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# THE POWER OF PLACE: Immigrant Communities and Adolescent Violence

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Despite popular assumptions, criminologists have long recognized that crime rates are lower for various immigrant groups than for similarly disadvantaged African Americans. What accounts for this paradox? In this study, we consider the role of neighborhood context, specifically, the concentration of immigrants within a community, as a protective factor responsible, in part, for lower crime rates among various immigrant groups. We use data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine the relationship between immigrant concentration and adolescent violence, controlling for a variety of individual-level and neighborhood predictors. The findings indicate that immigrant concentration is negatively related to adolescent violence. They also show the protective effects of immigrant concentration are stronger for some types of youth than others.

Much like in the past, the public debate over immigration today is laced with myths and a failure to separate fact from fiction. One of the most glaring examples of this can be seen in the common stereotypical assumptions that immigrants are uneducated, unemployed, and, because of various social- and health-related problems, are a drain on our welfare and healthcare systems. In fact, the research literature finds just the opposite; studies typically document “unexpectedly favorable social and health outcomes for immigrant groups” (Lee and Martinez 2006:90) compared with the native born. This has been shown with respect to a variety of outcomes, including smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, psychological problems, and pregnancy, among others. In the literature, this phenomenon is often referred to as the *immigrant paradox*—the “counterintuitive finding that immigrants have better adaptation outcomes than their national peers despite their poorer socioeconomic conditions” (Sam et al. 2006:125).

The immigrant paradox has been found to extend to immigrant youth as well as adults, particularly in terms of psychological and sociocultural adaptation. When children with immigrant backgrounds are compared with their national peers, they generally exhibit better health and less behavior problems, and do as well as or better than their nonimmigrant peers with respect to academic achievement and psychological well-being (Fulgini 1998; Sam et al. 2006).

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In the last few years, an emerging research agenda has expanded the notion of an immigrant paradox to include crime as one outcome where immigrants fare better than native-born minorities (Lee and Martinez 2006:90). In their comprehensive review of studies on race, ethnicity, and violent crime, Peterson and Krivo (2005:346) cite a small but growing literature that finds that “Lethal violence is lower for Latinos and various immigrant groups than for similarly disadvantaged African Americans” creating an “important puzzle” that researchers must decipher. More and more of today’s scholars are turning their attention to accounting for and understanding the immigrant paradox with respect to crime and violence (see, e.g., Hagan and Palloni 1999:630; Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush 2005:224; Sampson 2008:29).

One key factor for understanding the immigrant paradox that has received some attention in the literature centers on the presence of immigrant neighborhoods, or the residential concentration of immigrants. Immigrant concentration is “the tendency of immigrants to concentrate geographically by ethnicity or country of origin within the host country” (Chiswick and Miller 2005:5). An extensive literature outside of criminology has documented the positive role of ethnic/immigrant communities for numerous outcomes, including ethnic entrepreneurship (Portes and Zhou 1992), earnings (Chiswick and Miller 2005), and mortality protection (LeClere, Rogers, and Peters 1997:181), among others.

Recently, some research has begun to consider whether immigrant concentration affects crime levels among community residents, and the results suggest it does (Lauritsen 2001; Lee, Martinez, and Rosenfeld 2001; Lee and Martinez 2002; Martinez, Lee, and Nielsen 2004; Sampson et al. 2005; Morenoff and Astor 2006). These studies find that crime and victimization are lower in communities with more immigrants.<sup>1</sup> While clearly important, these studies are relatively few in number, and, excluding Lauritsen (2001), typically focus on neighborhoods within a single city, such as Chicago, Miami, or San Diego. Thus, the extent to which this finding is generalizable has not been fully established.

The current study builds on this small but important literature. As called for in recent research (Martinez et al. 2004; Peterson and Krivo 2005; Martinez 2006; Sampson and Bean 2006), we move beyond the black–white dichotomy to consider immigration and immigrant settlement patterns in the production of delinquency. In this study, we examine the relationship between immigrant concentration and juvenile violence in communities across the United States. Our study addresses several questions, including how might immigrant concentration affect crime and delinquency? Does immigrant concentration aggravate or mitigate criminal and delinquent behavior? And are the effects of immigrant concentration the same among Hispanic and non-Hispanic, Asian and non-Asian, and foreign-born and native-born youth? Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, we determine whether youth who live in communities with large concentrations of immigrants report lower levels of violence, controlling for a variety of individual-level and neighborhood predictors. We also determine whether the effects of immigrant concentration are stronger for some types of

youth than others. We begin by considering why immigrant concentration may affect juvenile delinquency.

