2016-01-01

The Persistent Fear Of Crime In A Safe Metropolitan Area: The Continual Impact Of Social Disorganization

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THE PERSISTENT FEAR OF CRIME IN A SAFE METROPOLITAN AREA:
THE CONTINUAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

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THE PERSISTENT FEAR OF CRIME IN A SAFE METROPOLITAN AREA: THE CONTINUAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION

by

GUILLERMO RIVAS

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2016
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Cristina Morales, Dr. Theodore Curry, Dr. Michael Zarate, and Dr. Howard Campbell for pushing me to achieve my best. I would also like to thank all the professors of the Sociology Department at UTEP for their expert intellect and willingness to share their knowledge and experience with the students of the department. Without the support and encouragement from my wife and my family, this achievement would have not been possible.
Abstract

While the association between physical and social disorder on crime have been established (Skogan, 1990), it is less clear how they influence fear of crime. Fear of crime is important to consider given that it can decrease both physical and mental health (Gee & Payne-Sturges, 2004). Utilizing data based on a randomly selected household survey in El Paso County, Texas (N= 1,070) I seek to examine the influence of physical and social disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime. OLS linear regression results illustrate the persistent impact of physical and social disorders regardless of neighborhood characteristics of poverty and Hispanic density. Social cohesion, on the other hand, only decreases fear of crime among individuals who live in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. This study concludes by drawing implications for social disorganization theory and studies on fear of crime and actual crime.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements........................................................................................................ iii

Abstract......................................................................................................................... iv

Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... v

List of Tables ................................................................................................................ vii

Chapter

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review ....................................................... 4

3. Research Methods ..................................................................................................... 12
   3.1 Sampling ............................................................................................................... 12
   3.2 Context.................................................................................................................. 13
   3.3 Operationalization of Theoretical Concepts ..................................................... 13
       Dependent Variable ............................................................................................... 13
       Independent Variables ......................................................................................... 14
       Control Variables ................................................................................................. 17
   3.4 Analytic Strategy ................................................................................................. 18

4. Results ......................................................................................................................... 21
   4.1 Descriptive and Bivariate Analysis .................................................................... 21
   4.2 Test for Multicollinearity ..................................................................................... 24
   4.3 OLS Linear Regression Analysis ....................................................................... 24
   4.4 The Effects of Neighborhood Context on Individual Levels of Fear of Crime  26

5. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 32
6. List of References ........................................................................................................... 35

Appendix A: Variance Inflation Factor Tables......................................................... 41

Curriculum Vita .................................................................................................................. 42
List of Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Measures ................................................................. 21
Table 2: Correlations between Measures ....................................................................... 23
Table 3: OLS Linear Regression Base Models ............................................................... 25
Table 4: OLS Regression Examining the Influence of Concentrate Poverty and Physical and Social Disorder on Fear of Crime ................................................................. 27
Table 5: OLS Regression Examining the Influence of Hispanic Density on Disorder and Social Cohesion on Fear of Crime ............................................................................. 29
Chapter 1: Introduction

Deviant acts within neighborhoods produce many more objectionable results than simply crime; fear is one byproduct that may be cultivated from such mischievous acts. Interestingly, fear of crime is increased throughout the United States despite significant declines in actual crime rates (Kohm, et al., 2012). Fear of crime, in turn, has several social and psychological effects. For instance, fear of crime is shown to decrease cohesion among residents and stimulate the deterioration of neighborhoods (Skogan, 1986). Fear of crime is also associated with producing psychological stress as well as poor overall health for individuals residing in these afflicted areas (Ross, 1993). An example of how this stress affects neighborhood residents is evident in the investigation done by Smolej and Kivivuori (2006) who argue that individuals’ daily routes may circumvent specific neighborhood areas due to the fear of possibly becoming victimized. Groups such as nonwhites and the poor, who live in disorganized communities characterized by high crime rates, are more afraid of becoming victimized than groups who tend to live in dissimilar areas (Ross, 1993). It will be interesting to test if similar results are replicated given the densely Hispanic setting that my research takes place in.

Fear of crime may cultivate a mindset among individuals which encourages a sedentary-lifestyle; producing reductions in physical activity which in turn decreases lifespan (Ross, 1993; Berkman & Breslow, 1983). Gee and Payne-Sturges (2004) find that stressors such as social disorder and fear may not only cause illness by weakening the body’s ability to fight off external challenges, but also are accountable for declines in mental health as well. Fear of crime must be understood to diminish the negative affects it has on both our mental and physical wellbeing.

The primary objectives of this study are two-fold. First, to consider the impact that disorders (commonly associated with social disorganization theory) have on individual levels of
fear of crime. Hunter’s (1978) initial study of signs of neighborhood incivilities such as social and physical disorder and lack of social cohesion has led many researchers to observe these items and others associated with them individually. There have been many different incivilities (or disorders) used to gauge social disorganization in relation to fear of crime, such as lack of neighborhood cohesion and physical deterioration (Hartnagel, 1979; Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Skogan, 1991; Smith & Sturgis, 2011; Markowitz et al., 2001; Lewis & Maxfield, 1980). I am particularly interested in three features stemming from social disorganization theory: social disorder, physical disorder, and low social cohesion. Physical disorder concerns the appearance of a community, social disorder concerns activities within the community and social cohesion considers the relationships between residents (Skogan, 1990). These three features are also commonly known as incivilities (Scarborough et al., 2010; Zhao, 2010). These incivilities are indicators of a socially disorganized neighborhood and in some incidents may become catalysts in the production of crime (Skogan, 1990). Answering the call for social disorganization to be investigated at more than the neighborhood-level, I will draw on the theory’s theoretical foundation to examine the association between individual perceptions of various disorders throughout their neighborhood in relation to their reported level of fear of crime (Ross et al., 2000; Porter et al., 2011).

