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Publication Date

2024-11-03

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Moving Beyond Social Disorganization: Rethinking Theoretical Perspectives to Explaining the Immigration-Crime Nexus

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Social Ecology

by

Vicente Celestino Mata, Jr.

Thesis Committee:
Associate Professor Bryan L. Sykes, Chair
Professor Susan Bibler Coutin
Professor Nancy Rodriguez

2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my BRILLIANT advisor and chair, Bryan Sykes, for all your support, guidance, and mentorship. Thank you for always believing in me and for never letting me give up! There are not enough words to express how thankful and honored I am to be your student! I know you don't hear this enough—-THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO! You are an amazing mentor and advisor, and an even better friend. Most importantly, thank you Bryan for being you! I am looking forward to our new journey at Cornell!

I want to thank my wonderful committee member, Susan Coutin, for graciously offering her time, insight, expertise, and support over the course of my graduate career. I also want to thank my third committee member, Nancy Rodriguez, for always rooting for me and lending a listening ear when I needed advice and support. Susan and Nancy, thank you for always being compassionate, understanding, and patient with me. I am so grateful for you both and look forward to continuing our work as I embark on the dissertation phase at Cornell!

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Moving Beyond Social Disorganization: Rethinking Theoretical Perspectives to Explaining the Immigration-Crime Nexus

by

Vicente Celestino Mata, Jr.

Master of Arts in Social Ecology

University of California, Irvine, 2024

Professor Bryan L. Sykes, Chair

Scholars of criminology have largely employed a social disorganization lens to explain the relationship between immigration and crime. In this paper, I synthesize the application of social disorganization theoretical arguments and their development over time, including assessing the variations in empirical findings and their relevance to explaining the immigration-crime nexus. Next, I discuss how variable measurement and methodological design issues have impacted empirical and theoretical examinations of the immigration-crime relationship. Furthermore, I examine the implications of this research on the development of immigration policies. Finally, I conclude this paper with suggestions for future directions and new approaches to researching immigration in criminology.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars of criminology have long debated the linkage between immigration and crime – often referred to as the immigration-crime nexus (Sutherland 1934; Hagan and Palloni 1999; Mears 2001; Dingeman and Rumbaut 2009; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Although previous research has delineated that there are no connections between increasing immigration and rising crime rates (Ousey and Kubrin 2009, 2018; Martinez, Stowell, and Lee 2010; Stowell et al. 2009; Hickman and Suttorp 2008; Rumbaut et al. 2006), anti-immigrant discourse has impacted public perceptions, thereby maintaining tropes of immigrant criminality and their threat to social order (Holmes and Painter 2021; Ousey and Kubrin 2009, 2018; Stewart et al. 2015; Kubrin 2013; Wang 2012; Martinez and Lee 2000). These perceptions have subsequently played a detrimental role in the creation of restrictive immigration policies and harsher policing tactics on immigrant communities. However, the imposition of these punitive measures are unfounded based on empirical evidence that shows rising immigration rates do not correspond with higher rates of crime. Therefore, the contentious debate between empirical research and U.S. policymakers calls into question the validity of the immigration-crime nexus and its power to shape policy and policing procedures.

This review focuses on the following questions: *How have empirical examinations and explanations of the immigration-crime nexus evolved in the field of criminology? What roles have variable measurement and methodological design played in criminological debates of the immigration-crime nexus?* And *what are the implications of this research on immigration policy?* Criminological literature has largely employed a social disorganization lens to explaining the relationship between immigration and crime. I begin by synthesizing the theoretical arguments application and development over time, including an assessment of the variations in

empirical findings and its relevance to explaining the immigration-crime nexus. Next, I discuss how variable measurement and methodological design issues have impacted empirical and theoretical examinations of the immigration-crime relationship. Furthermore, I examine the implications of this research on the development of immigration policies. Finally, I conclude this review with suggestions for future directions and new approaches to researching immigration in criminology.

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION AND IMMIGRATION

The Emergence of Social Disorganization in Criminology

In the early 20th century, researchers at the University of Chicago, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1925) posited the earliest conceptions of social and spatial organization in large metropolitan cities – known as the concentric zone theory. This ecological perspective suggests that the spatial formation of a city resembles a concentric ring model that is "zoned" into five residential areas - (1) *the central business district* (CBD), (2) *zone in transition*, (3) *working class zone*, (4) *residential zone*, and (5) *commuter zone* (suburbs).[1] Park and Burgess's (1925) zone theory, therefore, indicated that residential division through "zoning" prompted social and spatial deterioration causing "social disorganization" within a given community.

Social disorganization is defined as a community's inability to recognize mutual goals and find resolutions to persistent problems (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003: 374; Bursik 1988; see also Kornhauser 1978). The theory of social disorganization was first introduced by sociologists at the Chicago school, Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942). Shaw and McKay (1942, 1969),

[1] In their framework, metropolitan areas develop through a manner of continual expansion outward toward more desirable residential spaces away from central business and industrial areas. This zonal expansion would consequently lead to residential deterioration of areas closest to the CBD. Burgess (1928) called this area the "zone in transition," which lies just outside the CBD, describing it as a destitute area that is composed of factories, depreciated housing markets, and abandoned buildings. He explained that this zone is primarily settled by people of color, immigrant groups, the impoverished, and "professional" criminals in part due to financial instability, accessibility to factory work, and affordable housing opportunities.

built on Park and Burgess's seminal ecological theory of city development, proposing that neighborhoods characterized with increased conditions of social disorganization are more likely to experience higher rates of criminality.[2] They also explained that criminality is not caused at the individual level, rather criminality is an individual's natural response to spatial deterioration and the collapse of social infrastructure. Therefore, Shaw and McKay (1942, 1969) suggest that crime and criminality are inherited symptoms of residential turnover, disinvestment, unemployment, and weakened social control mechanisms. Their theoretical arguments endure (Kornhauser 1978; Stark 1987; Bursik 1988; Sampson and Groves 1989) and are widely regarded and have continued to shape the field of criminology.

Over the past forty years, social disorganization theory has been widely applied to criminological research assessing individuals' capacity to engage in criminality. The early work of Shaw and McKay (1942, 1969) emphasized the importance of "subculture" as a means of maintaining organization within a neighborhood, however theorists (Kornhauser 1978; Stark 1987) would later shift focus towards examining the structural aspects of a community. For instance, Kornhauser's (1978) work negates the existence of a criminal subculture, arguing that it is not a necessary component to maintaining social organization. She argues that strong social infrastructure[3] upholds organization within a neighborhood. Therefore, according to Kornhauser (1978), it is not the oppositional morals of a criminal subculture that causes crime rates to increase rather it is due to a weakened social infrastructure.[4]

[2] To test their hypothesis, Shaw and McKay (1942, 1969) analyzed juvenile court documents, recidivism rates, and conducted extensive fieldwork observations to determine the distribution patterns of criminality across zonal areas in Chicago. Their investigation found that higher concentrations of criminality occurred in socio-economically deprived areas that have a heterogeneous community and experienced breakdown in social infrastructure (e.g., institutions of social control and depreciated housing/residential instability).

