Perceptions of Drugs, Crime, and Race in my Neighborhood
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Introduction
We applied the concepts and theoretical compositions in regards to criminal justice while analyzing our neighborhoods through collected data. In the process, we kept in mind racial and class differences and the ways in which they influence perceptions of crime and safety.

Background

Maspeth, Queens: 104th Precinct - Middle-to-upper class, predominantly White and conservative neighborhood with a rich history of organized, money-laundering crime.

Morningside Heights, Manhattan: 26th Precinct - Mostly Caucasian, Asian, and African American middle-class people. Home to Columbia University and Barnard College, so majority of residents are students. Crime does exist, mostly grand larcenies, but is infrequent.


Upper East Side, Manhattan: 19th Precinct - Predominantly white neighborhood. Most typical crime: grand larceny.

Research Aims
1. To show how perceptions of crime differ across social, racial and ethnic backgrounds in Morningside Heights (Manhattan), Crown Heights (Brooklyn), Maspeth (Queens), and Upper East Side (Manhattan);
2. To illustrate the extent to which police presence influences perceptions of crime in high-crime NYC neighborhoods; and
3. To highlight emerging crime trends, including access to guns, new forms of drug dealing and drug consumption.

Methodology
- Ethnographic neighborhood description
- Quantitative, semi-structured survey interviews (N= 40)
- Qualitative, in-depth interviews (N= 10)

Neighborhoods and Reported Crime Data

Discussion of Findings
- Maspeth (Queens): Data shows that members of the Maspeth community feel relatively safe in the neighborhood, despite the abundance and availability of drugs, and the presence of the aforementioned “gun squad.” I attribute this confusion to the aesthetically pleasing outward appearance of the neighborhood, as well as the absence of ethnically diverse people.
- Morningside Heights (Manhattan): According to interview participants, residents feel safer during the day, as opposed to night time. Most crime occurs on college campuses (grand larcenies), as well as the abundance of drugs (marijuana and Adderall).
- Crown Heights (Brooklyn): Based on interview findings, guns and illicit drugs are widely available throughout this section of Brooklyn.
- Upper East Side (Manhattan): According to my sample data, crime in this community has either decreased or remained unchanged. Residents feel safe in the streets both during the day and at night. This sense of safety was mostly attributed to a constant pedestrian traffic, or “eyes on the street,” an overall positive relation between neighbors and the police, and a lack of violent crime.

Quantitative Data

Qualitative Data
Maspeth (Queens): “There were times that the gun squad stopped us and there were drugs in the car but they didn’t even care because they were the gun squad. Weird right? Like where do we live? Harlem?” - Female, age 30

Morningside Heights (Manhattan): “If you look at where majority of the crime is coming from, it’s from those housing complexes with those gun-toting youngsters”. - “Detective” - Male, age 59.

Crown Heights (Brooklyn): “My uncle showed me my first gun when I was five, and I held my first gun when I was nine. Growing up, I always knew criminals and gangsters because my uncle was one of them”. – “A-Money” Male, age 27

Upper East Side (Manhattan): “Cocaine users are rich White kids, 25 to 27, who aren’t thuggish, so they can get away with anything”. Male, age 50

References

Null Hypothesis: Data shows that members of the Maspeth community feel relatively safe in the neighborhood, despite the abundance and availability of drugs, and the presence of the aforementioned “gun squad.”