The secondary objectives of this research are to build upon the social disorganization and fear of crime literature. This will be done by examining if living with co-ethnics as well as social class are intervening factors shaping the association between neighborhood disorder and fear of crime. In particular, I will examine whether Hispanics (primarily Mexican-origin) feel safer in co-ethnic neighborhoods regardless of the level of social disorganization. Since 2003 Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the United States, requiring more research
on crime and fear of crime among this population; establishing a contribution to the social disorganization theory and fear of crime literature (Chon, 2003). While ethnic enclaves have been associated with solidarity and protection from exploitation in the labor market context, there is some disagreement about the protective value of sharing ethnicity (Morales 2009). In the case of the fear of crime, we have limited knowledge whether sharing ethnicity with your neighbors is associated with a decrease in fear of crime, regardless of the level of disorder in the neighborhood.

In regards to social class, poverty will be examined to observe if it affects individual levels of fear of crime as well. The literature on poverty is consistent with the notion that those living in poverty fear crime more than their counterparts; who are typically wealthy, non-minorities (Pantazis, 2000). As Scarborough et al. (2010) declare, persons who are economically disadvantaged are forced to live in neighborhoods with high levels of disorder. These two secondary objectives will be crucial in understanding how exactly how SDT affects fear of crime among individuals along the U.S.-Mexico Border.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, first I will discuss social disorganization theory and its implications for fear of crime. Second, I will discuss disorders (social and physical) and social cohesion factors that have been examined outside of the social disorganization theoretical framework. Third, I consider whether the association between social and physical disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime for individuals is mediated by residing in poverty and similarly ethnic areas.

Social Disorganization Theory and Fear of Crime

Social disorganization theory (SDT) was first coined by Clifford X. Shaw and Henry W. McKay (1942) while investigating juvenile delinquency and the rapid social changes that Chicago, Illinois had been going through at that time. Shaw and McKay (1942) concluded that high delinquency rates remained throughout Chicago despite the changes in racial and ethnic composition. This observation was found to be associated with neighborhood ecological conditions such as delinquencies and disorders which were influencing crime rates (Shaw & McKay, 1942). SDT continues to be relevant today and is presently defined as the inability of local communities to cultivate cohesion and solve commonly experienced problems, thus leading to further crime (Kubrin, 2003).

A concern of SDT is that to date the theory is applied to major crimes (such as murder and rape) while minor infractions (such as drinking in public and vandalism) have been neglected (Markowitz et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2011). These minor infractions have been proven to weaken social ties by reducing social cohesion among neighborhood residents, which may ultimately lead to a socially disorganized community (Porter et al., 2011; Markowitz et al., 2001, Skogan, 1990). Minor crimes such as these are similarly known as incivilities and disorder (Skogan, 1990). This is relevant for my research given that such minor forms of crime not only
weaken the community, but have also been proven heighten fear of crime among individuals (Markowits et al., 2001). My research will also seek to examine the association between social disorganization and fear of crime, which is greatly understudied at individual levels of analysis.

SDT’s effect on fear of crime has received considerable scholarly attention. Communities with high levels of characteristics originating from SDT were found to have high levels of fear of crime as well as other social problems throughout (Porter et al., 2012). Sampson et al. (1989) state that SDT characteristics positively influence fear of crime especially when social ties and values between neighbors erode. Well recognized in the SDT arena, the research done by Markowitz et al. (2001) focused on the relationship between specific concepts such as neighborhood cohesion, social ties, and disorder, on fear of crime which are also commonly the focus of other contemporary research involving social disorganization theory. The results produced by Markowitz et al., (2001) suggest that the disorder characteristics (i.e. noisy neighbors or loud parties, teenagers hanging around on the streets, drunks or tramps on the streets, rubbish and litter lying about, and vandalism or graffiti) produce increased levels of fear.

**Incivilities and Fear of Crime**

The above section described the origins of the relationship between SDT and fear of crime. I will now go into detail about the aspects of SDT that this study will use in relation to fear of crime and how they have been individually studied. In this section, I discuss social cohesion and disorder (both social and physical) associated with the theory as well as the possible consequences of each feature. I also include a section explaining the effect that similar ethnic density may have on levels of fear of crime.
Social Disorders

Fear of crime is linked to social disorder traits such as loitering, public drunkenness, litter, and vandalism (LaGrange et al., 1992; Lewis and Maxfield 1980; Perkins and Taylor 1996). Latkin and Curry (2003) discovered a relationship between drug use as being a problem throughout respondent’s neighborhoods and groups of teenagers hanging out in the streets as influential to fear of crime among residents. Giving support to the negative impact of fear on crime, Latkin and Curry (2003) coined the term “neighborhood level stressors” to categorize characteristics which influence fear of crime such as these examples. Groups loitering within the streets may be classified as neighborhood level stressors; promoting not only social disorganization but also reducing quality of life throughout neighborhoods (Hunter, 1978).

Physical Disorders

Most research on social disorganization theory involves physical disorder in some form (Skogan, 1986; LaGrange et al., 1992; Zhao et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2011). Some visual signs of physical deterioration among a neighborhood include junk/trash in vacant lots, boarded up buildings, stripped and abandoned cars, prostitution, panhandling, public drinking, verbal harassment of women, open gambling and drug use (Hunter, 1978; Gardner, 1980; Lewis and Maxfield, 1980; Taub et al., 1981; Porter et al., 2011). Stemming from the broken windows theory, this notion ascertains that certain characteristics of a neighborhood’s physical environment stigmatize it in a way which produces fear of crime in both residents and outsiders alike (Skogan, 1990). These physical “signs of incivility” lead people to make negative inferences about an area and those who inhabit it (Hunter, 1978). This brings me to my initial Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Social disorder will be positively associated with levels of fear of crime.
Hypothesis 2: Physical disorder will be positively associated with levels of fear of crime.