[3] e.g., social control mechanisms, economic opportunity, etc.

[4] Similarly, Stark (1987) argued that the increasing and fluctuating rates of crime and delinquency in neighborhoods are not solely based on the "kinds of people" that reside in them but rather it is also in part due to the "kinds of

Criticisms of social disorganization theory, however, point to how social disorganization is measured and conceptualized (Bursik 1988:526). According to Bursik's (1988:527-529), social ties and informal social control mechanisms are key to mediating the conditions of social disorganization and reducing criminality in neighborhoods. The seminal work of Sampson and Groves (1989) is significant due, in part, because it provided a well-defined theoretical explanation and improvements to methodological approaches in the empirical testing of social disorganization (Sun, Triplett, and Gainey 2004). Through their work, Sampson and Groves (1989) examined the significance of community structural characteristics as intervening factors in determining the predictability of neighborhood crime and delinquency. In other words, Sampson and Groves (1989:780-783) constructed neighborhood community-level measures[5] and three intervening dimensions of social disorganization[6] to assess their effects on an individual's likelihood to participate in criminal behavior and neighborhood crime rates. They test their theoretical model of social disorganization using multivariate regression and path analysis by examining national survey data gathered by the British Crime Survey (BCS) from neighborhoods located in England and Wales during 1982[7] and 1984[8] (Sampson and Groves 1989). Sampson and Groves (1989) argued that the formation of social ties/networks provide foundation to developing strong and effective informal social controls to combat and reduce neighborhood

places" and their ecological conditions. In other words, deteriorating structural and social control apparatuses in a neighborhood increases the likelihood for crime to occur.

[5] Sampson and Groves (1989) also refer to as "exogenous sources of social disorganization" (e.g., socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, residential mobility, family disruption, and urbanization).

[6] e.g., community supervision/control of adolescent groups, friendship networks, and community organizational engagement

[7] 1982 national survey data of 10,905 residents gathered from 238 neighborhoods in Great Britain. Sampson and Groves (1989) initially test their community-level (CL) theoretical model of social disorganization through the analysis of the 1982 survey data.

[8] Sampson and Groves (1989) replicate the analysis of the 1982 data by testing the CL model of social disorganization on 1984 national survey data constructed of a national sample of 11,030 residents across 300 British neighborhoods.

crime (Sampson and Groves 1989). Their findings indicated that active participation in the community, local friendship networks, and the collective supervision and control of adolescent peer groups reduces the rates of criminal victimization and offending (Sampson and Groves 1989). Additionally, Sampson and Groves (1989:790-792, 799) found that these intervening dimensions of neighborhood social disorganization mediate the impacts of community-level structural characteristics on neighborhood crime and victimization rates.

Veysey and Messner (1999) further test the community-level social disorganization model using covariance structural equation modeling to analyze the same BCS data originally analyzed by Sampson and Groves (1989)[9]. However, in contrast to Sampson and Groves' (1989) original findings, Veysey and Messner (1999:170) found that there were no mediating effects on the relationship between crime, family disruption, and urbanization. Moreover, Veysey and Messner's (1999) work tests the causal linkages between the indicators of social disorganization[10], expanding on Sampson and Groves (1989). Veysey and Messner's (1999:167) research suggests that friendship networks and organizational participation directly and indirectly[11] affect neighborhood delinquency and crime rates, whereas the presence of unsupervised adolescent peer groups only had direct impacts on neighborhood delinquency and crime rates[12].

Similar to Veysey and Messner's (1999) research analysis, Sun, Triplett, and Gainey's (2004)[13] analysis found moderate support for Sampson and Groves' (1989) theoretical model.

[9] Their re-examination found sufficient support of Sampson and Groves' (1989) findings, with respect to the mediating effects of social disorganizational factors on the association between criminality and socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility (Veysey and Messner 1999:170).
[10] e.g., friendship networks, organizational participation, and unsupervised adolescent peer groups
[11] i.e., accounting for unsupervised adolescent peer groups
[12] Although the work of Sampson and Groves (1989) and Veysey and Messner (1999) provide ample tests of social disorganization theory, their works are limited to one dataset derived from the BCS national survey.
[13] Sun, Triplett, and Gainey (2004) retest Sampson and Groves' (1989) model of social disorganization using data compiled from 36 neighborhoods in 7 U.S. cities.

Their results indicate that, from the three specified variables of social disorganization[14], local social ties were identified as the most effective mediator in large part in effecting residential mobility[15] on violent crime[16] (Sun, Triplett, and Gainey 2004:10). On the other hand, analysis of the organizational participation variable demonstrated that it did not mediate the impacts of socioeconomic status and family disruption on robbery or assault, while unsupervised youths showed to be more effective in transmitting effects community-level structural characteristics on assault.[17] Sun et al.'s (2004:11) work further imply that unsupervised youths serve as a mediating factor between social disorganization and crime, which results from weak social control mechanisms.

The testing of the community-level social disorganization model by Veysey and Messner (1999) and Sun et al. (2004) undoubtedly expands the foundational work of Sampson and Groves' (1989) and the literature on the empirical testing of social disorganization[18]. Nevertheless, scholars note the importance of disaggregating social ties in assessing measures of social control and criminality (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003:376; see also Elliott et al. 1996). Pattillo (1998) finds that social networks of law-abiding occupants in Chicago did in fact enable informal supervision of the community's adolescent youth; however, the inclusion of "gang members and drug dealers" into community social ties prevented the complete eradication of crime. Thus, social ties, or networks, are essential to maintaining social organization.

[14] e.g., local social ties, unsupervised youths, and organizational participation
[15] Residential mobility is one of four neighborhood structural variables in the social disorganization model tested by Sun, Triplett, and Gainey (2004).
[16] e.g., robbery and assault
[17] Moreover, Sun et al.'s (2004:11) findings suggest that the social disorganization indicator of unsupervised youths largely mediated the effects of residential mobility, family disruption, and friendship networks on crimes of assault, but had little effect on socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, and organizational participation.
[18] Collectively, their findings reach similar conclusions: low-income/poor neighborhoods with weak social ties (e.g., friendship and kinship networks) and low organizational participation are more likely to have ineffective social control mechanisms and elevated levels of social disorganization.

