

GROWING PAINS AND FEAR OF GANGS: A CASE STUDY OF FEAR OF GANGS AT SCHOOL AMONG HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS*

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This study provides an analysis of survey data on student fear of gangs and gang-related crime at school obtained from Hispanic high school students who reside in an area with a predominantly Hispanic and large immigrant population. Consistent with prior research on fear of crime, regression analyses of the data indicate that acculturation, gender, and victimization are significantly correlated with fear of gangs and/or fear of gang-related crime. Specifically, the analyses indicate that youths with limited acculturation are more fearful of gang-related school violence than well acculturated youths, that fear of gang members and gang-related theft is higher among females than among males, and that students who have been victimized are more concerned about gang-related victimization than are students who have not been victimized. The data also suggest there may be temporally and geographically specific dimensions to the relationship between victimization and fear of gang-related crime. The theoretical, methodological, and policy implications are discussed.

For good reason, researchers have devoted considerable attention to the study of fear of crime. In contrast to actual victimization, concerns about crime may not directly result in bodily

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injury or property loss, but fear of crime has adverse consequences. Research indicates that fear can affect everyday behavior as in instances where people avoid leaving their homes and avoid specific areas due to fear of crime or in cases where females abstain from flirtatious behavior due to fear of rape (Foster & Giles-Corti, 2008; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Lane, 2002). Research also suggests that fear of crime can contribute to a reduction in business profits as security and insurance costs increase and customer traffic decreases (Fisher, 1991; White, 1982) and even that “fear of crime is significantly associated with poor health” (Chandola, 2001, p. 113). Research conducted with juveniles has shown that fear of school crime is associated with defensive behaviors, such as weapon carrying, and avoidance behaviors, such as skipping school (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Forrest, Zychowski, Stuhldreher, & Ryan, 2000; Lowry, Cohen, Modzeleski, Kann, Collins, & Kolbe, 1999; Noaks & Noaks, 2000).

In addition, fear of crime may affect public policy makers. A number of scholars commented on the manner in which fear of gangs fueled the development of aggressive gang control measures during the 1980s and 1990s such as anti-gang police units and legislation that mandated harsh penalties for gang-associated crime like California’s 1988 Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (Esbensen, 2000; Katz, Webb, & Armstrong, 2003; Lane, 2002; Lane & Meeker, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2005). Based on an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data gathered in Las Vegas, McCorkle and Miethe (1998, p. 58) concluded that widespread intense fear of gangs (a phenomenon they referred to as a “gang panic”) had a major impact on crime control policies and tactics inclusive of “an expansion of social control agencies, new legislation, metal detectors on school campuses, more liberal juvenile certification procedures, and a proliferation of public and private antiviolence programs.” They went on to note that: “The actual threat posed by gangs, however, was less real than imagined” (p. 58). In other words, McCorkle and Miethe’s research suggested the response to gang activity by criminal justice officials and public policy makers was disproportionate to the threat posed by gangs; that it was fear of crime rather than crime itself that generated the increase in crime control measures.

Concisely stated, fear of crime can affect individual and collective behavior and is thus a phenomenon worthy of study. While considerable research on fear of crime has been conducted, most research has been based on analyses of data obtained from adults with less attention being afforded to fear of crime among juveniles. This study contributes to the literature by providing an analysis of data on fear of gangs at school and fear of gang-related school crime among Hispanic high school students who reside in an area with a predominantly Hispanic and large immigrant population.

FEAR OF CRIME AND GANGS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although there is a sizeable body of literature on fear of crime, there is no consensus on the causes of such fear (Hale, 1996). Nonetheless, a number of variables have frequently been shown to affect fear of crime. While numerous researchers have found that variables such as age and race/ethnicity impact anxieties about crime and victimization (Chiricos, Hogan, & Gertz, 1997; Clemente & Kleiman, 1977; Lane & Meeker, 2004; Smith & Hill, 1991), this literature review focuses on variables salient to the present study—gender, immigrant acculturation, and victimization—and on previous studies of fear of gangs and gang crime.