## WHY IMMIGRANT CONCENTRATION MAY MATTER

Immigrants settle where they do for many reasons, including facility (e.g., settling near ports of entry), where jobs are located, or where family and friends (co-ethnics) from earlier migrations have settled. One might interpret immigrants settling where friends and family reside as “clannish,” but an alternative interpretation is that settling in areas with others from the same origin provides for economies in communication, information, consumption, and in the labor market (Chiswick and Miller 2005:7). In other words, much is to be gained by residing in an area heavily populated with co-ethnics. As Aguilar-San Juan (2005:37) notes, these areas can be “sites for the creation of social networks, aggregating devices, anchors for identity, and representations of culture.” This argument is consistent with the immigration revitalization perspective, which suggests an influx of immigrants into an area may encourage new forms of social organization and strengthen neighborhood institutions and social ties, which ultimately may help to reduce crime (Martinez 2006:10).

Of course not all communities offer such advantages or resources to residents (see especially Mahler 1995). Many areas of high immigrant concentration are segregated from mainstream society and plagued with poverty, joblessness, and other social ills. Research also documents weak ties among residents in some immigrant communities (Wierzbicki 2004). One must therefore distinguish between areas that are “communities of choice or refuge” compared with “ghettos of last resort” (Glaser, Parker, and Li 2003:526; see also Marcuse 2005:17; Peach 2005:31; Varady 2005:xii). The former describes neighborhoods where co-ethnics of similar economic standing live in close proximity and are held together by the bonds of community, while the latter characterizes poor segregated neighborhoods that immigrants are unable to escape. Martinez et al. (2004:135) also distinguish between neighborhoods with a well-developed “enclave economy” and barrios without such economic institutions where dense network ties may be less helpful.

Beyond this distinction, it is also important to recognize that social and economic cooperation among co-ethnics does not characterize relations in all immigrant communities. A growing literature has begun to identify the conditions under which immigrant social networks and ties can be exploitative (Bonacich 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Aponte 1996; Menjivar 2000). One study of the janitorial industry in Los Angeles, for example, found that ties to co-ethnic family and friends constituted networks of exploitation rather than resource networks (Cranford 2005). The study described how decentralized employment relations, hostile immigration and labor legislation, and a working-class community created a context in which recruitment through social networks facilitated restructuring, where benefits from the networks accrued not to the workers themselves but to building owners (p. 379). In fact, the exploitative and

competitive nature of relations among immigrants was the main focus of one major study of Central and South American immigrants who settled in the United States (Mahler 1995).

Although we recognize that not all immigrant communities offer the refuge or resources to help residents, we maintain that some can provide conditions of ethnic solidarity, community, well-being, and other benefits that ultimately have implications for delinquent and criminal behavior. The mechanisms that transmit these benefits are varied.

### Cultural Preservation

Whether one refers to an “immigrant ethos” (Portes and Zhou 1992) or simply subcultural norms specific to a neighborhood, immigrant communities are key to preserving aspects of ethnic culture, such as language, customs, religious beliefs, lifestyle, and so on. This is important because research outside of criminology has shown that the retention of traditional culture helps explain, in part, why unacculturated Mexican immigrants have lower lifetime prevalence rates of psychiatric disorders compared with acculturated Mexican Americans (Escobar 1998; Vega et al. 1998). As these and other studies show, place is a central component in maintaining and developing subcultural norms and identity, particularly for immigrants. Discussing Pakistani ethnicity in British cities, Dahya (1974) notes, for example:

... the immigrant community's ecological base serves several important functions, which are related to the community's need to create, manifest, and defend its ethnic identity. During the early stages of the community's settlement, the ecological base is closely interwoven with the immigrants' participation in ethnic socioeconomic institutions and mutual aid, and with the community's need to define its identity, both for members and outsiders. Reinforced by endogamy, the ecological base with its concomitant institutions serves as an instrument for the transmission of the community's culture to the second generation. (P. 95)

And in her study of two Vietnamese communities in Orange County, California and Boston, Massachusetts, Aguilar-San Juan (2005:43) claims that retaining a Vietnamese identity entails “working with existing places to create sites for interaction and anchors for identity that preserve ‘old’ traditions and cultures and at the same time develop ‘new’ ways of being Vietnamese in an American context.” This happens to a heightened degree in communities with a critical mass of co-ethnics, which allows members to create what Durkheim (1965) referred to as “moral density,” a concept that refers to the cohesiveness and interdependence of groups within a community. In some cases, community leaders and residents can “reconstruct mini-homelands that reflect and reinforce the cultural and political identities of their constituencies, thus building community” (Aguilar-San Juan 2005:58). In short, community building is facilitated in neighborhoods with high immigrant concentration.

Beyond preserving subcultural norms, uniting members, and building community, members within immigrant communities can be shielded from aspects of American culture that encourage criminal involvement. Sutherland (1934) argued that

acculturation into American society rather than immigration was associated with crime because exposure to mainstream American culture caused immigrants, and especially their children, to become more like native-born citizens in their criminal involvements. Much research supports the notion that assimilated youth fare worse in terms of delinquency than unassimilated youth (Morenoff and Astor 2006; Rumbaut et al. 2006; Zhou and Bankston 2006). For example, more acculturated Hispanics have been found to have similar substance abuse patterns as the general U.S. population, and they go to bars, clubs, and parties more often than do less acculturated Hispanics (Mendes de Leon and Markides 1986; Caetano 1987).