A central component of social disorganization is social control. Social disorganization theorists have commonly discussed elements of informal control models[19] (see also Bursik and Grasmick 1993), however examinations of formal control[20] have not fully been assessed (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003:381). Rose and Clear's (1998) work contends that overreliance on formal mechanisms of control[21] thwarts the incorporation of informal community-level methods of control while simultaneously weakening familial and neighborhood social structures. Therefore, they suggest that use of formal control mechanisms to combat criminality may cause further social disorganization in neighborhoods. Additionally, police practices and discretion can play a direct role in determining the fluctuation of crime rates within a community (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003:382). For instance, harsher police practices may discourage an individual's engagement in criminality, whereas leniency may encourage criminal behavior (Stark 1987).

Thus, social disorganization remains extensively imbedded in the field of criminology and continues to be utilized to explain crime and delinquency. However, its application continues to evolve by scholars in the field of criminology to better assess neighborhood criminality. For instance, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) propose a theoretical shift in assessing the relationship between neighborhoods and violent crime. They posit that the collective efficacy within a community and the maintenance of effective informal social controls (i.e., policing) increases social organization and reduces violent crime in neighborhoods. Through a multilevel analysis of collective efficacy[22], they found that Chicago neighborhoods that yielded strong collective efficacy or social cohesion had a higher likelihood of residential stability and social

[19] e.g., social networks
[20] e.g., law enforcement
[21] e.g., incarceration
[22] Sampson et al. (1997:919) used PHDCN survey data collected in 1995 from 8782 residents of 343 neighborhoods in Chicago, IL.

organization reducing instances of violent crime. They also found that neighborhoods with high collective efficacy, which is conditioned by mutual trust and willingness to build solidarity, and effective informal social controls had a greater likelihood of having lower rates of violent crime. Contemporary research conducted by Matsueda and Drakulich (2016) replicated Sampson et al.'s (1997) multilevel measurement models, adjusting residents perceived collective efficacy for perceptions of deviance. Matsueda and Drakulich (2016)[23] find that residents who witnessed deviance/deviant behavior within their neighborhoods were less likely to intervene or engage in neighborhood collective efficacy. However, they also found that when observed deviance is controlled for in the model it resulted in a stronger relationship between neighborhood collective efficacy and violent crime (Matsueda and Drakulich 2016). In other words, neighborhood social organization is dependent on the strength of the resident's social capital[24] and its ability to developing effective informal social control mechanisms.

Kubrin and Wo's (2016) work further argues for the advancement and improvement of social disorganization in the criminological literature. They suggest, similar to Sampson et al. (1997) and Matsueda and Drakulich's (2016) work, that the theory move beyond the theoretical constructs of social ties and informal social control and incorporate collective efficacy[25], social capital[26], and social networks (Kubrin and Wo 2016:125). Lastly, Kubrin and Wo's (2016:133) final suggestion is to incorporate subcultural explanations of crime and delinquency into social

[23] Matsueda and Drakulich (2016) used the Seattle Neighborhoods and Crime Study (SNCS) data. SNCS data originally consisted of 5,755 Seattle resident surveys within 123 census tracts recorded in 2002-2003. SNCS gathered information from three separate sampling schemes to which Matsueda and Drakulich (2016:209) were only interested in the first two samples. From these samples Matsueda and Drakulich (2016) selected 3,739 cases which was merged with 2000 U.S. Census data and crime data collected by the Seattle Police Department. This ultimately led to the final number of 3,260 cases being analyzed in their work, nested within 123 Seattle, Washington neighborhoods.

[24] e.g., civic sense and mutual trust, building solidarity through organizational participation, etc.

[25] e.g., people's willingness to intervene for the common good and have common goals

[26] e.g., strong social relations

disorganization theory. They argue that, as an essential component of social disorganization, neighborhood subculture can better account for rates of crime and delinquency (Kubrin and Wo 2016; Kornhauser 1978, Shaw and McKay, 1942, 1969).

The foregoing brief history of social disorganization theory and its impact on the field of criminology lays the groundwork for scholarly understandings of how the theory has been applied to research on the immigration-crime nexus. In the following section, I focus on how the theorization of immigration and crime depends upon social disorganization theory and different ways of empirically investigating their association.

Theorizing and Assessing the Immigration-Crime Nexus: From Biological to Social Disorganization Theories and Multiple Empirical Investigations

The relationship between immigration and crime has remained a contentious debate among criminological theorists and empirical researchers. Early theory suggested that the connection between immigration and crime was directly linked to an immigrant's predisposed biological determinants of criminality. Cesare Lombroso (1897:646-647), writer of the earliest biological theories of crime, hypothesized that immigrants and persons of color had higher proneness to committing crime in part due to their innate predisposition toward delinquency. This theoretical perspective of crime dominated the field of criminology during the early 1900s. However, shifts in criminological thought would move away from biological explanations of crime and theorize that the processes of immigration have explicit linkages to delinquency and crime. For instance, Thorsten Sellin (1938) argues that an immigrant's adjustment into new cultural and behavioral norms can cause conflict with native-born persons leading to possible increases in criminality.

On the other hand, Edwin Sutherland (1934; see also Sutherland, Cressey, and Luckenbill 1992:128) theorized that employment displacement due to the influx of immigration may increase criminal behavior amongst native-born people. Sellin (1938) and Sutherland's (1934) theoretical works ultimately suggested that influxes of immigration posed a unique threat to the disruption of social organizational processes within communities, creating disorder and increasing criminal behavior among immigrant and native-born persons. These initial explanations and other early theories of the immigration-crime nexus stressed that individual characteristics[27] were the main catalysts for criminality. However, Shaw and McKay's (1942, 1969) seminal work on crime and delinquency introduced social disorganization theory as an explanation by showing that rising crime rates in a given neighborhood were not associated with individual characteristics of immigrants, but rather that residential turnover and racial/ethnic heterogeneity mattered for increased crime rates.

Social disorganization theory remains the primary lens through which the immigration-crime nexus has been framed in the criminological literature. Early iterations of social disorganization theory posited that increased fluctuations of immigrant populations weakened social ties/networks in neighborhoods, thereby generating higher instances of crime (Shaw and McKay 1942, 1969; Sampson and Groves 1989). However, Butcher and Piehl's (1998:477)[28] examination of immigration and crime reveals that, although large immigrant populations commonly settled in high-crime neighborhoods, there was no association between changes in immigrant demographics and crime rates[29]. Hagan and Palloni's (1999; see also Butcher and

[27] e.g., ethnic background, socioeconomic status, etc.
[28] Butcher and Piehl's (1998) examine immigration rates in 43 metropolitan regions and crime rates trends in the 1980s.
[29] It is important to recognize that misperceptions linking immigration and crime are propagated through government reports that conflate Latino incarceration with immigration procedural practices (Hagan and Palloni 1999:619).