As to research on fear of crime, analyses of data gathered in a diversity of locations have consistently shown that females are more concerned about victimization than males (Benedict, Brown, & Bower, 2000; Clemente & Kleiman, 1977; Fisher & Sloan, 2003; Haynie, 1998; Toseland, 1982). To provide a couple of examples, based on an analysis of data gathered in Miami-Dade County, Eitle and Taylor (2008) showed that, regardless of race/ethnicity, females were more fearful of crime than males, with Black, Cuban Hispanic, non-Cuban Hispanic, and White females being more fearful of crime than male members of the aforementioned racial/ethnic groups. Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum (2006, p. 294) conducted an analysis of data obtained in a Midwestern metropolitan area and found that “women felt less safe overall and were more

fearful of personal victimization than men.” However, Schafer and colleagues did not find any gender differences in worries about property crimes such as burglary.

Few scholars have assessed fear of crime among immigrants, but the limited research which does exist suggests that crime-related concerns are high among immigrants, especially immigrants with limited acculturation. Ackah’s (2000) study of Ghanaian immigrants in Washington, DC, showed that frequent participation in Ghanaian social and cultural activities (indicators of limited acculturation) was associated with increased levels of fear among the immigrants. Lee and Ulmer’s (2000) study of Korean Americans in the greater Chicago metropolitan area showed that limited acculturation was associated with fear of crime. Specifically, they found that Korean Americans with a solid command of English were less fearful of crime than those with limited English proficiency, that Korean Americans born in the United States were less fearful of crime than those born outside of the country, and that Korean Americans who frequently watched Korean TV programs and read Korean newspapers were highly fearful of crime. Eitle and Taylor’s (2008, p. 1108) study of fear of crime in Miami-Dade County did not include specific measures of immigrant status or immigrant acculturation, but they did report that “Non-Cuban Hispanics have a greater average level of fear of crime than either Whites or Blacks, but Cuban-Americans report the highest mean level of fear of crime, significantly higher than any other group.”

With respect to the impact of victimization on fear of crime, there is no consensus as to how victimization affects fear of crime or what types of victimization have the greatest effect on trepidation of victimization, but numerous scholars have documented a link between victimization and concerns about crime (DeValve, 2005; Wallace, 1998). For instance, data gathered from college students showed that victimization affected fear of property victimization but not fear of personal victimization (Dull & Wint, 1997), and data gathered from adolescents showed that victimization was associated with a heightened fear of school crime among females but not males (May & Dunaway, 2000). Interestingly, although common sense dic-

tates that violent personal victimization should have a greater impact on fearfulness than non-violent property victimization, Toseland's (1982) analysis of national survey data showed that having been the victim of a burglary affected fear of crime, but having been mugged or threatened with a gun had no impact on fear of crime. Smith and Hill's (1991, p. 232) examination of survey data gathered in North Carolina suggested that being the victim of a property crime or both a property crime and a personal crime was associated with elevated levels of fear, but that "personal victimization alone turns out to have no measurable effect on levels of expressed fear."

In contrast to the sizeable body of literature on fear of crime, little research has been conducted on fear of gangs and gang-related crime. Early studies pertaining to fear of gangs were based on data gathered in the Midwest in the mid-1980s and showed that gang crime was a concern among urban denizens with young people being most concerned about gang activity. It was reasoned that fear of gangs was most intense among the young because they were the demographic most likely to be the victim of gang-related crimes (Pryor & McGarrell, 1993; Takata & Zevitz, 1990). More recently, Lane and Meeker (2000; 2003a; 2003b) conducted several analyses of data gathered in Southern California in the mid-1990s and found that fear of gangs is distinct from fear of crime and that many people were concerned about gang activity.

In one study, Lane and Meeker (2000) found that gender had a significant impact on fear of gangs when examining bivariate correlations, but that gender was insignificant in multivariate models of fear of gangs. However, concordant with the sizeable body of research which has shown fear of crime is higher among females than among males, in another study Lane and Meeker (2003a) reported that fear of gangs was greater among females than among males. In yet another study, Lane and Meeker (2003b) examined fear of specific types of gang crime such as gang-related carjacking and gang-related drive-by shootings to test the "shadow thesis," which suggests that female fear of crime is an extension of female fear of rape. Lane and Meeker tested the shadow thesis by comparing fear of rape and fear of gang-related assault as "perceptually con-

temporaneous offenses” (for a discussion of the shadow thesis and perceptually contemporaneous offenses, see: Fisher & Sloan, 2003; Gordon & Riger, 1991; Warr, 1984). Lane and Meeker (2003b) found that females were more fearful of gang crime than males, but their study did not support the thesis that the high level of fear of crime among females is a residual of concerns that any form of victimization could escalate into a sexual assault. They concluded it is fear of injury rather than fear of rape that is at the base of fear of crime.