Along these lines, Portes and Rumbaut (2001:59) describe the “challenges confronting immigrant children in U.S. neighborhoods in a social context promoting dropping out of school, joining youth gangs, or participating in the drug subculture.” This alternative path has been called downward assimilation, because socialization into American society for some immigrants does not encourage a path toward upward mobility, but instead results in adopting a deviant lifestyle. Many immigrants settle in areas in or around urban ghettos and assume the tough, aggressive stances common when negotiating the streets (Bourgois 2003). The implication is the “Americanization” experience of recent arrivals, in some cases, parallels the experience of similarly situated African Americans or Latinos in their neighborhoods, schools, or places of work (Martinez et al. 2004:135). In short, immigrant communities can buffer residents and youth from adopting deviant lifestyles in urban communities that are linked to larger structural conditions of disadvantage and discrimination. More importantly, a common ethnic subculture helps to generate social ties among residents, which is a critical factor in the relationship between neighborhoods and crime.

### **Social Ties, Networks, and Informal Social Control**

Areas with high immigrant concentration can provide a sense of home to groups with a lingering feeling of disorientation and displacement, feelings that can lead to stronger social ties among residents. Some sociologists have described immigrant communities as “little worlds” where residents find personal comfort through developing ties with like-minded and culturally similar individuals (Breton 1964). For example, research on communities in Toronto, Canada, where there has been a long history of Black, Jewish, Italian, and Chinese immigrants clustering in neighborhoods, documents how these groups create “little homelands” through individual and group initiative (Harvey 1985:11). In their study of Vietnamese Americans in Little Saigon, Mazumdar et al. (2000) discover that social activities, such as rituals, combine with concrete aspects of the built environment, such as architectural design, to generate deep place ties that shape social relations. Beyond making residents feel at home, the co-ethnic community can provide a dense network of ties, what some might refer to as “localized ties” (Guest and Wierzbicki 1999:109), that serves as a resource for immigrant families, which allows them to confront obstacles to successfully adapting in their new environment.

In tightly knit immigrant communities with limited financial means, these networks are vital in overcoming barriers to success, while simultaneously thwarting family

disruption and other triggers of poverty (Martinez et al. 2004:134). Ethnic social networks can provide informal recruitment, on the job training, and an encouraging environment for starting a new business (Bailey and Waldinger 1991). In other words, ethnic communities can provide information networks for residents that will be valuable in social interaction, consumption, and employment activities. This is due in part to the fact that natives of an area have acquired location-specific human capital, which includes information obtained directly and indirectly through established networks (Chiswick and Miller 2005:7). Ethnic goods, or those goods and services consumed by members of an immigrant/ethnic group that are not consumed by others (Chiswick and Miller 2005:20), are also more likely to be generated and can provide benefits to residents and the community as a whole. Portes and Stepick (1993) highlight the positive effects of recent immigration in stabilizing and reenergizing many of Miami's cultural and economic institutions. Rather than contributing to social disorganization, immigrants strengthened community social control (see also Nyden et al. 1998). In this instance, immigrant communities facilitated social and economic stability, which may have suppressed crime in areas where immigrants resided.

### Employment and Ethnic Entrepreneurship

A final reason why immigrant communities may matter in reducing crime has to do with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. As Waters and Eschbach (1995) note:

When immigrants enter a new society they often face barriers to full inclusion in the economic activities of the host society. Besides through outright discrimination, this occurs, for example, because of the absence of network ties necessary to gain access to or to succeed in certain kinds of activities, because of barriers to entry to professional or internal labor markets that have the effect of excluding those with foreign credentials, because the skills of immigrants are concentrated in specific occupations, and because these skills may not be well matched to the needs of the employers in the host society. (P. 437)

Immigrant communities can provide residents with employment opportunities, opportunities otherwise not available in other neighborhoods. Moreover, researchers maintain that the enclave in particular allows immigrants to find employment that yields better returns to their human capital than would be found in the secondary labor market outside of the area (Waters and Eschbach 1995:438). Although the jobs offered may be low wage, they still provide income and help offset poverty—one of the strongest correlates of crime and delinquency.<sup>2</sup>

In some, but not all, immigrant communities, there is a high degree of institutional completeness, which means that outgroup contact is minimized, and the community is largely self-sufficient. In many cases, a thriving business district not only keeps shop owners and their family members employed, but it constitutes an ethnic economy that can employ or serve the entire community (Aguilar-San Juan 2005:46). As Boal (2005:68) notes, “. . . the ethnic space provides a context for the development of ethnic businesses, professional services (such as lawyers, teachers, doctors, and travel agents), and so on, all oriented to the specific needs of particular ethnic groups.” These ethnic



economies have been especially critical in the last several decades of deindustrialization, when the loss of blue-collar/manufacturing jobs has served to increase employment difficulties for racial and ethnic minorities. One result has been that some new immigrants fare better in the labor force compared with native minorities, what Portes and Zhou (1992:498) describe as the “peculiar American paradox of rising labor market marginalization of native-born blacks and Puerto Ricans, along with growing numbers and employment of third world immigrants.”