Piehl 1998:483) research explains that although Latinos, regardless of legal status, are disproportionately at risk for engaging in criminality, Latino immigrants are less likely to be involved in crime. In other words, Butcher and Piehl's (1998) and Hagan and Palloni's (1999) findings suggest that there is a weak relationship between immigrant concentration and crime, refuting the notion that rising immigration rates increase neighborhood crime and delinquency.

However, Martinez (2000)[30] reported that Latino immigration significantly increased the number of Latino felony homicide rates in metropolitan areas. This finding is in large part due to the changing social structural characteristics of a neighborhood[31] . Social disorganization theory contends that neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants, specifically populations that are racial/ethnic heterogenetic, are disposed to having ineffective or failed informal social controls, which result from rising rates of residential instability and heterogeneity (Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Stowell et al. 2009). In this regard, Lee, Martinez, and Rodriguez's (2000) examination of Latino homicide rates in Miami, Florida and El Paso, Texas[32] found that neighborhood characteristics (e.g., population structure and local conditions) may shape Latino involved homicide rates[33]. Lee et al. (2000), however, found Latino homicide rates to be more prevalent in Miami in comparison to the city of El Paso.[34] In other words, Martinez (2000) and Lee et al. (2000) posit that increases in Latino immigration disrupt social organization and

[30] Martinez (2000) utilizes the 1980 Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR) to assess Latino immigration impacts on homicide rates.
[31] e.g., residential turnover, racial/ethnic heterogeneity, etc.
[32] Lee, Martinez, and Rodriguez (2000) gathered their data from El Paso and Miami Police Departments homicide investigation files. They reviewed and analyzed 435 El Paso and 1,370 Miami homicide cases ranging between 1985-1994.
[33] Lee et al.'s (2000:385-386) research would find similarities across Latino involved homicide types (e.g., intimate, stranger, etc.) in both border cities.
[34] Their findings further suggested that Miami's increased homicide rates may be indictive of the city's residents ethnic background and nativity. More specifically, they suggested that an immigrant's exposure to violence and political repression in their country-of-origin may be an indicator of their proneness to engaging in criminal behavior (Lee et al. 2000:386-387).

increase violent crime in metropolitan areas. This presumed link between increased immigration and rising crime rates is thought to be correlated with immigrant settlements being highly concentrated in poorer socially disorganized communities (Butcher and Piehl 1998; Lee, Martinez, and Rosenfeld 2001, Martinez 2000; Lee et al. 2000).

In additional examinations of the immigration-crime nexus, Lee et al. (2001) analyze criminal homicide data form three border cities (e.g., Miami, El Paso, and San Diego) to assess immigrations impact on violent crime rates in Latino and Black metropolitan areas. Their findings reveal that in San Diego, for example, there was a significant correlation between black homicide rates and immigration. Lee et al. (2001) assume that the reasoning for the correlation was either due, in part, to intergroup violence or preexisting violent conditions within the neighborhood. Overall, their research found that there was no significant relationship between new waves of immigration and rising homicide rates and violent crime. They suggest that conditions of social disorganization[35] are more prominently correlated with Latino and Black victimization rather than rising immigration patterns (Lee et al. 2001:572).

Lee et al.'s (2001) findings coincide with previous immigration-crime nexus research which suggests that increases in crime rates are a direct result of immigrations negative impacts on economic opportunity/advancement and local labor market competition (Reid et al. 2005; Butcher and Piehl 1998; Waldinger 1997; Beck 1996). In other words, increased influxes of migrant workers in the U.S. labor market may trigger an increased likelihood of competition for limited employment opportunities, heighted unemployment rates, and economic deprivation, for both immigrants and nonimmigrant populaces, subsequently increasing intergroup conflict and

[35] e.g., residential instability, employment opportunities, and poverty

motivations to engage in criminal activity (Ousey and Kubrin 2018:67).[36] Additionally, Waters and Jiménez (2005) note that different racial/ethnic groups of immigrants may experience increased instances of discrimination that heighten outcomes of residential and employment insecurity, forcing them to remain in poorer "socially disorganized" and high crime rate neighborhoods, thusly, signifying that heightened crime rates are strongly linked to a neighborhoods racial/ethnic concentration (Sampson et al. 2005) due to disparate social and economic conditions experienced by different racial/ethnic groups (Hipp 2014; McNulty 2001; Sampson and Wilson 1995).

Lee and Martinez (2002)[37], further assess the central foundations of social disorganization theory in examining the relationship between the arrival of new immigration groups and Black homicide rate in northern Miami. Consistent with previous research, there is virtually no association between immigration[38] and increased community-level homicide rates (Lee and Martinez 2002:376; Graif and Sampson 2009). This finding, according to Lee and Martinez (2002), calls into question the central conditions of social disorganization theory, which argues that immigration and in particular racial/ethnic heterogeneity are key factors in destabilizing residents' social ties/networks and collective efficacy, subsequently increasing neighborhood crime rates (Bursik 1988; Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson et al. 1997).

Stowell and Martinez (2007) further assess the immigration-crime nexus adjusting for variations across foreign-born ethnic populations. Their findings, like many of the previous

[36] Similarly, Martinez et al. (2010), argue that social disorganization in immigrant concentrated communities may be a function of impoverished conditions (e.g., economic instability). This observation suggests that neighborhoods may experience higher rates of crime and delinquency because immigrant populations often struggle to maintain economic stability, residential stability, and adequate educational opportunities (Lee et al. 2001; Martinez and Lee 2000).

[37] Lee and Martinez (2002) utilizing spatial analysis based on maps to empirically examine the relationship between the arrival of new immigrant groups and Black homicide rates in northern Mami. Their findings are consistent with other research utilizing spatial analysis to assess immigration and crime.