Social Cohesion

Just as social disorganization theory has evolved, so have notions of social cohesion. Accepted definitions of the term have varied throughout time such as Lockwood’s (1992) focus on altruism, or Bollen and Hoyle’s (1990) dual perspectives of objective and perceived cohesion. Bollen and Hoyle (1990) state that the objective element refers to the “closeness” that residents feel to others within their neighborhood, and the perceived aspect refers to how the individual resident views their own standing and belonging within the group (Bollen and Howle, 1990). An all-encompassing definition proposed by Chan et al., (2006) describes social cohesion as:

“…a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations” (p.298).

Social cohesion among a neighborhood is studied at both micro and macro levels (among policy makers and academics alike), however contemporary works on the subject highlight the influence that individual attitudes regarding cohesion may have on the neighborhood as a whole. Common characteristics associated with social cohesion include membership attitudes, common values, trust, social ties and general altruism among neighbors (Skogan, 1990). A community lacking social values refers to a breakdown of bonds and social networks (both formal and informal) among a neighborhood (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Skogan, 1990). Janowitz (1975) defines common values among neighborhoods as a collective pursuit of morals which are rewarding and meaningful.
Associated with common values is the concept of social ties. Ross and Jang (2000) emphasize that social ties buffer the effects of social disorganization and may reduce fear of crime among neighborhood residents. Social ties determine the degree to which neighbors chat, visit, help or lend one another things (Ross & Jang, 2000). These ties have been proven to mediate the relationship between neighborhood conditions as well as reduce crime (Kubrin, 2003). A neighborhood lacking this crucial characteristic may lead itself to social disorganization and possible increases in crimes (Kubrin, 2003), which brings me to my second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3*: Social cohesion will be inversely associated with fear of crime.

**Neighborhood Context**

It is well established that poverty increases fear of crime (see Skogan, 1990; Scarborough et al., 2010). According to Pantazis (2000), when researching fear of crime, the discussion is consistently concerned with the findings that women, people living in old age and those living in poverty are generally more fearful of crime than others. The reason why those groups may be more fearful of crime is due to one characteristic that they all have in common: vulnerability.

Vulnerability is studied in union with many other concepts such as disease, attraction, marginalization, and fear of crime. Offering a definition to the concept of vulnerability (when associated with fear of crime), Franklin (2008) states that previous literature has argued that those who feel unable to protect themselves, including economically, are more prone to report higher levels of fear than those who feel that they have the abilities for self-protection. The reasons as to why those living in poverty have higher levels of fear is in part due the inability to protect their homes, the lengthy amount of time it would take to recover from a crime, putting their economic and social positions in jeopardy, and an overall lack of social resources which
may aid in the coping of victimization (Franklin, 2008; Pantazis, 2000; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Baumer, 1978; Clement & Kleiman, 1977; Taylor & Hale, 1986; Will & McGrath, 1995). Moreover, people living in poverty lack the economic privilege to reside in gated communities like their counterparts do, and are thus “class-based excluded” and marginalized (Low, 2001).

Therefore, I will also examine whether the association between social and physical disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime is only restricted to individuals living in poverty neighborhoods. Specifically, I will seek to discover how social and physical disorders function in poverty as well as low to no poverty neighborhoods. Furthermore, as Skogan (1990) states, not only are both forms of disorder most common in poor areas, but they are also tied to indicators of neighborhood cohesion as well. In agreement with Skogan, Pantazis (2000) asserts that people living in poverty lack the social networks enjoyed by others which may aid in the dissipation of disorders throughout their neighborhood. This brings me to my next hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Social disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 5: Physical disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 6: Social cohesion decreases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Throughout America today it is easy to see how barricaded residences have become. Walls are being built around homes and businesses to keep others who “do not belong” out. Places like country clubs, resorts and even suburban developments are safeguarded by walls to keep others out. These “others” are typically labeled as poor, non-whites who the discriminators believe that they need to protect themselves from (Low, 2001). Indeed, the concept of “white
flight,” where white residents leave these ethnically shifting neighborhoods for areas with more whites where they feel safe and secure is well established in the literature (e.g., Low, 2001).

Another neighborhood contextual concept of interest is Hispanic density. Most work done on the racial and ethnic concentration on fear of crime focuses on Blacks (Massey, 1990). The literature found that Blacks living in primarily Black communities characterized by poverty and crime have higher levels of fear of crime (Massey, 1990; Covington & Taylor, 1991). With limited attention given to a growing Hispanic population, the question arises: do social and physical disorders function differently in Hispanic dense neighborhoods?

I will also conduct an exploratory analysis examining the interaction between physical and social disorders and Hispanic density on fear of crime. There is less consensus about whether Hispanic density is a protective factor or associated with the segregated and marginalized communities (see Morales, 2009). Chiricos et al. (2001), lead the way in studying how Hispanic and Hispanic density may impact fear of crime. With Hispanic population projected to outgrow Blacks, Chiricos et al. (2001) assert that it is important to assess whether this growing minority will come to pose a perceived criminal threat, while also receiving the negative stigma commonly associated with Blacks as perpetrators of crime. I draw some insights from the Hispanic race and ethnicity literature suggesting that sharing ethnicity is a protective factor (Elliot & Smith, 2001; Hum, 2000; Morales, 2009). I will conduct an exploratory analysis on how physical and social disorder and social cohesion interact with different levels of Hispanic density. Based on insights from the literature, I hypothesis that:

**Hypothesis 7:** Social disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in neighborhoods that have high vs. low Hispanic density.
Hypothesis 8: Physical disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in neighborhoods that have high vs. low Hispanic density.