Much of Lane and Meeker’s research supported the subcultural diversity thesis which holds that fear of crime is impacted by concerns about racial/ethnic and cultural diversity.¹ In one such study, Lane and Meeker (2000) concluded that concern about racial/ethnic and cultural diversity—in particular, concern about Latin American immigration—was the best predictor of fear of gangs. Their data showed “a direct, independent, and positive connection in the public’s mind between concerns about diversity (e.g., Latino immigration) and worries about crime and gangs” (p. 516). Similarly, based on analyses of qualitative interview data, Lane (2002) found that fear of gangs was correlated with concerns about racial/ethnic and cultural diversity and that many persons, inclusive of Hispanic persons, viewed gangs as the result of the growing number of Hispanic immigrants in Southern California. To quote Lane (2002, p. 451) directly, many Southern California residents, including Hispanic residents, “believed that the recent (perceived to be mostly undocumented) Latinos were a ‘different breed’ from those who immigrated many years ago. . . . The residents believed that these ‘illegals’ were more likely than not to be gang members.”

Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2004; 2005) assessed the findings from Lane’s (2002) qualitative study of fear of gangs using quantitative data gathered from telephone surveys. Consistent with Lane’s (2002) earlier conclusions, Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2005) found that concerns about diversity had a significant impact on fear of gang crimes, but the effect was indirect in some models tested. Disaggregated analyses of the data showed that Hispanics and Whites differed in terms of which types of concern (e.g., concerns about community disorder, concerns about community decline) im-

pacted fear of gangs, but concerns about diversity were significantly related to fear of gang crimes among Hispanics and Whites (Lane & Meeker, 2005). Another research team of note is Katz, Webb, and Armstrong (2003) who conducted an analysis of data gathered in Mesa, Arizona, and compared fear of crime with fear of gangs to ascertain any differences in the variables that affect the two types of fear. In contrast to Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2003b), Katz and colleagues (2003, p. 115) found that gender was “significantly associated with fear of crime but not fear of gangs.” Concordant with Lane and Meeker (2000, 2003a, 2005), Katz and colleagues (2003, p. 121) concluded that fear of gangs was significantly affected by concerns about racial/ethnic and cultural diversity.

As to the effects of victimization on fear of gangs, Pryor and McGarrell (1993) found that individuals who had been the victims of crime were more likely than non-victimized persons to view gang crime as a serious problem and to believe that gang crime was increasing. Similarly, Katz and colleagues (2003) reported that both gang-related victimization and non-gang-related victimization were significantly associated with high levels of fear of gang crime. However, research conducted by Lane and Meeker (2003b) showed that victimization had no impact on fear of some types of gang-related crime, such as carjacking, and that, in instances where victimization did prove to significantly affect fear of gang-related crime, the relationship was inverse with non-victims being more fearful of gang-related crimes than victims. Also worthy of note, the relationship between victimization and fear of gang-related crime varied by gender. Lane and Meeker (2003b) reported that males who had not been the victim of a crime were more concerned about harassment by gang members than were males who had been victimized and that females who had not been the victim of a crime were more concerned about gang-related graffiti and gang-related drive-by shootings than were females who had been victimized.

None of the heretofore discussed studies of fear of gang activity included a measure of immigrant status or acculturation, but in one study Lane and Meeker (2004) did report that fear of gang crimes was greater among the Vietnamese than any other ra-

cial/ethnic group. On a side note, the research showing that fear of gangs is affected by concerns about immigration (e.g., Lane, 2002) is interesting when considered in light of the research, which has shown that immigrants with limited acculturation are more fearful of crime than well acculturated immigrants and native born citizens (e.g., Lee & Ulmer, 2000). Basically, the extant research suggests the possible existence of a quixotic quagmire of fearfulness in which many people who reside in areas with large concentrations of recent immigrants are fearful of the immigrants who are themselves highly fearful of crime.

