

# Crime Media and its Influence on Venturing Beyond the Collegiate Gates

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## Background

- Between the years 1990 and 1998, the number of stories about murder showcased on televised news stations increased by 600% despite national murder rates declining by 20% (Glassner, 1999, p.xxi).
- In reference to his *Cultivation Theory*, George Gerbner hypothesized that those who watch higher quantities of TV are more likely to perceive their neighborhood as unsafe, assume an increase in local crime rates, and overestimate the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime.
- News stories on crime tend to hold a spotlight on narratives showcasing White victims and Black criminals.
- Fear of crime leads to *avoidance behaviors*, any preventative actions one takes to avoid troubling thoughts, feelings, and or outcomes (Star, 2020).

## Research Question & Hypotheses

RQ:

Does the amount of crime media consumed and the racial composition of the neighborhood surrounding a college, produce fear within college aged students to venture off campus?

H1:

More time spent consuming crime related media leads to less time off campus.

H2:

Individuals who less resemble the racial composition of the surrounding neighborhood will be less likely to venture off campus.

H3:

Men will be more willing to venture off campus than women.

## Method

Survey Measure 1: Comfortability in Surrounding Neighborhood of College

- How likely are you to spend time within 3 miles of your campus in activities related to...

Survey Measures 2 & 3: Perceptions of Crime ON & OFF Campus

- Rate the likelihood of a particular crime occurring ON/OFF campus.

Survey Measures 4 & 5: ON & OFF Campus Crime News Information Sources

- Rate how often you receive info about crime ON/OFF your campus from a particular source.

Survey Measure 6: Crime Related Media Consumption

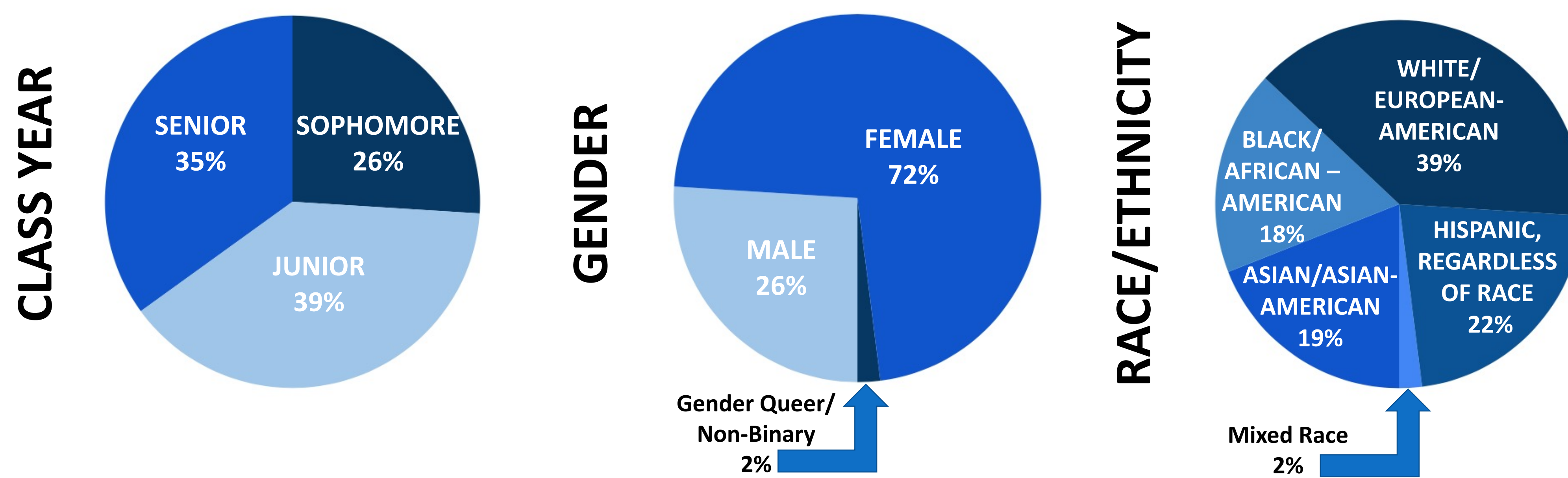
- In a typical week how, much time do you spend on... / How much of that time is dedicated to crime related media.