Hypothesis 9: Social cohesion decreases fear of crime for individuals living in high vs. low Hispanic density neighborhoods.

Summary of Hypotheses

Based on insights from the literature, I developed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Social disorder will be positively associated with levels of fear of crime.

Hypothesis 2: Physical disorder will be positively associated with levels of fear of crime.

Hypothesis 3: Social cohesion will be inversely associated with fear of crime.

Hypothesis 4: Social disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 5: Physical disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 6: Social cohesion decreases fear of crime for individuals living in poverty vs. non-poverty neighborhoods.

Hypothesis 7: Social disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in neighborhoods that have high vs. low Hispanic density.

Hypothesis 8: Physical disorder increases fear of crime for individuals living in neighborhoods that have high vs. low Hispanic density.
Hypothesis 9: Social cohesion decreases fear of crime for individuals living in high vs. low Hispanic density neighborhoods.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

Sampling

The data utilized for this study is part of a larger project examining the relationship of immigration and crime (NSF grant 1251897, PI Dr. Theodore Curry, Co-PI Dr. Cristina Morales, and Co-PI Dr. Harmon Hosch). The data were collected using the random sampling method within neighborhood clusters throughout El Paso County between March to August 2014. The research team followed Robert Sampson’s (1997) methodology in his Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) to construct neighborhood clusters. The measurement of observed areas or “neighborhoods” is notoriously ambiguous to define. The neighborhoods utilized in this study are based on “clusters” consisting of census tracts along with local knowledge to construct 95 neighborhood clusters. Out of the 95 cluster sampling, 44 neighborhood clusters were randomly selected. From each cluster a total of twenty households were selected to participate, producing 1,070 survey responses. Of these 1,070 useable surveys, I have utilized 1,025 of them. The rational for this process will follow.

Each of the twenty households were mailed a notification letter (printed in both English and Spanish) stating they had been randomly selected to participate in the study and notifying them when the surveyors would visit their residence. Upon successful completion of each survey, the respondent was compensated with $20 which was also identified within the initial contact letter. Respondents were interviewed personally by a surveyor and the survey contained a map to make the respondent aware of how their neighborhood was operationalized.
Context

With a predominately Hispanics population of 82.2%, the city of El Paso, Texas has been recognized as one of the safest cities in the U.S. for three years in a row (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; City Crime Rankings, 2014; Borunda, 2013). As Madriz (1997) states, most studies in the United States regarding criminology tend to focus on whites and Blacks, neglecting the growing Hispanic population. This context of safety and having a predominate Hispanic population makes El Paso as an ideal context to examine the persistence of fear of crime.

Operationalization of Theoretical Concepts

This section will explain the operationalization of fear of crime and key variables (i.e. those associated with social disorganization theory,) as well as the control variables for this research. These features will be organized in terms of dependent, independent, and control variables. The following is an explanation of how these variables are operationalized within this study beginning with my dependent variable fear of crime.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is fear of crime. Fear of crime is based on individual perceptions based on how fearful they are of becoming a victim of crime within their neighborhood. In particular, fear of crime is operationalized as a scale variable constructed from the following questions:

1. How worried are you about you or a member of your household being the victim of a burglary?
2. How worried are you about you or a member of your household being the victim of theft, including auto theft?
3. How worried are you about you or a member of your household being robbed by someone?

4. How worried are you about you or a member of your household being physically attacked or assaulted (including sexual assault)?

All the individual items above were measured using Likert scales consisting of the following responses: 1=not at all worried, 2=somewhat worried, and 3=very worried. The operationalization of fear of crime is consistent with previous studies (Ross & Jang, 2000; Scarborough et al., 2010; Adams et al., 2000), who measured the concept with questions similar to the items included in this study.

**Independent Variables**

Drawing on social disorganization theory, the independent variables consist of social and physical disorders and social cohesion among neighbors. Social disorder captures people engaging in drinking alcohol, fighting and committing other deviant acts in public (Skogan, 1990). Following insights from the literature (e.g. Markowits et al., 2001; Latkin and Curry, 2003; Skogan, 1990), social disorder is measured as a scale variable based on the following survey items:

1. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is alcohol consumption?
2. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is drug use?
3. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is people making threats to others?
4. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is people being rowdy?
5. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is loud music from cars or homes?
6. How big of a problem in your neighborhood are any other types of noises made by your neighbors?
7. How big of a problem in your neighborhood are people hanging around on the streets?
8. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is people begging or asking for money?
9. How big of a problem in your neighborhood is people bothering or causing problems for others?

All the individual items above were measured using Likert scales consisting of the following responses: 1=not a problem, 2=somewhat of a problem, and 3=a big problem.

In the literature physical disorders consists of “physical decay” or as “visible marks on the community, marks that stigmatize it in the eyes of residents and outsiders alike” (Skogran, 1990: p.36). Consistent with previous literature (Skogan, 1990; Scarborough et al., 2010; Ross & Jang, 2000), physical deterioration is created from the following items:

How big of a problem in your neighborhood is destruction of property or vandalism?
How big of a problem in your neighborhood is graffiti?
How big of a problem in your neighborhood is litter or trash? Including animal feces or waste.
How big of a problem in your neighborhood is poorly maintained or abandoned buildings, apartments, homes and cars?