[38] e.g., newly arrived Haitian immigrants

studies, are consistent with the prior research noting that there are no significant linkages between immigration and crime, with the inclusion of foreign-born ethnic background measures. In other words, empirical research has supported the notion that immigration contributes to reduction in crime rather than increase crime (Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008; Ousey and Kubrin 2009, 2018; Crowley and Lichter 2009; Chenane and Wright 2018). Sampson (2008) notes that there is a direct correlation between immigration generational status and lower crime rates. Therefore, neighborhoods with a more diverse populations are less likely to experience high instances of crime. This finding refutes social disorganization theory's community-level condition that heterogenous communities are more prone to higher rates of criminality. To be clear, according to previous empirical research (Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Martinez, et al. 2010) and the fundamental components of social disorganization theory, fluctuations of new wave immigrants cause neighborhood disorder by impacting economic and residential stability not crime rates.[39]

Moreover, Feldmeyer (2009)[40] finds that immigration has no direct influence on violent crime rates[41] suggesting that there is no relation between rising immigrant populace and homicide. These findings also indicate that immigration can simultaneously strengthen and weaken structural condition in Latino centric neighborhoods supporting the tenants of social

[39] Similarly, Reid, Weiss, Adelman, and Jaret's (2005) examination of the immigration-crime nexus at the macro-level revealed that there is no association between new waves of immigration and rising crime rates. More specifically, the authors noted that violent and property crime were not linked to new waves of immigration (see also Sampson 2008). These findings also indicated that immigration and "Asian" immigration reduced violent and property crime rates (Reid et al. 2005:775). Stowell et al.'s (2009) work further confirms that higher concentrations of immigrants decrease violent crime (see also Martinez et al. 2010; Ferraro 2016; Light and Miller's 2018). However, Stowell et al.'s (2009) findings also suggested that increases in immigration had an inverse effect on robbery crime rates[39] in metropolitan areas.

[40] Feldmeyer (2009) uses the data on violence, California Arrest Data (CAL), New York State Data (NYSAD), and U.S. census data to assess the impacts of immigration on violence.

[41] e.g., homicide

disorganization theory.[42] Han and Piquero's (2021) assessments of the effects of immigrant concentration on neighborhood crime, however, indicate a negative association between immigration concentration and neighborhood crime, specifically property and total crime in Dallas, Texas neighborhoods. Their results show that immigrant concentration moderates the effects of neighborhood structural conditions. Han and Piquero (2021:70) also found that neighborhoods with heightened immigrant concentration reduced crime generating effects of Black segregation. In line with previous immigration-crime nexus research, the intricate association between immigrant concentration and structural disadvantages suggests that high immigrant concentrations can either contribute to the revitalization of a neighborhood or strengthen disorganizational conditions[43] resulting in higher crime rates (Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Stowell et al. 2009; Reid et al. 2005; Lee and Martinez 2002; Martinez 2000; Lee et al. 2000; Butcher and Piehl 1998).

Although, previous examinations of the immigration-crime nexus have found heightened immigrant concentration to have insignificant and/or negative effects on neighborhood crime rates (Han and Piquero 2021; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; 2018; Martinez et al. 2010; Feldmeyer 2009; Reid et al. 2005), there is minimal empirical examination of how social organization's theoretical mechanisms[44] lower crime rates in immigrant concentrated neighborhoods (Mears 2002; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Kubrin 2013).

[42] Kubrin, Hipp, and Kim's (2018) examination of the immigration-crime nexus finds that heightened immigrant racial/ethnic homogeneity in metropolitan neighborhoods significantly increased crime rates. More specifically, Kubrin et al. (2018:18) found that Southern California neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Latino immigrants experience increased rates of violent crime, in comparison to neighborhoods with heightened concentrations of Black and Asian immigrants. These findings discount social disorganization theory's notion that immigrant racial/ethnic heterogeneity increases neighborhood disorganization and crime rates (Shaw and McKay 1942, 1969; Bursik 1988; Sampson and Groves 1989; Stowell et al. 2009).
[43] e.g., economic deprivation, educational inequalities, employment scarcity, residential instability, etc.
[44] e.g., strong social ties/networks, increased organizational participation, heightened informal social control mechanisms.

Contemporary research on the immigration-crime nexus, however, has found some empirical evidence and support that suggests that heightened immigrant concentrations in neighborhoods tend to decrease crime rates through various social organizational mechanisms. For instance, Harris, Feldmeyer and Barranco's (2018) research examines how religious traditions and organizations mediate neighborhood crime rates. Harris et al. (2018)[45] found that religious devotion and organizations mediated crime rates in traditional[46] immigrant communities. In other words, the presence of strong Catholic traditions and adherence[47] was found to reduce violent crime rates in traditional immigrant localities, in comparison to immigrant communities with networks of evangelical Protestant traditions and adherence[48] (Harris et al. 2018:9-10).[49] These findings suggest that religious traditions and organizations are significant factors that mitigate violent crime rates and establishing strong crime control mechanisms[50] (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson et al. 1997) in immigrant concentrated neighborhoods.

Furthermore, previous neighborhood and crime studies have often indicated that voluntary organizations offer essential services[51] and encourage community engagement[52], which can affect neighborhood crime control mechanisms (Wo 2018; Wo, Hipp, and Boessen 2016; Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001; Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson and

[45] Harris et al. (2018) used a negative binomial regression to assess the impacts of religious traditions and organizations on crime.
[46] Traditional immigrant communities are defined as communities with substantial histories immigration (e.g., large metropolitan areas) (Harris et al. 2018).
[47] e.g., religious organizations and practices
[48] Evangelical Protestant traditions and adherence was linked to increased rates of robbery and aggravated assault crimes (Harris et al. 2018:10).
[49] Additionally, religious practices and organizations related to mainline Protestants had no mediating effects on violent crime rates (Harris et al. 2018:10).
[50] e.g., strengthened social networks, civic engagement, community surveillance, collective efficacy, etc.
[51] e.g., social services
[52] e.g., strengthened social ties/networks, social cohesion, and informal social control

Groves 1989). Kim, Hipp, and Kubrin's (2022)[53] research builds on these previous works by examining the effects of voluntary organizations[54] on neighborhood crime rates, taking into consideration additional community correlates of crime and temporal endogeneity[55]. Using a combination of four datasets[56] and an egohood[57] (see also Hipp and Boessen 2013) level unit of analysis, Kim et al. (2022) found that, in general, immigrant-serving organizations reduce all types of crime rates[58]. Their findings also indicate that crime-reducing effects inherently increase when additional immigrant-serving organizations are present in a metropolitan area (Kim et al. 2022:11). Additionally, crime-reducing effects are further enhanced in neighborhoods with increased presence of immigrant-serving organizations and higher immigrant concentration. Kim et al. (2022) suggest that these crime-reducing effects are due, in part, to immigrant-serving organizations providing vital services[59] for immigrant communities (18-19) which can increase collective efficacy and strengthen informal social controls (Matsueda and Drakulich 2016; Sampson et al. 1997; Morenoff et al. 2001; Bursik and Grasmick 1993) in immigrant concentrated neighborhoods. Therefore, it is indicated that immigrant-serving organizations moderate the association between immigration and crime.