THE PRESENT STUDY: RESEARCH RATIONALE, SETTING, AND METHODOLOGY

This study provides an analysis of data on concerns about school-associated gang problems among Hispanic high school students who reside in a predominantly Hispanic community with a large immigrant population. It is important to study fear of gangs in Hispanic communities because research has shown that Hispanics, especially Hispanic immigrants, are stereotyped as gang members and that fear of gangs is especially problematic in Hispanic communities (Eitle & Taylor, 2008; Katz et al., 2003; Lane, 2002; Lane & Meeker, 2000; Tovares, 2002). To date, however, there have been no studies which focused specifically on fear of gangs among Hispanic adolescents or fear of gangs in a school setting. These gaps in the literature are addressed herein.

The data were drawn from a larger survey project conducted to assess school crime, the efficacy of and student satisfaction with extant school security measures, and student concerns about crime and victimization. The surveys were administered to high school students in Brownsville, Texas, in 2000 and 2001. Brownsville is located in Cameron County and sits directly on the Mexican border, adjacent to Matamoros, Tamaulipas. The city has a population of approximately 140,000 people, the majority of whom (91.3%) are Hispanic and roughly a third of whom (30.1%) were born in Latin America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). There are no official statistics on the number of active gang members or extent of gang-related

crime in Brownsville, but there is graffiti throughout the city which indicates there are a number of youth gangs in the area. Based on an examination of local law enforcement intelligence gathered shortly before the surveys were conducted, Stratford (1999) identified more than a dozen youth gangs in Brownsville such as La Villa Verde, the West Side Locos, the East Side Locos, and La Olmita. Similarly, anecdotal reports from the Cameron County Commissioners Court and the Cameron County Juvenile Probation Office indicated that youth gang activity was a problem in the area and that youth gangs caused problems in the schools (Unidos Podemos, 2000).

The survey contained several dozen questions pertaining to demographic variables (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) and crime-related issues (e.g., victimization, fear of gang crime). In addition, owing to the large number of immigrants in the area, the survey included a question about language spoken in the home (English, Spanish, or Other) as a means of delineating between well-aculturated youths and less-aculturated youths, the rationale being that youths who speak Spanish at home are most likely either residents of Mexico,² immigrants, or the children of immigrants (for a discussion of language as an indicator of nativity, see: Stevens, 1992). Although the language spoken at home is a crude measure of immigrant acculturation it was reasoned that, because Brownsville is in the heart of the Immigration and Naturalization Service's "Operation Rio Grande" and because Border Patrol agents are ubiquitous,³ asking questions about the nationality or immigration status of the students and/or the students' parents might have generated trepidation and false responses. In contrast, as Spanish is commonly spoken in Brownsville, a single question about language spoken at home should not have generated many concerns.

As to fear of gangs, the survey included several questions to gauge student concerns about gang activity in the schools. Based on studies which showed differences between general fear of crime and fear of specific forms of crime (Dull & Wint, 1997; Warr & Stafford, 1983; Wilcox-Rountree & Land, 1996), the questions distinguished between belief about the extent of gang activity, fear of gang members, and fear of personal and property gang-related victimization.

In particular, the respondents were asked: (1) “Do you think gangs are a big problem at your school?” (2) “Are you afraid of the gang members at your school?” (3) “Do you worry about being attacked by gang members at your school?” and (4) “Do you worry about gang members stealing something from you at school?” Due to the exploratory nature of the study, each question had dichotomous (Yes / No) response categories.

The surveys were administered to 230 public high school students. Because Texas law mandates that school districts utilize a system of site-based administration which grants principals considerable discretionary authority, this study depended on the cooperation of school officials, and as a result the sampling procedures differed from one school to the next. For example, at one school the administrator assigned to facilitate the survey located teachers who were willing to allocate class time to the study, while at another school the administrator selected a few classes with large enrollments. Additionally, students at one of the five public high schools in Brownsville were not included in the sample owing to a lack of cooperation from school authorities. In short, the students were not randomly selected.

Unfortunately, nonprobability sampling is a common methodological shortcoming in studies of this nature. For example, in previous studies of fear of gangs, Lane (2002, p. 447) relied on snowball sampling, and Katz and colleagues (2003, p. 110), having drawn a random sample of 800 subjects, obtained a participation rate of only 25%. Katz and colleagues also noted that Whites and older persons were overrepresented, which indicated that young minorities were underrepresented. Moreover, many scholars have had to rely on non-random samples in studies of crime-associated phenomena among racial/ethnic minorities (e.g., Madriz, 1997), immigrants (e.g., Lee & Ulmer, 2000), and juveniles (e.g., Malek, Chang, & Davis, 1998). In short, the use of nonprobability samples in studies such as this one—namely, studies of adolescents, racial/ethnic minorities, and/or immigrants—is often a necessity.