In fact, among Latinos, Martinez (2002) notes that joblessness is not particularly widespread. Moreover, Latinos have a relatively strong attachment to the economy through low-paying but fairly stable jobs, particularly in immigrant communities: “attachments to the world of work even through subsistence-paying jobs are part of the bond that fortifies Latino communities and helps them absorb the shock of widespread poverty” (p. 133). It has been suggested that low-wage work is what accounts, in part, for the relatively lower crime and delinquency levels among immigrants in general and Latinos in particular. Furthermore, economic attachment through work is a key factor in reducing family disruption, a major contributor to crime (Sampson 1987).

As the above discussion suggests, there are several reasons to believe immigrant communities can reduce crime and delinquency. It is also the case that such effects may be magnified in communities where residents feel a sense of pride that is linked to their race, ethnicity, or immigrant status. Research on the perceptions and attitudes of ethnic minorities indicates that when residents view their neighborhood as a “community of choice” (compared with a “ghetto of last resort”), they are more likely to report their household is doing better economically than they expected, describe job availability within the community as good, feel they would receive assistance from their neighbors if needed, view their neighbors as people who take care of their property, and indicate their neighborhood is a safe place to raise children (Glaser et al. 2003). These perceptions and attitudes translate into “real-world effects” by influencing neighboring patterns among residents—by developing social ties and networks, and by enhancing informal social control. The result is likely diminished crime and delinquency in such communities.

These claims are not far-fetched. There is some empirical support for the idea that immigrant communities generate lower crime rates. In their study on immigrant communities and drug violence in Miami and San Diego, Martinez et al. (2004:151–2) find that “without exception, those residing in barrios or enclaves did not live in areas with significant levels of drug violence.” And in their study of Chicago neighborhoods, Sampson et al. (2005:229) find that violence is lower for first- and second-generation (compared with third-generation) respondents, and that immigrant status is protective for all racial and ethnic groups except for Puerto Ricans/other Latinos. More relevant to our study, they also find “for individuals living in neighborhoods that are 40% immigrant, the relative odds of violence are about four fifths lower than for otherwise similar individuals living in neighborhoods with no immigrants” (p. 230). The contextual effect of immigrant concentration was robust, persisting even after a host of protective factors, including the immigrant status of the individual, were taken into account.



There is also reason to believe the effects of immigrant concentration will be stronger for some populations than others. Foreign-born compared with native-born youth are more likely to benefit from cultural preservation, the presence of social ties and networks, and employment opportunities in communities with high levels of immigrant concentration because these resources and advantages are directed toward them in particular. In these communities, compared with the native born, immigrants are more likely to be shielded from aspects of American culture that encourage criminal involvement (especially if English is not their primary language), are more likely to create ties and networks with co-ethnics, and are more likely to be presented with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities from their compatriots. Likewise, the effects of immigrant concentration may be heightened among racial and ethnic groups that share the same language, as well as similar customs and religious beliefs. Compared with non-Asian youth, for example, Asian youth are especially likely to benefit from these resources and advantages in communities with high levels of immigrant concentration, especially if the great share of immigrants is Asian to begin with. The same is likely true for Hispanic compared with non-Hispanic youth. Therefore, in this study, we examine the extent to which immigrant concentration may have stronger effects on adolescent violence for Hispanic compared with non-Hispanic, Asian compared with non-Asian, and foreign-born compared with native-born youth.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, as suggested by the literature, while immigrant communities may expose residents to risk factors, they also introduce key protective factors. A growing body of literature has begun to consider whether and to what extent these communities produce less crime and delinquency, but more remains to be done. In their study, Sampson et al. (2005:231) raise possibilities for future research in this area noting “perhaps most important is the need to replicate the results in cities other than Chicago.” Our study takes up this request. Although we are unable to test the precise mechanisms that may operate in immigrant communities as identified above, we nonetheless build on this important literature by determining whether or not immigrant concentration reduces violence among adolescents using a nationally representative sample of youth across the United States. We also assess whether the effects of immigrant concentration on delinquency are stronger for some populations than others.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Sample

This study uses data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The Add Health Study utilized a school-based sampling design. The primary sampling frame was a list of schools that had an 11th grade and an enrollment of more than 30 students. Schools were stratified by region of the country, urbanicity, percent white, size, and school type (public, private, and parochial). A sample of 80 high schools was selected with unequal probability. Fifty-two middle schools that supplied students to the high schools were also included in the sample, for a total of 132 schools.