Much of the immigration-crime nexus literature reviewed in this section finds that heightened immigrant concentrations reduce neighborhood crime rates (Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Crowley and Lichter 2009; Lee et al. 2001; Butcher and Piehl 1998: Hagan and Palloni

[53] Their work theorizes that immigrant-serving organizations may be a crucial component to explaining decreasing crime rates in immigrant concentrated neighborhoods.
[54] e.g., immigrant -serving organizations
[55] Kim et al. (2022:9) utilize data collected over an 11-year span (2010-2011) to assess temporal endogeneity.
[56] e.g., the National Center of Charitable Statistics (NCCS), the U.S. Census Bureau, Reference USA business data, and Los Angeles police departments official crime data (Kim et al. 2022)
[57] Kim et al. (2022:7) explain that an "egohood constitutes ¼ mile radius surrounding a focal Census block as a neighborhood…"
[58] Immigrant-serving organizations have crime-reducing impacts on all types of crime (e.g., Robbery, Aggravated assault, Burglary, Larceny, and Motor vehicle theft) (Kim et al. 2022:11)
[59] e.g., opportunities for civic engagement and participation in community events, and other resources/aid

1999). However, other empirical research in this review suggests that heightened influxes of immigration, although have no direct association with increases in crime, do create neighborhood disorder by negatively affecting social and economic conditions[60] indirectly effecting crime rates (Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Martinez et al. 2010; Reid et al. 2005; Butcher and Piehl 1998; Waldinger 1997; Beck 1996). Overall, the application of social disorganization theory on immigration-crime nexus research reveals inconsistencies and variations in empirical findings, particularly in determining whether a relationship between immigration and crime exists. The next section builds on this comprehensive review, highlighting issues of variable measurement and methodological designs in explaining the immigration-crime nexus.

VARIABLE MEASUREMENT AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN ISSUES

Although empirical findings have largely revealed a negative and weak association between immigration[61] and crime[62], there are substantial issues in variable measurement that poses a significant problem to the ways in which criminological analysis empirically and theoretically assesses the immigration-crime nexus (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). For instance, some researchers have often used percentages of foreign-born individuals as measurements of immigration concentration (Lee and Martinez 2002; Stowell and Martinez 2007; Graif and Sampson 2009; Allen and Cancino 2012; Ramey 2013; Han and Piquero 2021), which limits empirical examinations in accurately assessing the association between immigration and neighborhood crime. Other empirical studies have used a combination of measures, including percentages of foreign-born individuals, percentages of Latino population, and percentages of English language proficiency, to create an immigration concertation index (Ousey and Kubrin

[60] e.g., economic and residential stability, employment opportunities, etc.
[61] Immigration is a key independent variable in the immigration-crime literature.
[62] Crime is a key dependent variable in the immigration-crime literature.

2009; Stowell et al. 2009; Desmond and Kubrin 2009; Kubrin and Ishizawa 2012; see also Sampson et al. 1997). However, both of these measurements fail to consider dissimilarities among immigrant groups, including racial/ethnic identity, cultural backgrounds, country of origin, generational status, and/or legal status, aggregating immigrant enclaves into one homogeneous population reducible to one singular index (Kubrin et al. 2016; see also Ousey and Kubrin 2018; Rojas-Gaona and Madero-Hernandez 2021). Therefore, scholars have argued for the disaggregation of immigrant concentration variables to fully capture the unique differences of immigrant groups and there impacts on crime (Martinez 2000; Lee et al. 2000; Reid et al. 2005; Hagan and Palloni 1999; Kim et al. 2022).

Although researchers have made attempts to mitigate issues of aggregation by accounting for racial/ethnic differences within immigrant concentrations (e.g., Martinez 2000[63]; Reid et al. 2005[64]), they fail to account for additional characteristics and factors that further diversify immigrant groups. For instance, Martinez (2000) and Lee et al.'s (2000) fail to disaggregate legal status amongst the Latino population, conflating Latino non-citizen and citizen populations. In other words, by not disaggregating non-citizen and citizen populations, measurement error in crime rate findings can occur[65] (Hagan and Palloni 1999), leading to unreliable empirical analysis and variations in findings on the immigration-crime nexus. Moreover, Kim et al.'s (2022:7-9) conceptualization of immigrant concentration takes into account four approaches to capture variations among immigrant groups including: 1) percentages of foreign-born immigrants, 2) racial/ethnic characteristics, 3) country of origin, and 4) immigrant groups

[63] Martinez (2000:367) disaggregated Latino immigrant groups by "foreign born Latinos… and a proxy for recent immigration the represents Latinos residing in a foreign country…five years before the 1980 census."

[64] Reid et al. (2005:767) disaggregated immigrant groups by percentage of recent foreign-born immigrants arriving to U.S. Metropolitan Areas (MA) between 1990 and 2000, country of origin, and English proficiency.

[65] e.g., inferences of rising crime rates among undocumented immigrants

tendency to spatially co-locate with another immigrant group[66]. This approach further expands on previous constructions of immigrant concentration variables, further emphasizing the necessity to disaggregate immigrant groups to better assess the relationship between immigration and crime.

Additionally, much of the literature has assessed crime through two measures - violent[67] and property[68] crime – which have been primarily constructed through official crime datasets[69] (Kim et al. 2022; Kubrin et al. 2018; Harris et al. 2018; Kubrin and Ishizawa 2012; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Reid et al. 2005; Feldmeyer 2009; Lee and Martinez 2002; Lee et al. 2001; Martinez 2000; Lee et al. 2000). However, the use of official crime data to construct crime variables poses a significant problem to empirically assessing the immigration-crime relationship. For instance, official crime data fails to disaggregate nativity status posing a significant problem to ascertaining whether an immigration-crime relationship exists (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Previous studies (e.g., Martinez et al. 2010; Lee et al. 2001), although have made attempts to mitigate the limitations of official crime data by incorporating additional data sources[70], have primarily captured racial/ethnic attributes failing to distinguish between native- and foreign-born status. This poses a significant problem in that measurements of crime conflate native- and foreign-born populations making it difficult to determine whether immigrants commit or are victims of crime[71] (Lee et al. 2001; Bernat 2017; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Additionally, official crime data fails to distinguish immigrant "legal" status[72] (Kubrin 2013; see

[66] This measurement takes to in account: 1) Immigrant groups choice of destination and 2) Which groups commonly coexist with each other (Kim et al. 2022).
[67] e.g., aggravated assault, homicide, robbery
[68] e.g., motor vehicle theft, larceny, and burglary
[69] e.g., UCR program, Police Department data, etc.
[70] e.g., police department files
[71] I recognize that capturing immigrant victimization rates can be difficult. Immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, engage in system avoidance due to fear of police surveillance and removal/deportation (Bernat 2017)
[72] e.g., undocumented vs documented

also Ousey and Kubrin 2018) further suggesting that official crime data provides inaccurate and unreliable assessments of immigrant crime (Mears 2001:285). With that said, these limitations to measuring crime exacerbate the difficulties to accurately assessing the immigration-crime relationship.