Despite the fact that the sample was not random, the respondents' demographic characteristics parallel those of the Brownsville

populace. Consistent with Census reports that the majority of Brownsville residents are Hispanic, most of the students surveyed were Hispanic (93.8%), with Whites (4.4%) and other non-Hispanics (1.8%) constituting small percentages of the sample. Because few White students (N=10) and students of other non-Hispanic races/ethnicities (N=4) were surveyed, the data obtained from these students and from students who neglected to respond to the question about race/ethnicity (N=2) were excluded from the analyses, which yielded a sample of 214 Hispanic students. The sample of Hispanic students was composed of an almost even percentage of males (48.6%) and females (51.4%), and a reasonable mix of students who speak English at home (42%) and students who speak Spanish at home (58%).

DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Initially, univariate descriptive analyses were conducted. Contrary to the stereotype that gang violence is concentrated in Hispanic communities and that Hispanic immigrants are prone to violent gang activity, the majority of the respondents did not think gangs were a problem in their schools, were not afraid of the gang members in their schools, and were not concerned about being attacked by gang members. The only gang-related crime the majority of students reported being concerned about was theft by gang members (see Table 1, below). Nonetheless, it is disconcerting that roughly a fifth to a fourth of the students reported that gangs were a problem in the schools or that they were afraid of gang members at school.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics on Fear of Gangs and Gang-Related Crime

	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
Think Gangs are a Problem	52	24.3	162	75.7
Worry About Gang Attacks	40	18.8	173	81.2
Worry About Gang Theft	101	47.4	112	52.6
Afraid of Gang Members	40	18.9	172	81.1

N = 214

Note: Due to missing data, not all rows total 214. Percentages reported are valid percentages.

Based on studies that showed that acculturation, gender, and victimization affect fear of crime (e.g., Haynie, 1998; Katz et al., 2003; Lee & Ulmer, 2000), bivariate descriptive analyses were conducted to ascertain whether there were any correlations between the aforementioned variables and fear of gang activity. As shown in Table 2 [next page], on virtually every measure of gang-related concern, females were more concerned than males, less acculturated youths were more concerned than their better acculturated classmates, and victims were more concerned than non-victims. The sole exception is that a slightly greater percentage of students who had not been attacked at school reported being afraid of gang members at school than was the case among students who had been attacked.

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to ascertain whether the correlations were significant. Logistic regression is the appropriate statistical technique because each measure of concern about gang activity is dichotomous and because logistic regression permits for significance even when the sample and cells are small (DeMaris, 1995; Hanushek & Jackson, 1977). As shown in Table 3 [page 152], the correlations between gender and three of the four measures of gang-related fear proved significant, with the relationship between gender and fear of gang-related attacks being insignificant. Additionally, the correlation between acculturation (gauged by language spoken at home) and fear of attacks by gang members was significant, yet acculturation had no significant impact on other gang-related concerns. The only correlations which proved highly significant ($p < .001$) were those between prior victimization and fear of gang-related victimization, with students who had been the victim of a theft being most concerned about theft by gang members and students who had been attacked being most concerned about being attacked by gang members.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Select Independent Variables and Gang-Related Concerns

	Think Gangs Are a Problem		Afraid of Gang Members		Worry About Gang Theft		Worry About Gang Attacks	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gender								
Male	17.5%	82.5%	13.7%	86.3%	44.7%	55.3%	16.5%	83.5%
Female	31.2%	68.8%	24.1%	75.9%	50.9%	49.1%	21.3%	78.7%
Language (Acculturation)								
English	21.0%	79.0%	14.8%	85.2%	44.4%	55.6%	12.3%	87.7%
Spanish	26.8%	73.2%	23.4%	76.6%	50.5%	49.5%	23.2%	76.8%
Victim of Attack								
Yes	34.3%	65.7%	17.6%	82.4%	62.9%	37.1%	45.7%	54.3%
No	22.3%	77.7%	19.1%	80.9%	44.4%	55.6%	13.5%	86.5%
Victim of Theft								
Yes	26.1%	73.9%	20.3%	79.7%	58.2%	44.8%	21.8%	78.2%
No	21.2%	78.8%	16.5%	83.5%	29.1%	70.9%	13.8%	86.2%