Based on enrollment lists provided by school administrators, students were randomly selected from each school to complete an In-Home Questionnaire. After the students were stratified by sex and grade (7th–12th), approximately 200 students were randomly selected from each school. The Wave I In-Home Questionnaire was administered between April and December of 1995. Researchers then collected a second wave of data between April and August of 1996 (Wave II In-Home Questionnaires). For each adolescent who completed the first In-Home questionnaire, the researchers also attempted to interview one of the youth's parents. Thus, Parent Questionnaires, which include information about parents and additional information about the adolescents, can be linked to the In-Home Questionnaires completed by the juveniles.<sup>4</sup> Add Health researchers also oversampled select groups, including students with disabilities, identical and fraternal twins, and racial minorities with at least one college educated parent. After accounting for attrition between wave 1 and 2 and missing data, the sample size for our analysis is roughly 9,500.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to these surveys, the Add Health data also contain a large number of contextual variables measured at multiple levels (e.g., counties, census tracts, and block groups). Most of these variables are based on data taken from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing, which the research team linked to respondents' identification numbers. The contextual data provide an indication of the neighborhood context in which adolescents reside. For a more complete description of the Add Health Data, see Harris et al. (2008).

Because of the Add Health's complex sample design, it is necessary to use a statistical software program that can correct for unequal probability of selection and the "clustering" of students within schools. The weights necessary to correct for unequal probability of selection were computed by Add Health researchers. The analyses were conducted using Stata, which can adjust the results to compensate for the school-based sampling design of Add Health. For a thorough discuss of the Add Health sample "design effects," and how corrections are made for purposes of analysis, see Chantala and Tabor (1999).

### Individual-Level Control Variables

Previous research suggests that demographic characteristics such as sex, age, race, and social class are significantly related to delinquency. For this reason, we included a series of control variables in the analyses. Sex was coded as a dichotomous variable (1 = male). Age is a continuous measure that was computed by subtracting the interview date from the adolescent's date of birth. Race (African American, Asian, Native American, and Other Race) was coded as a set of dummy variables. White youths served as the contrast category. Hispanic ethnicity was also coded as a dummy variable (1 = Hispanic). The Add Health sample is 23.2 percent African American, 7.6 percent Asian, 3.6 percent Native American, and 9.4 percent other race/multiracial. Seventeen percent of the youths are Hispanic.

We included two measures of social class—welfare status and parents' level of education. Welfare status was constructed using a series of items from the parent survey. The adult respondent was asked a series of questions about different types of welfare:

“Last month, did you or any member of your household receive” Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and/or a housing subsidy? The variable was coded 1 if the family received any form of welfare and 0 if they did not receive public assistance.

As part of the In-Home Questionnaire, youths were asked to report how far their mothers and fathers went in school. Because many of the adolescents live in single-parent homes with no father present, we elected to use a single measure based on the parent with the highest level of education. When no father is present, which results in father’s education being listed as missing, parent’s education is equal to mother’s education. In rare cases when there is no mother present, parent’s education is equal to father’s education. Finally, when both parents are present, parent’s education reflects the parent with the highest education level.

Previous research suggests that acculturated youth are more likely to engage in delinquency (Mendes de Leon and Markides 1986; Caetano 1987; Harris 1999; Bui and Thongniramol 2005). Therefore, we included a series of variables that indicate the degree to which a youth and his/her family are acculturated. First, we included a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not the youth was born outside the United States (1 = foreign born). Of the youths in the sample, 9.2 percent report they were born outside the United States. Second, in order to distinguish between first and second-generation youth, we included a dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not an adolescent’s parent was born outside the United States (1 = parent is foreign born). Of the parents in the sample, 17.1 percent were born outside the United States. Third, we included a series of dummy variables that indicate the language that is primarily spoken in the home. Three categories—English, Spanish, and other languages—are used, with English as the contrast category. Eight percent of the youths report Spanish is primarily spoken in the home, whereas 3.5 percent report speaking languages other than English or Spanish in their homes.

Additional control variables were included for residential mobility, family structure and process, school attachment and grades, delinquent peer associations, previous delinquency, urbanicity, and region. Residential mobility is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the adolescent moved between wave 1 and wave 2 of the Add Health survey. We used four variables to control for the effect of family structure and process. The first, biological family, was constructed using a household roster that lists every person living within the home. The item was coded 1 if the adolescent lived with both biological parents. Second, four items were combined to form a measure of parent’s attachment to the child ( $\alpha = .731$ ). Parents were asked “How often would it be true for you to make each of the following statements” about their sons or daughters: “You get along well with him/her,” your child and you “make decisions about his/her life together,” and “You feel you can really trust him/her” (0 = never, 4 = always). For the final item, parents were asked whether or not they agreed with the statement “Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with” your child (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). Third, we used five items to compute a measure of attachment to mother and attachment to father: “How close do you feel to your mom/dad?,” “How much do you think he/she cares about