All the individual items above were measured using Likert scales consisting of the following responses: 1=not a problem, 2=somewhat of a problem, and 3=a big problem. These individual items were consolidated to form a scale variable labeled ‘physical disorder’.

In regards to social cohesion there is much debate over contemporary definitions of the term (Chan et al., 2006). An important factor of social cohesion includes the sharing of norms such as values. The general understanding of “values” are the standards by which members of a
particular culture define what is good or bad, moral or immoral, proper or improper, desirable or undesirable, beautiful or ugly (Benokraitis, 2014). I employed four items within the survey to measure social cohesion. The four items are:

1. People in your neighborhood are willing to help each other.
2. People in your neighborhood are trustworthy.
3. People in your neighborhood get along well with each other.
4. People in your neighborhood share a common set of values.

All the individual items above were measured using Likert scales consisting of the following responses: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree. These items were summed into a single scale variable labeled ‘social cohesion.’

All Cronbach Alpha reliability factor analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 21.0. The fear of crime measures reliability estimates yielded an $\alpha=0.92$. The physical disorder scale reliability estimate was $\alpha=0.80$. The social disorder scale yielded a reliability estimate of $\alpha=0.87$. The social cohesion scale reliability estimates yielded an $\alpha=0.83$. The factor analysis determined that the items in all of the scales loaded into single components.

Control Variables

Social-demographic indicators, in particular age, sex, and ethnicity have been employed as standard control variables for studies examining fear of crime (see Abdullah et al., 2013). Perhaps the most influential factor regarding fear of crime is sex. Females have been consistently revealed to be more likely than males to fear crime (Abdullah et al., 2013; Scarborough et al., 2010). Additionally, Abdullah et al. (2013) concluded that not only women, but the elderly demonstrate higher levels of fear of crime than non-elderly. Lastly, Hispanic
ethnicity is measured as a dummy variable indicating “1” if Hispanic (regardless of race) and “0” if otherwise. Background analysis showed that our respondents were 81.6% Hispanic, reflecting the similar Hispanic indicator of 82.2% in the American Community Survey for El Paso County (2010).

**Neighborhood Characteristic Controls**

It is well established that people who reside in poverty neighborhoods are more afraid of crime (see Pantazis, 2000). Therefore, it is important to consider whether individuals are living in a neighborhood plagued by poverty or not. The concentrated poverty variable is created from data obtained from the American Community Survey (2010) based on percent education high school or above (inverse), percent unemployed, percent occupation civilian employed population 16 years and over management (Inverse), percent households that earn less than $10,000, percent receiving public assistance, percent with no health insurance, percent below poverty level (all families and people), and percent occupied units with one person or less per room (Inverse). These variables were created as a scale and then standardized into z-scores. Each respondent was then assigned a concentrated poverty value for their respective neighborhood. In my analysis, I have conducted a comparative analysis of fear of crime for individuals living in two levels of poverty (positive z-scores on concentrated poverty) versus moderate non-poverty to no poverty neighborhoods (negative z-scores on concentrated poverty).

Another important neighborhood characteristic to consider is the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood. Being that El Paso is a predominately Hispanic metropolitan area the Hispanic density is relatively high (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), although there are important variations. This variable was initially constructed by individuals identifying whether they are Hispanic or not. The ‘percent Hispanic’ variable was then constructed based on the mean number of
individuals who identified as Hispanic in each neighborhood cluster and this value was then assigned to each individual.

**Analytic Strategy**

Following insights from Scarbrough et al. (2010) I utilized Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression analysis. OLS is the best tool to use for the regression analysis to observe exactly how the multiple independent variables interact with one another to influence the dependent variables at the individual level of analysis. Level of analysis is the chief reason OLS is selected as the regression tool, however Scarbrough et al., (2010) cites another important concern. Scarbrough et al., (2010) elected OLS regression over HLM is due to sample size considerations. Specifically, Scarbrough et al., (2010) were concerned about their sample size of 1,181 which may generate unreliable results from HLM analysis. This also presents a concern for my research given my sample is N= 1,025. This approach is also been followed by Zaho et al., (2010) who also look at the relationship between SDT and fear of crime. I will now describe the various analysis models I have created to display the relationships between the variables.

I will begin the examination of the relationship between disorders (physical and social) and social cohesion on fear of crime as an additive model. Model 1 examines the association between social and physical disorders, as well as social cohesion, on fear of crime. Model 2 adds demographic variables as controls. This allowed me to view the effect that disorders (physical and social) and social cohesion produce on fear of crime and whether their effect withstands despite the influence of demographic controls.

Second, I will examine the influence of physical and social disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime across neighborhood characteristics. To capture the comparative analysis examining the influence of poverty on fear of crime, the full model will be sorted by “1” poverty,
“2”, moderate poverty, “3” moderate non-poverty, and “4” non-poverty. These categories were based on the data being separated at 25th, 50th, 75th percentiles. A separate analysis examined the mean Hispanic in individuals’ perspective neighborhoods. The mean Hispanic variable, described above, was recoded to indicate low (0.0-.72), medium (.73-.89), and high (.90-1.0) percent Hispanic levels. These thresholds were based on the data being separated at 30th, 60th, and 90th percentiles.