Table 3
Logistic Coefficients for Correlations Between Select Independent Variables and Gang-Related Concerns

	Think Gangs are a Problem		Afraid of Gang Members		Worry About Gang Theft		Worry About Gang Attacks	
	b	Odds Ratio	b	Odds Ratio	b	Odds Ratio	b	Odds Ratio
Gender	-.872*	.418	-.888*	.412	-.759*	.548	-.548	.578
Language Spoken (Acculturation)	-.363	.356	-.590	.554	-.331	.718	-1.028*	.358
Victim of Attack	.672	1.958	.129	1.137	.572	1.772	1.952**	7.040
Victim of Theft	.419	1.520	.588	1.801	1.620**	5.054	.663	1.941

** p< .001; * p< .05

DISCUSSION: METHODOLOGICAL, THEORETICAL, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings that acculturation, gender, and victimization are correlated with fear of gangs and/or gang crime are to some extent consistent with extant research, but the relationships between the variables are characterized by subtle nuances which are of methodological and theoretical significance. First, there are the findings that females are significantly more likely than males to think gangs are a problem, to be fearful of gang members, and to be fearful of being the victim of a gang-related theft, but that there is no significant difference between male and female concerns about gang-related attacks. As to accounting for the gendered variance in fear of gangs and gang crime, the finding that females were significantly more likely than males to believe that gangs are a problem in the schools and to be afraid of gang members may be explained by the oft-cited theory that, owing to patriarchal norms and values and gender differences in physical capabilities, females feel more vulnerable to crime than do males (for discussion see: Gordon & Riger, 1991; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Warr, 1984; Young, 1992).

The finding that females are significantly more concerned than males about being the victim of a gang-related theft, yet not significantly more concerned about being the victim of a gang-related attack, may be the result of rational thinking. Given that females often carry purses containing cash and valuable items (e.g., cell phone, iPod), whereas males are more likely to keep cash and valuables in their pockets, it is understandable that female students would be more concerned about gang-related thefts than males since snatching a briefly unattended purse is easier than forcibly withdrawing valuables from a person's pants pockets. Additionally, considering the fact that the majority of gang members are male and that there is little reason for a male gang member to attack a female at school—as physically beating a female would neither enhance a male gang member's reputation for combative capability nor make a male gang member more attractive to the opposite sex—the female students surveyed may not believe they are likely to be attacked by a gang member at school.

The data on gender are also of interest because, even though numerous studies have shown females are more fearful of crime than males (e.g., Benedict et al., 2000; Fisher & Sloan, 2003), research on fear of gangs has yielded mixed results. Whereas Katz and colleagues (2003) found gender had no impact on fear of gangs, and Lane and Meeker (2000) originally found gender was insignificant in a multivariate model of fear of gangs, Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2003b) later found gender differences in fear of specific forms of gang crime and that gender had a significant impact on a composite measure of fear of gang crime. The present findings that gender is correlated with general concern about gangs, fear of gang members, and fear of gang-related thefts but not fear of gang-related assaults, further clutter the inconsistent literature on this subject, but these findings also suggest that the inconsistencies in the literature may result from methodological issues.

Whereas Lane and Meeker (2000) originally examined data from a single question about fear of gangs, and Katz and associates (2003) analyzed a single composite measure of fear of gangs, Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2003b) later analyzed several measures of fear of specific types of gang crime and combined the measures to create a fear of gang crime index. Yet they did not include a question gauging general fear of gangs in their study. In light of the present finding that gender has a divergent impact on general and specific fears of gangs and gang crime, it is reasonable to suspect that methodological imparities are partially responsible for the inconsistent findings on gender and fear of gangs (also see: Lane & Meeker, 2003a, p. 448). To better assess the relationship between gender and fear of gangs, future scholars should consider using scaled measures of both general and specific forms of fear of gangs and gang crime.

