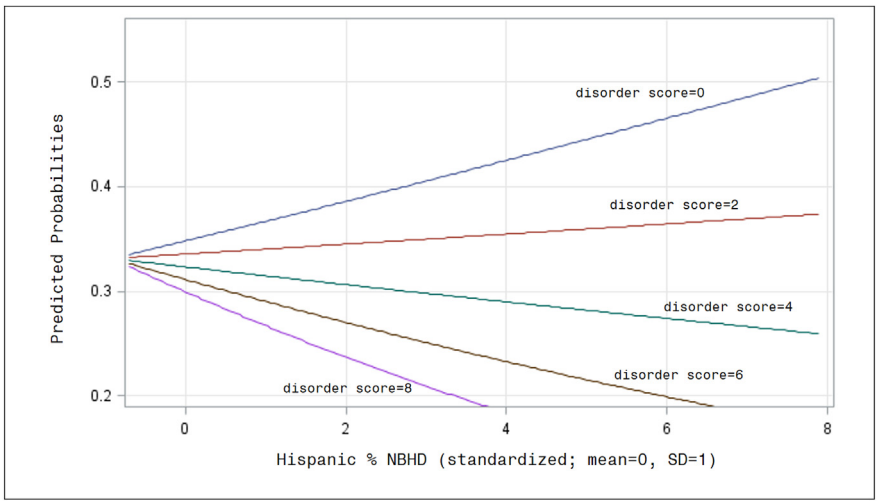

Fig. 5. Interactive Relationship between Hispanic Percentage in Neighborhood and Neighborhood Disorder Factor Score (predicted probabilities: "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with public safety).
Note: Hispanic % NBHD (Mean = 7.49, SD = 9.84) are standardized (Mean = 0, SD = 1).

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