**Data Imputation**

To account for missing data, the multiple imputation process is employed within SPSS following insights from Enders (2010). This data set will contain imputed values in place of the missing values by means of the Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) method. The goal of the MCMC is to simulate random draws from the data (Enders, 2010). During each imputation the missing values are imputed and then are averaged together to take into account the variance of the missing values. The values are only replaced for variables with less than 3 percent of missing values and I used the 10th iteration.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will present the findings from the statistical analysis testing the impact of social and physical disorders as well as social cohesion on fear of crime. First, I will discuss the descriptive statistics of the variables employed in this study. Second, I will conduct correlations to discuss bivariate relationships and conduct an initial test for multicollinearity. Third, I will conduct Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analysis to examine the influence of disorders (social and physical) and social cohesion on fear of crime controlling for demographic and neighborhood contextual factors.

Descriptive and Bivariate Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>12</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Disorder</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>11.72</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>42.45</td>
<td>16.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean of Hispanics (Neighorhood)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 reflects the range, mean, and standard deviations of all the variables in the analyses. This table provides the basic features of the data within the study. The mean for the dependent variable fear of crime is 6.0 (s=2.47). Therefore, descriptive analysis shows that respondents moderately fear crime.

The independent variable social disorder produced a mean of 11.72 (s=3.51) indicating low levels of social disorder. Physical disorder produced a mean of 5.24 (s=1.79) indicating low levels of physical disorder. The social cohesion independent variable produced a mean of 15.53 (s=2.85), demonstrating that most respondents feel that there is reasonable social cohesion within their neighborhood. This interesting result will be further examined in the regression models.

The demographic control variables include age, sex (male), and Hispanic ethnicity. Age produced a mean of 42.45 (s=16.96). Within the dataset, almost half of the respondents are male (sample mean=0.44, s=0.50). Hispanic ethnicity produced a mean of .82 (s=0.39) indicating that the majority of the respondents were of Hispanic ethnicity. This figure was expected due to the proximity of El Paso County to the U.S.-Mexican border.

Two variables are used to contextualize the neighborhoods in which respondents live. Of these variables the mean for the concentrated poverty variable is .02 (s=0.85). This mean reflects that the average respondents live in poverty in El Paso County. In terms of mean percentage of Hispanics living in the neighborhood, reflective of the individual indicator of ethnicity, the average is 0.82 (s=0.14). This information tells us that the respondents live primarily in Hispanic dense neighborhoods.
The correlations between the independent variables, control variables and fear of crime are presented in Table 2. This bivariate analysis showed that fear of crime has a moderate and positive relationship with social disorder ($r=.465$, $p<.001$). Showing preliminary support for Hypothesis 1, as social disorder increases there is an increase on fear of crime. Also showing preliminary support for Hypothesis 2, as physical disorder increases there is an increase on fear of crime ($r=.485$, $p<.001$). Illustrating support for Hypothesis 3, there is a negative and low association between social cohesion and fear of crime ($r=-.207,p<.001$). This correlation expresses that as social cohesion increases there is a decrease in fear of crime. Thus far, the association between social and physical disorder as well as social cohesion and fear of crime are in the expected direction.

**Test for Multicollinearity**

To test for multicollinearity, I begin by examining correlations between independent and control variables. The highest significant correlation is between concentrated poverty and mean
of Hispanics in the neighborhoods which produced a positive and high correlation ($r = .725$, $p < .001$). Therefore, levels of Hispanic means are associated with high levels of concentrated poverty which poses a concern for both of these indicators being in the model at the same time. Therefore, each of these two variables are utilized within two separate models. All other significant correlations between independent and control variables are below $r = 0.3$ and therefore do not pose concerns for multicollinearity.

To further test for collinearity and multicollinearity I conducted a diagnostic analysis comprised of a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test (Appendix A). This process yields VIF values which allowed me to observe if any of the variables produced high degrees of multicollinearity. VIFs for all of the OLS linear regression models are below 3.0 and thus I am confidence that multicollinearity does not present an issue in my analysis (Appendix A).

**OLS Linear Regression Analysis**

To examine the relationship between social and physical disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime more closely I will utilize OLS linear regression. In particular, Model 1 (Table 3) examines the bivariate relationship between social and physical disorder and social cohesion on fear of crime. Model 2 then adds demographic control variables.
Table 3: OLS Linear Regression Base Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Disorder</td>
<td>.168***</td>
<td>.173***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.027)</td>
<td>(.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>.427***</td>
<td>.418***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.051)</td>
<td>(.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>-.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.025)</td>
<td>(.025)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.009*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.133)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.173)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj-R²</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>1025</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in Table 3 (Model 1), there is preliminary support for Hypothesis 1 and 2 stating that as disorder traits increase, so too will fear of crime. In particular, for every one unit increase in social disorder, there is an increase in fear of crime of .168 (b= .168, p.<.001). For every one unit increase in physical disorder, there is an increase in fear of crime of .427 (b= .427, p.<.001). There was no preliminary support for Hypothesis 3, reflecting an inverse relationship between social cohesion and fear of crime. Model 1 explains 26.8% of the variation in fear of crime due to disorder and social cohesion. There was a statistically significant relationship between the variables as determined by one-way ANOVA (F [6,1018] = 125.73; p.<.001).
Model 2 incorporates demographic factors (age, sex, and ethnicity) into the baseline model (Table 3). In support of Hypothesis 1, the relationship between Social disorder and fear of crime remained positive and significant ($b = .173$; $p < .001$), accounting for demographic controls. In particular, for every one unit increase in social disorder there is a .173 increase in fear of crime accounting for age, sex, and ethnicity. The same was true of physical disorder. For every one unit increase in physical disorder there is a .418 increase in fear of crime accounting for age, sex, and ethnicity ($b = .418$; $p < .001$). Social cohesion did not significantly impact fear of crime. One-way ANOVA ($F[6,1018] = 63.96$; $p < .001$) indicated that this model is significant and produced an adjusted $R^2$ of .269.