Next, there is the finding that victimization is correlated with fear of gang-related victimization. There is no consensus among scholars as to how victimization impacts fear of crime, but numerous studies have shown a link between the variables (e.g., DeValve, 2005; Wallace, 1998). The findings that having been attacked is correlated with fear of gang-related attacks but not with any other measure of fear of gang activity, and that having been the victim

of theft is correlated with fear of gang-related theft but not with any other measure of fear of gang activity suggest the relationship between victimization and fear of crime may be offense specific. In other words, the data indicate that having been the victim of a crime may enhance fear of similar forms of victimization yet have no impact on general fear of crime or fear of specific types of crime the individual has not experienced.

Another possibility is that the relationship between victimization and fear of crime may not only be offense specific, but also has temporally and/or geographically specific dimensions. We were unable to find any research which specifically addressed the question of whether crime victims are most concerned about similar (or dissimilar) crimes when in situations similar to the situations wherein they were victimized, but did locate some related findings. Based on an analysis of survey data obtained from juveniles, Deakin (2006, p. 385) reported that youths "who had been victimised expressed fears related to the victimisation they had suffered." To provide another example, a study of psychological sequelae among older adult crime victims showed that many victims suffered from "psychological distress to trauma cues" and "physiological reactivity in response to trauma cues" (Gray & Acierno, 2002, p. 305; also see: Acierno, Brady, Gray, Kilpatrick, Resnick, & Best, 2002). Additionally, many female victims of physical and sexual assault have reported intense anxiety and fear in situations which remind them of the assault and avoidance of situations which remind them of the assault (Burgess, 1983; Foa & Riggs, 1995).

The lack of research which specifically addresses the relationship between victimization and fear of crime being imbued by offense, time, and locale notwithstanding, it is not only conceivable that such a cognitive phenomenon exists but rational to expect that it does. For instance, it is possible, if not probable, that urban denizens who have been the victim of a pickpocket while on a subway during rush hour are most concerned about and take the most precautions against pickpockets while riding on the subway during peak transit hours. With respect to the current study, the survey questions were not designed to assess whether the relationship between vic-

timization and fear may have offense, temporal, and locality specific dimensions, but such specifics are implicit in the relevant survey questions. For example, the question about property victimization asked “Has anyone ever stolen anything from you *while you were at school?*” and the question about fear of gang-related property victimization asked “Do you worry about gang members stealing something from you *at school?*” (emphases added). Given that students typically go to the same school each day and begin and end each school day at roughly the same time, a location and time frame are implicit in the questions. As shown in Table 3, the relationship between having been the victim of an attack at school and concerns about gang-related attacks at school, and the relationship between having been the victim of a theft at school and concerns about gang-related thefts at school were especially strong. It is conceivable that the relationships between victimization and anxieties about similar forms of victimization were strengthened by temporal and geographic specifics of the victimization experiences and concerns about future victimization.

Finally, there are the data showing that Hispanic youths with limited acculturation (as gauged by language spoken at home) are more concerned about being attacked by gang members at school than their better acculturated peers. This finding is inconsistent with research which suggests high levels of immigration are associated with significant concerns about gang activity among established residents (e.g., Lane, 2002) and consistent with research which suggests that immigrants with limited acculturation are more fearful of crime than acculturated immigrants and native-born citizens (e.g., Lee & Ulmer, 2000). Taking into consideration the research of Lane and Meeker (2003a; 2005) conducted in Southern California, which suggested that concerns about high levels of Hispanic immigration were associated with high levels of fear of gangs even among Hispanic persons, it might be reasonable to expect that acculturated Hispanic youths would be more worried about being the victim of a gang crime than their less acculturated classmates. However, in contrast to Southern California, Southernmost Texas does not have an extensive history of violent organized gang activity, and in contrast to the racial/ethnic diversity in Southern California, the population

of Brownsville is racially/ethnically homogenous with the vast majority of residents being Hispanic—regional differences which may help explain the discrepancies between the present findings and the findings of Lane and Meeker.

As to explaining the relationship between acculturation and fear of gang-related school violence, building on the research of scholars such as Ackah (2000) and Lee and Ulmer (2000), it is possible that the high level of concern about violent gang-related victimization among the less acculturated youths is affected by their limited social integration. Although Hispanic immigrants comprise a substantial portion of the local populace and Spanish is commonly spoken, restricted acculturation and limited English proficiency are obstacles to social integration and upward mobility. For instance, Spanish language radio, television, and newspapers are available, but the bulk of news and entertainment is provided in English. Additionally, the majority of classes in the local schools, community colleges, and universities are taught in English. In fact, studies conducted by the Texas Education Association and the state comptroller showed that Brownsville students with limited English proficiency were placed in special education programs at a disproportionately high rate (Perez-Trevino, 2003), a clear indicator of the social isolation experienced by immigrant youths with limited acculturation. Moreover, jobs in banks, chain fast-food and casual dining restaurants, grocery stores, utility providers, etc. typically require proficiency in English. In short, despite the large number of immigrants and frequency with which Spanish is spoken in Brownsville, poorly acculturated immigrants are to some extent socially isolated, and such isolation may increase their feelings of vulnerability to crime.