## Participants

- An online survey was distributed to 300 students at a small liberal arts college with an overall population of 2,234 students. Of the entire student body, 65% identified as White; 7% Hispanic; 6% Black; 4% Asian; 10% identified as international; 3% as multiracial; and 5% unknown in terms of race.
- The participating school was located in an urban neighborhood in the United States, with a town population of 122,105 people, 45% identifying as Hispanic; 37% as Black; 33% as White; and 3% as Asian.

### Current Study:

- Fifty-one students completed the survey. Participants were entered in a drawing for 1 of 4 \$50 Amazon gift cards as an incentive.



## Results

- No significant correlation was found between crime related media consumption and time spent off campus. Social Media:  $r = .13, p = .37$ ; TV Crime Dramas:  $r = -.22, p = .14$ ; TV News:  $r = -.07, p = .64$ .
- A repeated measures ANOVA showed no effect of gender on time spent off campus,  $F = 0.14, p = .71$ , partial eta-squared =  $.003$ , nor was gender by type of activity a significant interaction,  $F = 1.02, p = .36$ , partial eta - squared =  $.021$ .
- A repeated measures ANOVA found a significant effect of race/ethnicity on time spent off campus in course-related activities, social activities, and personal needs,  $F = 3.68, p = .019$ , partial eta-squared =  $.194$ .
- Race/ethnicity by type of activity was also a significant interaction,  $F = 2.78, p = .016$ , partial eta-squared =  $.154$ .
- Although it was not formally addressed in my hypotheses a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to measure participants' perceptions of crime on and off-campus.
- A repeated - measures ANOVA determined that perceived likelihood of crime was higher off-campus ( $M = 35.6, SE = 3.7$ ) than on campus ( $M = 28.3, SE = 2.9$ ),  $F = 10.31, p = .003$ , partial eta - squared =  $.213$ .
- Type of crime was a significant predictor of perceived likelihood of crime,  $F = 32.44, p < .001$ , partial eta squared =  $.461$ .
- The interaction of crime location and type of crime was also significant,  $F = 15.67, p < .001$ , partial eta-squared =  $.292$

Figure 1. Time Spent Off-Campus as a Function of Type of Activity and Race/Ethnicity