The only demographic variable that was significant in this model was age. For every unit increase in age there was a .009 increase in fear of crime ($b = .009$; $p < .05$). This is in agreement with the literature which states that as age increases, so does fear of crime (see Franklin, 2008; Skogan; 1991, Scarborough et al., 2010; McCall et al., 2013).

**The Effects of Neighborhood Context on Individual Levels of Fear of Crime**

To examine the relationship that neighborhood context has on fear of crime levels, I have again utilized OLS regression. Within this analysis, I have considered the interaction effect between social and physical disorders, social cohesion and poverty on fear of crime. Table 4 sorts the model by individuals living in poverty versus those who do not.
My result shows support for Hypothesis 4 and 5. Supporting Hypothesis 4, social disorder is associated with fear of crime for individuals living in poverty neighborhoods. In particular, with an increase in the social disorder scale there was a .183 increase in fear of crime ($b= .183; p< .001$), accounting for demographic controls. For every increase in the physical disorder scale there was a .414 increase in fear of crime ($b= .414; p< .001$), accounting for demographic controls. The adjusted $R^2$ produced by this model explains 29.5% of the variation in fear of crime due to disorder and social cohesion accounting for demographic factors and
those living in poverty. There was a statistically significant relationship between these variables as determined by one-way ANOVA (F [6,270]= 20.23; p.<.001).

Surprisingly there was a significant relationship between social and physical disorders on fear of crime for individuals living in moderate non-poverty neighborhoods. In particular, social disorder produced a .179 increase in fear of crime levels for individuals living in moderate non-poverty neighborhoods, accounting for demographic controls (b=.179; p.<.001). Physical disorders produced a .458 increase in fear of crime among individuals living in moderate non-poverty neighborhoods also accounting for demographic controls (b=.458; p.<.001). Thus, contrary to the literature; where social and physical disorders tend to be features associated with poverty neighborhoods and increasing fear of crime (see Pantazis, 2000; Ross, 1993; Skogan, 1990). The adjusted R² produced by this model explains 30.3% of the variation in fear of crime due to disorder and social cohesion accounting for demographic factors and those living in moderate to no poverty. There was a statistically significant relationship between these variables as determined by one-way ANOVA (F [6,230]= 18.08; p.<.001).

Also worth noting was the significant relationship between social disorders on fear of crime for individuals living in non-poverty neighborhoods. In particular, social disorder produced a .322 increase in fear of crime levels for individuals living in moderate non-poverty neighborhoods, accounting for demographic controls (b=.322; p.<.001). The adjusted R² produced by this model explains 18.1% of the variation in fear of crime due to disorder and social cohesion accounting for demographic factors and those living in non-poverty. There was a statistically significant relationship between these variables as determined by one-way ANOVA (F [6,222]= 9.42; p.<.001).
In disagreement with Hypothesis 6, social cohesion was not found to be a significant predictor of fear of crime in poverty neighborhoods. In fact, this was true for individuals residing in all levels of poverty neighborhoods. This finding is in opposition to the literature which states that those living in poverty report higher levels of fear of crime (Pantazis, 2000; Low, 2001; Scarborough, 2010; Skogan, 1990; Franklin, 2008).

**Hispanic Density**

With the majority of El Paso County identifying as Hispanic and this MSA being considered one of the safest in the nation, it is interesting to examine the impact of Hispanic density on fear of crime. Hispanic density was figured for each cluster then assigned to each respondent within the cluster. Table 5 reflects the data when sorted by low, medium, and high levels for the means of Hispanics within the neighborhoods.
Table 5: OLS Regression Examining the Influence of Hispanic Density on Disorder and Social Cohesion on Fear of Crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Disorder</td>
<td>.145** (.060)</td>
<td>.157** (.051)</td>
<td>.186*** (.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>.477*** (.102)</td>
<td>.382*** (.100)</td>
<td>.422*** (.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>.003 (.043)</td>
<td>-.032 (.050)</td>
<td>-.074 (.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.011 (.007)</td>
<td>.008 (.008)</td>
<td>.007 (.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.214 (.228)</td>
<td>.102 (.269)</td>
<td>.008 (.211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.138 (.138)</td>
<td>.239 (.342)</td>
<td>.217 (.497)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj-R²</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***. (p.< .001)
**. (p.< .01)
*. (p.< .05)

Among neighborhoods considered low in Hispanic density (mean = 0-.72), physical and social disorders were found to be significant (Table 5). In particular, as social disorder increased, there was a .145 increase in fear of crime, accounting for demographic controls (b=.145; p.<.001). As physical disorder increased, there was an increase in fear of crime of .477 (b=.477; p.<.001). Social cohesion and control variables were not statistically significant. This model
explains 17.6% of the variation of fear of crime. There was a statistically significant relationship between these variables as determined by one-way ANOVA (F[6,307]= 12.16; p.<.001).

For individuals living in medium levels of Hispanic density (means = .73-.89), there was a significant relationship between the both disorder scales and fear of crime. In this circumstance, social disorder produced a .157 increase in fear of crime, accounting for demographic controls (b=.157; p.<.01). Physical disorders produced a .382 increase in fear of crime within this model (b=.382; p.<.001). Social cohesion and controls were not statistically significant predictors of fear of crime for individuals living in intermediate levels of Hispanic density. This second model explains 25.5% of the variation of fear of crime and one-way ANOVA (F[6,267]= 16.59; p.<.001) was significant.