Moreover, methodological design[73] issues have also significantly impacted the ways in which researchers examine the immigration-crime nexus. Firstly, immigration-crime research has largely employed a cross-sectional research design to examine immigrations impact on crime rates. This temporal design, however, significantly limits empirical analysis to assessing immigrations impacts on crime at a specific point in time (Light and Anadon 2020; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). For example, Stowell et al. (2009) sample cross-sectional time-series data from metropolitan areas between 1994-2004 to examine whether changes in immigration effect changes in "recent" violent crime rates. However, this method of analysis poses significant limitations because findings can only explain how changes in immigration effected changes in violent crime rates during 1994-2004. In other words, a cross-sectional methodological design is unable to assess how changes in immigration[74] impact changes in crime rates overtime (Light and Anadon 2020; Ousey and Kubrin 2018).

On the other hand, Adelman et al. (2017) examined the relationship between immigration and crime across U.S. metropolitan areas from 1970-2010 to describe the continuously changing immigration-crime relationship. Using a longitudinal design, Adelman et al. (2017:64-70) considered various confounding economic and demographic variables over a 40-year period finding that immigration does not increase violent and property crimes in U.S. metropolitan areas. Additionally, Light and Miller's (2018) work suggests that a longitudinal design may be

[73] e.g., temporal design issues significantly impact criminological research on crime.
[74] e.g., changes in migration patterns, policy, public opinion, etc.

the best way to assess the macro-level association between undocumented immigration and crime. Using various data sources to capture the undocumented population[75], their research examines the immigration-crime relationship across the U.S. between 1990-2014 finding a negative relationship between undocumented immigration and crime. More specifically, the longitudinal design provided Light and Miller (2018:11-12) an opportunity to consider state and year fixed effects allowing for a more rigorous examination of the impacts of undocumented immigration on violent crime over-time. Therefore, scholars have suggested that a longitudinal methodological design be applied to examinations of the immigration-crime nexus due, in part, to the design better controlling for confounding variables (Light and Anadon 2020; Light and Miller 2018; Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Lee et al. 2001:574) and producing more robust statistical findings on research assessing the immigration-crime relationship (Ousey and Kubrin 2018:75).

Overall, these variable measurement and methodological design issues underscore that there are substantial limitations to fully and accurately assessing the immigration-crime relationship (Ousey and Kubrin 2018), calling into question the appropriateness of assessing the immigration-crime nexus through social disorganization theory. As described throughout this review, immigrant concentration and crime variable measurements fail to capture immigrant "legal" status (e.g., Martinez 2000; Lee et al. 2000; Kubrin 2013) which is an important distinction to be made in immigration-crime research (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Additionally, immigration-crime research has largely utilized a cross-sectional methodological design (e.g., Stowell et al. 2009), which fails to capture how changes in immigration over time impact crime

[75] Light and Miller (2018) capture criminal, socioeconomic, and demographic information to construct undocumented population estimates. The authors construct estimates from The Center of Migration Studies (CMS) and the Pew Research Center (Pew).

rates. Combined, these issues pose a significant limitation to social disorganization theoretical arguments, therefore, suggesting that social disorganization theory is unable to fully and accurately assess the impacts of immigration on neighborhood crime rates. Researchers (Lee et al. 2001, Reid et al. 2005; Stowell et al. 2009; Ousey and Kubrin 2018), although have suggested that the immigration-crime relationship be theoretically assessed the immigrant revitalization thesis which argues that immigrants revitalize communities rather than being the catalyst for crime (Kim et al. 2022; Han and Piquero 2021; Ousey and Kubrin 2018; Light and Miller 2018). This, of course, raises the question: If immigrants reduce crime and revitalize communities, why are there harsh and punitive immigration policies?

SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION THEORY, IMMIGRATION AND CRIME RESEARCH, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Traditional conceptualizations of social disorganization posit a positive relationship between immigration and crime (Shaw and McKay 1942, 1969; Sampson and Groves 1989), suggesting that influxes of immigration cause neighborhood disorder by engendering racial/ethnic heterogeneity, increasing residential instability, and weakening social networks, subsequently decreasing effective informal social control mechanisms leading to heightened occurrences of crime (Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Stowell et al. 2009; Lee and Martinez 2002; Kubrin 2000). Empirical examinations, on the other hand, have largely found there to be a negative association between immigration and crime, suggesting that heightened immigrant concentration helps revitalizes communities rather than increasing crime (Kim et al. 2022; Han and Piquero 2021; Ousey and Kubrin 2018, 2009; Matsueda and Drakulich 2016; Martinez et al. 2010; Feldmeyer 2009; Stowell et al. 2009; Sampson 2008; Reid et al. 2005; Lee et al. 2001). Public and political discourse, however, depict immigrants, specifically undocumented

immigrants, as perpetrators of crime and threats to economic prosperity (Joppke 1999; Gilbert 2009; Schrag 2010), aligning with anti-immigrant rhetoric conceptualized by traditional social disorganization theorists.

Despite empirical evidence, deceptive societal tropes and political discourse on immigration and crime continue to gain traction (Higgins, Gabbidon, and Martin 2010; Rumbaut and Ewing 2007; Martinez and Lee 2000; Hagan and Palloni 1999), culminating in exclusionary and punitive anti-immigrant policies[76] (Trager and Kubrin 2019:148; Provine et al. 2016; Macias-Rojas 2018). Trager and Kubrin (2019:160) suggest that the divergence between public/political discourse and empirical research on the immigration-crime nexus is largely due, in part, to immigrant's lack of visibility and sociopolitical participation within their community. In other words, immigrant populations that actively take part in sociopolitical activities and are visible to their communities may help reduce public moral panic and heighten political acceptance (Trager and Kubrin 2019). However, given the increased anti-immigrant rhetoric and legislation in the broader U.S. context, immigrant communities often live in constant fear of being detained and deported making it difficult for them to fully immerse themselves within their communities (Menjívar 2011; Cross, Rivas-Drake, and Aramburu 2022). Therefore, it is critical for empirical research to be taken into account when developing immigration policies.