you?,” “Most of the time your mother/father is warm and loving toward you,” “You are satisfied with the way your mother/father and you communicate with each other,” and “Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your mother/father.” The response format for the first two items ranged from 0 = not at all to 4 = very much. The response format for the last three questions ranged from 0 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Responses to each item were combined to form an index of attachment to mother and to father (alpha for mother attachment = .941, alpha for father attachment = .980). We then averaged the attachment indices to form a single measure of parental attachment. Finally, we used seven items to create a measure of supervision (alpha = .641). Adolescents were asked: “Do your parents let you make your own decisions about . . .”: “the time you must be home on weekend nights,” “the people you hang around with,” “what you eat,” “what you wear,” “how much television you watch,” “which television programs you watch,” and “what time you go to bed on weeknights.” Higher scores indicate greater supervision (i.e., parents make these decisions, rather than adolescents).

The adolescents’ grades were measured using a computed grade point average. Adolescents reported the grade they received in four subjects during “the most recent grading period”: English or language arts, math, history or social studies, and science. The items were coded 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, and 1 = D or lower (alpha = .982). We also used five items to construct a measure of school attachment (alpha = .761). Adolescents were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements: “You feel close to people at your school,” “You feel like you are part of your school,” “You are happy to be at your school,” “The teachers at your school treat students fairly,” and “You feel safe in your school” (0 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree).

The delinquent peers measure consists of three items: “Of your three best friends, how many . . .”: “smoke at least one cigarette a day?,” “drink alcohol at least once a month?,” and “use marijuana at least once a month?” Each variable uses the same response format: 0 = no friends, 1 = one friend, 2 = two friends, and 3 = three friends (alpha = .756). We also used a measure of previous delinquent behavior as a control variable. We created a single composite measure of delinquency, taken from the first wave of data, that combines 15 different items related to violence, theft, and substance use (alpha = .770).

Finally, because immigrants tend to settle in certain regions of the country—and in particular cities and communities within those regions—we included measures of urbanicity and region. Urbanicity is a census variable, measured at the block group level, that indicates the proportion of the population that lives in an urban area. Region is represented by a series of dummy variables, Northeast, Midwest, and West (South is the contrast category).

### Neighborhood-Level Variables

In this study, neighborhood context is measured at the block group level. Gephart (1997:10) argues “although administrative units, such as census tracts and block groups, are imperfect proxies for the concept of local community, they generally possess more ecological integrity than cities or SMSAs, and they are more closely linked to the causal

processes assumed to underlie the outcomes of interest.” Previous research on neighborhoods has used both census tracts and block groups, yet because block groups are smaller than census tracts, they more accurately capture the day-to-day lived experience of adolescents.

Traditionally, neighborhood studies include measures of economic disadvantage, residential stability, and racial heterogeneity. Our index of disadvantage combined five items that measure the economic well-being of the neighborhood, including the proportion of female-headed households, the proportion of households receiving public assistance, the proportion of persons living below the poverty level, the proportion of persons 18 and over with no high school diploma, and the proportion of unemployed residents ( $\alpha = .879$ ). Residential stability was measured using a single item: proportion of occupied housing units moved into in the last 5 years. Racial heterogeneity was measured using a single item that captures the level of racial dispersion in a neighborhood. The measure ranges from 0 (completely homogenous) to 1 (completely heterogeneous).<sup>6</sup>

For our key contextual measure, immigrant concentration, we combined two variables. The first indicates the proportion of the population that is foreign born. The second is the proportion of persons aged 5 and over who speak English not well or not at all ( $\alpha = .862$ ). This measure is consistent with other neighborhood studies that examine immigrant concentration (LeClerc et al. 1997:176; Sampson et al. 2005:228; see also Silver and Miller 2004:562). Although the mean for immigrant concentration is .071, the variable ranges from .000 to a maximum of .860. Therefore, the sample does include neighborhoods with high concentrations of foreign-born, non-English speakers.<sup>7</sup>

### Dependent Variable: Violence

Our dependent variable measures adolescent violence over the course of a year. To create the measure, we combined five items from wave 2 of the survey: “Use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone,” “Take part in a fight where a group of your friends was against another group,” “Gotten into a serious physical fight,” “Pulled a knife or gun on someone,” and “Shot or stabbed someone.” The original items are not coded using the same response format. The format for the first three items is 0 = never, 1 = 1 or 2 times, 2 = 3 or 4 times, 3 = 5 or more times, whereas the format for the last two items is 0 = never, 1 = once, and 2 = more than once. Following previous research that has used the Add Health data to study delinquent behavior (Haynie 2001; Bellair, Roscigno, and McNulty 2003), each item was converted to a dichotomous variable in order to create an index (1 = adolescent had engaged in the behavior or 0 = adolescent had not engaged in the behavior). The variables were then combined to form an index (Kuder–Richardson 20 = .700). Thus, the measure of violence represents the number of different violent acts the adolescent had committed. Put another way, it is a measure of the “breadth” of delinquent involvement, rather than a measure of the “frequency” of delinquent behaviors. The mean level of violence for the sample is .477. Almost

one-third (28.7 percent) of the youths reported committing at least one violent act in the previous year.