As to the policy implications of this study, initially it is important to note that school officials should make every possible effort to reduce fear of school crime among students, because research has shown that student perception of danger at school negatively affects attendance and academic achievement (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Lowry et al., 1999). The present finding that victimization had a significant impact on fear of victimization indicates that an effective means of reducing fear of school crime is to reduce the

actual level of school crime which, in turn, suggests school officials must be diligent in their efforts to provide a safe learning environment for students and make every reasonable effort to keep student victimization at a minimum. The finding that limited acculturation was significantly associated with fear of gang-related violence indicates that school officials should remain diligent in their efforts to integrate immigrant youths into the schools in order to reduce their feelings of vulnerability. Indeed, the finding that limited acculturation was associated with fear of gang-related school violence in Brownsville, a city with a sizeable and well-entrenched immigrant population where Spanish is commonly spoken, suggests that, in cities where there are few immigrants and immigrants endure a high degree of social isolation, immigrant youths may be especially susceptible to feelings of fear while at school.

SUMMARY REMARKS

The present data are important for a number of reasons. In terms of better understanding fear of gangs, the finding that gender has a varying impact on different measures of fear of gang activity indicates that the conflicting findings pertaining to gender and fear of gangs in the extant literature may be the result of methodological issues. It is thus suggested that, to assess the relationship between gender and fear of gangs, future scholars should consider using scaled measures of both general fear of crime and fear of specific types of victimization. Next, the finding that victimization increases fear of similar types of victimization but has no impact on general fear of gangs or fear of dissimilar forms of victimization suggests that the relationship between victimization and fear of victimization may be offense specific—an issue which deserves additional study. Third, the implicit measures of the time and location of victimization and concerns about victimization and the strong relationships between victimization and fear of victimization in similar situations suggest that the relationship between victimization and fear of crime may have temporally and geographically specific dimensions—another issue deserving of additional study. However, because the data were obtained from an exploratory sur-

vey of a nonrandom sample, the findings must be viewed with caution. In short, the most salient implication of this study is the need for additional research on fear of gangs.

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ENDNOTES

1. The argument that racial/ethnic minorities are viewed as a threat is herein referred to as the "subcultural diversity thesis" because the term "subcultural diversity thesis" has been used by prior scholars who published research on fear of gangs (e.g., Lane & Meeker, 2000). It is important to note, however, that not all scholars use the term "subcultural diversity thesis." For example, Kane (2003) used the term "minority group-threat hypothesis," and other scholars such as Chiricos and colleagues (1997) and Quillian and Pager (2001) did not employ any particular label for this argument, but described such derisive views toward minorities using terms such as "stereotypes" and "racial polarities." Readers interested in this subject should see Jackson's (1989) text, *Minority Group Threat, Crime, and Policing: Social Context and Social Control*, which contains a thorough discussion of the thesis that minority groups are perceived and treated as a threat to the general welfare of society.

2. Because the geographic boundaries of the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) do not extend into Matamoros, there are questions about whether adolescents who reside in Matamoros are legally eligible to attend publicly funded schools in Brownsville. The reality, however, is that verifying the residency of the approximately 40,000 youths who attend the BISD alternative, elementary, middle, and high schools is impossible. Judging from conversations with anonymous BISD personnel it appears that the only requirement for attending a BISD school is a local address. Hence, juvenile residents of Matamoros who have access to the

U.S. (e.g., a border crossing permit) and friends or relatives in Brownsville who can provide them with a local address have access to BISD schools.

3. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there was a massive restructuring of U.S. federal law enforcement agencies. As a result, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service was dissolved and its duties divided among newly created agencies: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement. The original name of the immigration agency (the Immigration and Naturalization Service) is used herein because the data were gathered prior to the restructuring of this agency.

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