Empirical examinations of the immigration-crime nexus, although seemingly ignored by policymakers, largely find that immigrants[77] are less prone to engage in criminal behavior, rather their presence increases crime-reducing effects (Kim et al. 2022; Han and Piquero 2021; Light

[76] e.g., 287(g) program (-which established the collaboration between federal, state, and local authorities to enforce federal immigration laws (see also Nevins 2010)), Arizona SB 1070 (-states that it is a misdemeanor offence if an undocumented immigrant is found to be within Arizona state lines without legal documentation. This allows law enforcement to ask about legal status during an arrest and detain when there is "reasonable suspicion" that legal documentation cannot be produced by the individual.), and deportation policy, etc.

[77] i.e., documented and undocumented

and Miller 2018; Reid et al. 2005; Lee and Martinez 2002: Lee et al. 2001). Challenges to traditional iterations of social disorganization theory show that heightened immigrant concentrations (Reid et al. 2005; Lee and Martinez 2002: Lee et al. 2001) and the presence of immigrant-serving organizations (Kim et al. 2022) revitalize communities by increasing residential mobility, economic prosperity, and employment opportunities (Trager and Kubrin 2019). Given that the vast majority of empirical research negates public/political perceptions of immigration and crime, this body of research calls into question the motivations and decision-making processes of policymakers when they create harsher and punitive anti-immigrant policies. Of course, more empirical research needs to be done this area. However, it is safe to say that there is a definite disconnection between public policy and the theoretical and empirical findings on immigration and crime (Trager and Kubrin 2019).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Does immigration cause crime? Criminological research has long debated the question, and as noted throughout this review, the immigration-crime relationship has most prominently been theorized and attempted to be explained through a social disorganization lens. The theory of social disorganization, in its earliest conceptualization, would point to immigration as being the catalyst for community disorganization and increased neighborhood crime. However, as discussed in this essay, immigration contributes to the stabilization and revitalization of communities, challenging the appropriateness and validity of social disorganization theory to empirical inquiries of the immigration-crime nexus. Unfortunately, the general consensus of research on this topic has been largely ignored in public and political discourse, which has capitalized on anti-immigrant sentiments to create exclusionary and punitive anti-immigrant

policies. This disconnect raises several questions for future directions of immigration-crime research.

Firstly, how can immigration-crime scholars improve on social disorganization research to better assess the immigration-crime relationship? Social disorganization research, as previously discussed, has various limitations in accurately and reliably assessing the immigration-crime relationship due, in large part, to limitations in variable measurements and methodological design issues. In order to improve on social disorganization empirical analyses, researchers must take into account the diverse complexities of immigrant populations[78] (Ousey and Kubrin 2018) which can provide a more accurate depiction of the immigrant populaces impact on neighborhood crime. Additionally, researchers must avoid solely using official crime data to measure immigrant crime. I recognize that the over reliance on official crime data to measure crime is primarily a result of its convenience, but there are significant limitations that must be mitigated if researchers are to properly assess the immigration-crime relationship (see also Mears 2001; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). I propose that researchers take a qualitative approach to assessing immigrant crime by engaging with the communities in which they study. Perhaps talking with community law enforcement, immigrant-serving organizations, and/or residents coupled with official crime data can provide a more pounced and robust variable measurements[79] (Bernat 2017; Ousey and Kubrin 2018).

Moreover, immigration-crime research, with some exceptions[80], have not been able to fully assess how changes in immigration over time have impacted crime. Although researchers have found significant negative and/or null effects between immigration and crime, this review

[78] e.g., racial/ethnic differences, nativity, legal status, etc.
[79] e.g., discerning between immigrant perpetrators and victims of crime
[80] e.g., Light and Anadon 2020; Light and Miller 2018

reveals that a majority of studies employ a cross-sectional approach to their analyses limiting their generalizability across time. Ousey and Kubrin's (2018) meta-analysis points to utilizing a longitudinal methodological approach to capture and better assess the immigration-crime relationship. This is a crucial component to improving empirical understandings of the immigration-crime relationship due, in part, to the longitudinal design's capabilities to control for economic, demographic, and structural variables. This approach can also allow researchers to assess the impacts of metropolitan areas political climate which is significant because it may provide context to why crime increases and/or decreases over time. These suggestions to improve social disorganization research can provide, if implemented, a reliable and accurate understanding of the immigration-crime nexus.

Secondly, what new theoretical approaches can assess the impacts of high influxes of immigration on neighborhood structures? Moving beyond social disorganization theory, immigration-crime scholars (Kim et al. 2022; Han and Piquero 2021; Trager and Kubrin 2019; Light and Miller 2018; Reid et al. 2005; Lee and Martinez 2002: Lee et al. 2001) have suggested that assessments of immigration and neighborhood crime be framed through the immigrant revitalization perspective. This approach stems from the social disorganizational research on immigration and crime helping to explain the impacts of immigration on neighborhood revitalization. However, more empirical research[81] needs to be done to fully assess how and under what conditions does heighten immigrant concentration revitalize local and/or metropolitan areas.

Finally, how do policymakers reconcile the push for exclusionary and punitive anti-immigrant policies, in light of substantial empirical evidence that shows immigration's crime-

[81] e.g., Ramey 2013; Lee 2013

reducing effects and positive impacts on community relations? This is an important question that needs to be theoretically and empirically addressed by immigration-crime scholars. Given the amount of empirical evidence that suggests heightened immigrant concentration reduces crime, the call for restrictive immigration policies by public and governmental agencies seems a bit misplaced (Trager and Kubrin 2019; Macias-Rojas 2018; Provine et al. 2016). Future criminological research addressing this matter should consider assessing: 1) the motivations and decision-making practices of immigration policymakers, 2) contemporary political discourse, 3) public perceptions about immigration, 4) solutions to immigration policy reform, and 5) the role of population change (i.e., increases in and changes to the ethnic/national composition of the immigrant population) in causing politicians to create and support restrictive and punitive immigration policies. This type of research can have significant implications on shifting public and political perceptions, and for reforming immigration policy and legislation. Therefore, it is prudent that immigration-crime scholars refocus their attention towards those in power.

CONCLUSION

Immigration and crime research has evolved, moving away from findings that contributed to anti-immigrant sentiment to more contemporary work that attempts to combat political and public anti-immigrant rhetoric. It is important to recognize that examinations of the immigration-crime nexus, through a social disorganization lens, routinely finds a significant negative and/or null immigration-crime association and that immigration is important for neighborhood revitalization. Despite these findings, however, formal control mechanisms continue to be put into place due, in part, to societal and governmental provocations of moral panics and anti-immigrant sentiment. Therefore, immigration-crime scholars should consider addressing the

following more in depth: 1) the Immigrant Revitalization Perspective and 2) the disconnection between empirical research and immigration policy.

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