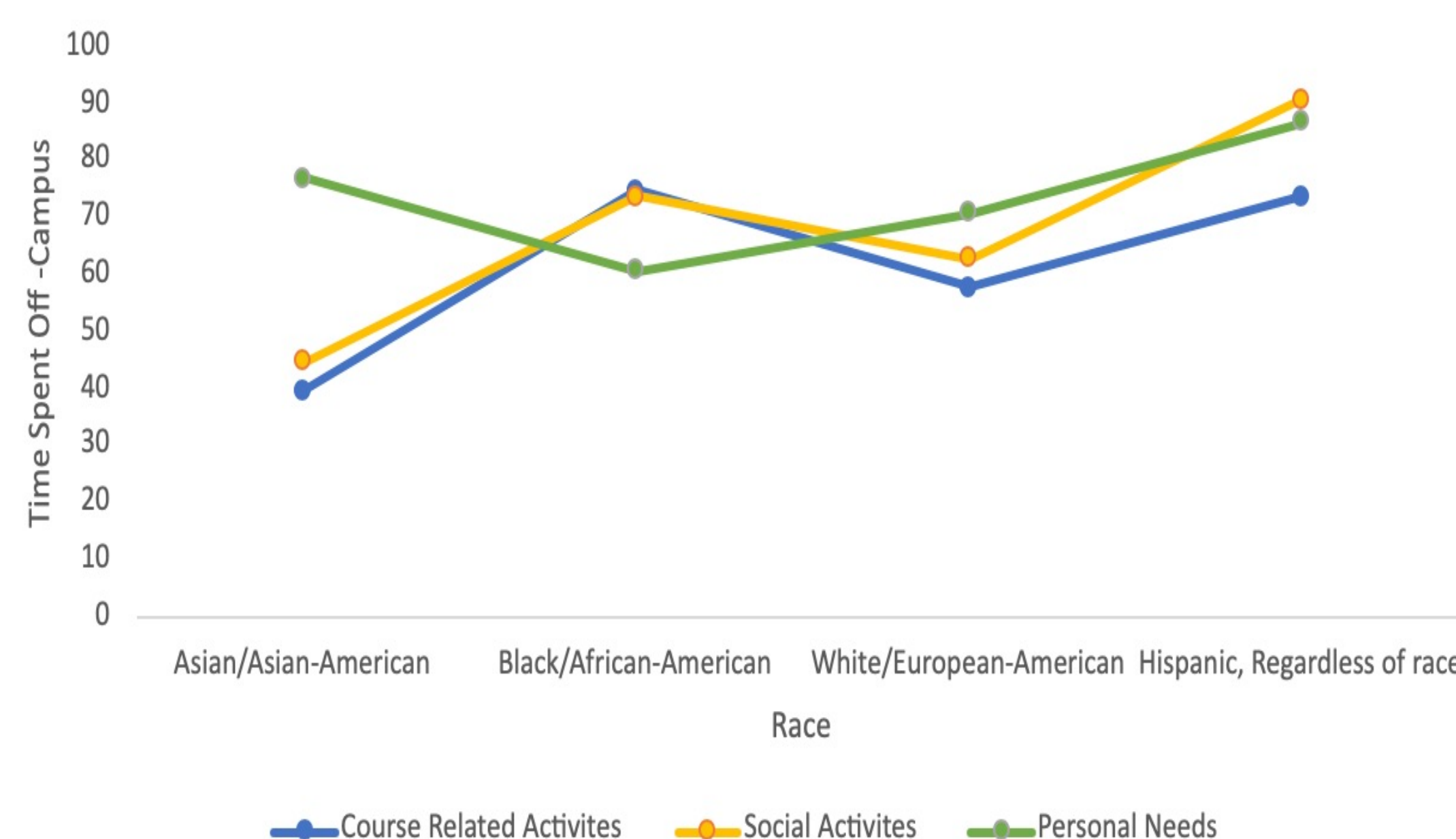
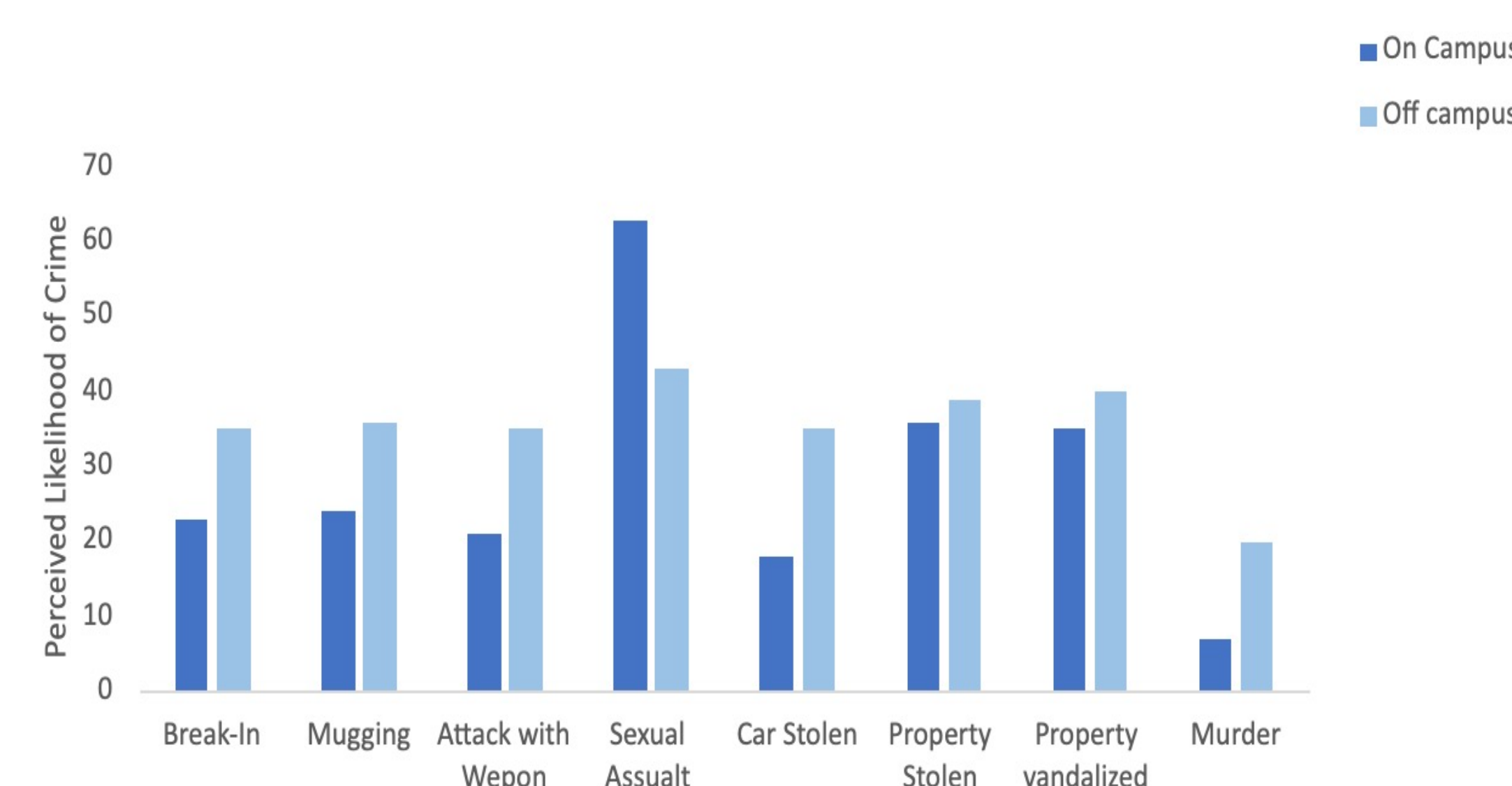