For individuals living in neighborhoods with high levels of Hispanics (.90-1.0), social and physical disorders also increased fear of crime. Specifically, for each increase in the social disorder scale there was a .186 increase in fear of crime, accounting for demographic controls (b=.186; p.<.001). Physical disorders produced a .422 increase in fear of crime within this model (b=.422; p.<.001). Again, social cohesion and the control variables were not statistically significant. This model explains 25.9% of the variation of fear of crime and the one-way ANOVA (F[6,430]= 31.40; p.<.001) is significant.

Statistical tests comparing beta coefficients of social disorders across low and high poverty neighborhoods reveal there is no statistically significant differences (z= 0.959, not significant). Therefore, the null hypothesis (β_pov = β_nonpov) could not be refuted and the influence of social disorders on fear of crime is the same whether individuals reside in poverty or non-poverty neighborhoods. The same result was produced with physical disorders across low and high poverty neighborhoods (z=1.36).
Lastly, supporting the null hypothesis ($\beta_{\text{medHisp}} = \beta_{\text{highHisp}}$) the influence of social disorders on fear of crime is the same whether individuals reside in neighborhoods with low-level or high-levels of Hispanic density ($z = 0.962$, not significant). Physical disorders produced the same results ($z = .024$) demonstrating that they remain the same across low and high levels of Hispanic density.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Drawing insights from social disorganization theory (SDT), this study considered the impact that physical and social disorder and social cohesion have on individual’s fear of crime within their neighborhoods. A secondary objective was to investigate whether the relationship between disorders and social cohesion on fear of crime varied according to neighborhood characteristics of poverty and Hispanic density. Below I discuss my contribution to the literature.

A major finding is the persistent association between physical and social disorder and fear of crime. Consistent with previous research, SDT characteristics increase fear of crime (e.g., Sampson et al., 1989). Indeed, I found physical and social disorder increased fear of crime even in neighborhoods that are commonly thought of as safe neighborhoods such as those living in neighborhoods with low to no poverty. Furthermore, physical and social disorder increased fear of crime in all neighborhoods with various levels of Hispanic density (low, medium, and high). While physical and social disorders do interact with Hispanic density, it does not matter if neighborhoods are low or high in Hispanic density, disorders increase fear of crime. Indeed, I found individual perceptions of physical and social disorder are even more important predictors of fear of crime than actual poverty levels in perspective neighborhoods.

Another interesting finding was the lack of relationships produced by social cohesion. Previous literature states social ties can buffer the effect of physical and social disorders on fear of crime (Ross & Jang, 2000; Sampson & Groves, 1989). I found social cohesion to not influence fear of crime among individuals regardless of poverty level.

This study also advances the literature of fear of crime by investigating whether Hispanic density serves as a protector or instigates perceptions of fear of crime in conjunction with the
presence of physical and social disorders. Results show that Hispanic density in respective neighborhoods does not buffer the effects of disorder on fear of crime. While even the low levels of Hispanic density may be relatively high, for some other parts of the U.S., this study showed that disorders are salient and do not vary much across Hispanic density.

A limitation and direction for future research entails the examination between fear of crime and actual crime. According to the “broken windows theory” (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) disorder leads to an escalation of crime and fear. Moreover, the literature states that fear of crime is shaped not so much by the reflections of crime statistics, but rather by the numerous incivilities present throughout neighborhoods (Kohm et al., 2012; Lewis & Maxfield, 1980). While this study highlights the importance of perceptions of neighborhood disorder on fear of crime, it does not examine how actual crime interacts with disorders to influence fear of crime.

Another direction for future research is a more in-depth examination of social cohesion. Previous research found that when social cohesion among neighbors erodes, the neighborhood’s capacity to mediate disorder reduces, which is proven to lead to an influx in crime (Kubrin, 2003). Future research should examine how social cohesion functions at other neighborhood contextual factors such as immigrant enclaves, urban vs. rural areas, and neighborhoods comprised of lower levels of Hispanic density.

To conclude, the research I have conducted produced results that extend our understanding of fear of crime. Fear of crime is important to consider given its association to health and overall well-being (Gee & Payne-Sturges, 2004). I found perceptions of social and physical disorder are salient in increasing fear of crime, even in neighborhoods that are arguably safe i.e. those with no poverty and high levels of Hispanic density (in the case of a majority
Hispanic MSA). Furthermore, social cohesion is a buffer for fear of crime but only among individuals residing in poverty neighborhoods.
Chapter 6: List of References


Appendix

Independent & Control Variables (Table #3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variable</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>1.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>1.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Age</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.038</td>
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Independent, Control Variables & Concentrated Poverty (Table #4)

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<th>VIF</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>1.912</td>
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<td>Social Cohesion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Age</td>
<td>1.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrated Poverty</td>
<td>1.147</td>
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Independent, Control Variables & Hispanic Mean (Table #5)

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disorder</td>
<td>1.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Log Age</td>
<td>1.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Mean (Neighborhood)</td>
<td>1.147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Vita

Guillermo Rivas was born in El Paso, Texas. In 2005 he graduated from Coronado High School and began attending the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP). While attending UTEP, he chose to honor his grandfather and father as well as answer the call to serve his country and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. His active duty time in the Marine Corps was met with many successes and hardships; all lessons he is grateful for and would carry with him the rest of his life. Guillermo returned home from his deployment to Afghanistan with extreme focus on completing his academic studies. He obtained his Bachelors of Arts in Criminal Justice in the spring of 2012. He was then advised to continue his education by his mentor, Dr. Guillermina Núñez-Mchiri. Just as he is grateful for his time in the Marine Corps, Guillermo also cherishes the time and relationships he has come across while attending UTEP.

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