### Analytic Strategy

Given that our dependent variable represents an ordinal scale, we used ordered logistic regression (see Bellair et al. 2003:14). We conducted the analysis in a series of steps. First, we predict adolescent violence using the individual-level variables. Second, controlling for these individual-level variables, we incorporate the traditional neighborhood measures, economic disadvantage, residential mobility, and racial heterogeneity. Finally, we include all of these, plus our measure of immigrant concentration, to determine whether immigrant communities help to reduce adolescent violence. In additional models, we examine the specific effects of immigrant concentration on minority group members, including Hispanic, Asian, and foreign-born youth.<sup>8</sup>

## RESULTS

Model 1 of Table 1 displays the regression results for the individual-level predictors of adolescent violence. The results are consistent with previous research. Boys are more likely to commit acts of violence than girls. Also, compared with white youths, African American, Native American, and Hispanic youths are more likely to report engaging in violence. The only other variables to have a significant effect on adolescent violence are age, parent's education, grades, delinquent peers, and prior delinquency. This is not surprising. Previous research suggests social bonding measures, such as parent and school attachment, have a stronger effect on minor delinquency than serious acts of violence. Also, association with delinquent peers mediates the effect of many other variables in the model. Even more importantly, controlling for prior delinquency reduces the effects of several measures.

In model 2, we added the three neighborhood measures. Both neighborhood disadvantage and residential mobility have significant effects on violence. Adolescents who live in economically disadvantaged and residentially unstable neighborhoods are more likely to report they have committed acts of violence, a finding consistent with the literature (Elliott et al. 1996). Adding the neighborhood variables does little to change the pattern of results for the individual-level measures, except for the effect of race. Controlling for neighborhood context reduces the coefficient for African Americans by 25 percent, for Hispanics by 10 percent, and for Native Americans by 14 percent. Thus, consistent with previous research, the results suggest racial minorities report engaging in more violence, in part, because they live in more socially disadvantaged neighborhoods.

In the third model, we added a measure of immigrant concentration. Consistent with our argument, the results suggest that immigrant concentration has a significant, negative effect on violence. Therefore, as the percentage of neighborhood residents who are foreign-born and/or non-English speakers increases, adolescents are less likely to engage in violence. That immigrant concentration is a significant predictor, even after controlling for traditional measures of neighborhood context, as well as a host of

TABLE 1. Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Youth Violence on Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics (Adjusted Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual controls			
Male	.677 (.063)**	.680 (.063)**	.681 (.063)**
Age	-.203 (.023)**	-.199 (.024)**	-.198 (.024)**
African American	.393 (.095)**	.296 (.108)**	.278 (.109)*
Asian	.266 (.220)	.142 (.217)	.151 (.215)
Native American	.444 (.183)*	.381 (.173)*	.375 (.172)*
Other race	.160 (.124)	.140 (.129)	.119 (.130)
Hispanic	.373 (.132)**	.335 (.135)*	.372 (.141)*
Welfare	.063 (.094)	-.011 (.100)	-.015 (.100)
Parent education	-.061 (.015)**	-.053 (.015)**	-.051 (.015)**
Foreign born	-.193 (.177)	-.227 (.177)	-.206 (.176)
Parent foreign born	.005 (.162)	.041 (.158)	.071 (.160)
Language Spanish	-.111 (.150)	-.174 (.153)	-.069 (.156)
Language other	-.471 (.355)	-.507 (.358)	-.479 (.351)
Moved	.077 (.165)	.032 (.178)	.036 (.178)
Biological family	-.099 (.059)	-.097 (.061)	-.101 (.061)
Attachment to child	-.020 (.015)	-.024 (.015)	-.024 (.015)
Parental attachment	-.013 (.011)	-.012 (.011)	-.013 (.011)
Supervision	.016 (.017)	.012 (.018)	.012 (.018)
Grades	-.197 (.047)**	-.191 (.048)**	-.193 (.048)**
School attachment	-.005 (.009)	-.007 (.009)	-.006 (.009)
Delinquent peers	.167 (.045)**	.156 (.044)**	.154 (.043)**
Prior delinquency	.334 (.018)**	.338 (.017)**	.338 (.017)**
Urban	.019 (.071)	-.039 (.073)	-.022 (.073)
Northeast	-.109 (.103)	-.093 (.104)	-.088 (.104)
Midwest	.026 (.082)	.078 (.086)	.070 (.087)
West	.083 (.127)	.171 (.132)	.175 (.129)
Neighborhood			
Disadvantage		1.098 (.437)*	1.178 (.440)**
Residential mobility		.495 (.216)*	.508 (.217)*
Racial heterogeneity		.217 (.167)	.257 (.167)
Immigrant concentration			-.747 (.377)*

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

individual-level factors, suggests that immigrant concentration represents an important aspect of community context that inhibits youth violence.