Figure 2. Perceived Likelihood of Crime as a function of Crime Location and Type of Crime



## Discussion

### Crime Related Media Consumption and Time Spent Off-Campus

- A possible explanation for why no relationship was found between crime related media consumption and time spent off campus may be because of the initiatives the participating school's administration has implemented to urge students to spend time off campus prior to the COVID pandemic.

#### Initiatives:

- 1) Giving every student a bus pass so that they can use public transportation for free throughout the school year.
- 2) Incorporating walking tours throughout the surrounding neighborhood of campus as part of First-Year Orientation.
- 3) Having courses that require students to go off campus to attend internships, lectures, and other events, as part of their final grade.

- The incentivizing and or requirement of spending time off campus may have presented participating students the opportunity to see that the neighborhood surrounding their campus isn't as dangerous as the media makes it out to be.

### Race/Ethnicity and Time Spent Off - Campus

- The significant difference between students who identify as Hispanic (regardless of race) and Asian/Asian-American can be attributed to:

1) *The participating school being located in a Latinx neighborhood:* The Hispanic regardless of race participants have an easier time of finding traces of their own culture if not similar aspects that remind them of home in the surrounding neighborhood of their school.

2) *The growing Anti-Asian sentiment in America as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic:* Around the time data was being collected the murder of 8 Asian women was a prominent news story across media forms.

### Gender and Time Spent Off- Campus

- A potential explanation as to why no gender differences were found when measuring for time spent off campus could be because of how off campus was defined: *Within three miles of your school.*

- Such a definition which is not as clear-cut as providing street names to serve as boundaries, may have led participants to overestimate how far they can go within three miles.

## Limitations & Future Research

Originally, I intended to conduct this study at a variety of liberal arts colleges that are comparable in both school and city size, yet differ in the racial composition of the neighborhood they are located in. Unfortunately, due to COVID regulations, most of the schools that were comparable to the participating school of this study, did not allow external research.

Future research should replicate the current study at four different schools to further examine if perceived racial composition of a neighborhood in addition to crime related media consumption produces hesitancy within college students to spend time in the immediate area surrounding their college campus. Doing so will ultimately fill the gap in existing literature on college age students and their perceptions of crime and safety.

## Acknowledgments

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\* References are available upon request of researcher.