As the findings in Table 1 show, immigrant concentration has a significant negative effect on adolescent violence. But do immigrant communities reduce violence for all adolescents, or is the effect limited to certain populations? For example, does immigrant concentration reduce violence among minority youth compared with non-minority youth? Or foreign-born compared with native-born adolescents? In order to determine



**TABLE 2.** Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Analysis of Hispanic Subgroups (Adjusted Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
<b>Individual controls</b>		
Male	.707 (.177)**	.689 (.068)**
Age	-.236 (.054)**	-.192 (.027)**
African American	.274 (.500)	.282 (.114)*
Asian	.192 (.315)	.158 (.245)
Native American	.087 (.273)	.489 (.214)*
Other race	.229 (.148)	-.387 (.302)
<b>Hispanic</b>		
Welfare	.117 (.246)	-.061 (.113)
Parent education	.013 (.029)	-.065 (.016)**
Foreign born	-.041 (.265)	-.245 (.266)
Parent foreign born	.046 (.221)	.163 (.206)
Language Spanish	.031 (.203)	.492 (.675)
Language other	.192 (.510)	-.698 (.442)
Moved	.004 (.286)	.059 (.197)
Biological family	.021 (.167)	-.110 (.069)
Attachment to child	-.019 (.030)	-.025 (.016)
Parental attachment	-.022 (.028)	-.012 (.012)
Supervision	.040 (.057)	.007 (.019)
Grades	-.242 (.112)*	-.180 (.052)**
School attachment	.029 (.032)	-.012 (.010)
Delinquent peers	.354 (.110)**	.123 (.049)*
Prior delinquency	.338 (.043)**	.340 (.019)**
Urban	.318 (.274)	-.041 (.076)
Northeast	.040 (.240)	-.127 (.126)
Midwest	-.223 (.370)	.080 (.092)
West	.060 (.304)	.191 (.132)
<b>Neighborhood</b>		
Disadvantage	2.068 (1.222)	1.108 (.466)*
Residential mobility	.386 (.616)	.502 (.234)*
Racial heterogeneity	-.167 (.336)	.302 (.200)
Immigrant concentration	-.981 (.483)*	-.543 (.993)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

whether the protective effect of immigrant concentration applies equally to all types of youth, we conducted a series of subgroup analyses in which we focused on Hispanic, Asian, and foreign-born youth. The results are shown in Tables 2 to 4.<sup>9</sup>

Table 2 displays the results for the analysis of Hispanic youth. The results show that immigrant concentration is significantly negatively related to Hispanic youth violence (Table 2, column 1). On the other hand, immigrant concentration is not significantly associated with non-Hispanic youth violence (the coefficient is negative but not

significant). To test the divergent effects of immigrant concentration for Hispanic and non-Hispanic adolescents, we used the equation,  $t = b_1 - b_2 / \sqrt{(SEb_1^2 + SEb_2^2)}$  (Paternoster et al. 1998). The results indicated the coefficients for immigrant concentration were not significantly different at the  $p < .05$  level.

With respect to the other measures, many of the variables have the same effect on Hispanics and non-Hispanics. For example, sex, age, grades, and prior delinquency have significant effects on violence for both groups. Furthermore, there is not a significant difference in the strength of the effects between groups. On the other hand, parent's education, neighborhood disadvantage, and residential mobility are significantly related to violence for non-Hispanic, but not Hispanic, youth. The effect of parent's education is stronger for non-Hispanics ( $t = 2.36, p < .01$ ), but the effects for neighborhood disadvantage and residential mobility are not. Finally, although associating with delinquent peers has a significant effect on Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth violence, the effect is stronger for Hispanic youths ( $t = 1.92, p < .05$ ). Thus, parent's education contributes to less adolescent violence for non-Hispanics, whereas delinquent peers contribute disproportionately to Hispanic violence.

Table 3 displays the results for Asians and non-Asians. As with Hispanics, we find that Asian adolescents who live in immigrant communities are significantly less likely to commit acts of violence compared to non-Asian youth. Unlike with Hispanics, however, the effect of immigrant concentration is significantly different across the subgroups ( $t = -1.88, p < .05$ ). Thus, immigrant concentration has a stronger effect on Asian than non-Asian violence.

With regard to the other variables, the pattern of results for Asians and non-Asians is comparable in a few respects, but there are more differences. For both Asians and non-Asians, prior delinquency has a significant effect on violence and males are more likely to report committing violent acts. On the other hand, age, parent's education, grades, and delinquent peers all have significant effects on non-Asian violence, but not on violence committed by Asian youth. None of the effects, however, are significantly different across subgroups. Although immigrant concentration has a significant effect on violence for Asian youths, neighborhood disadvantage, residential mobility, and racial heterogeneity all have significant effects on non-Asian violence. Although none of these effects is significantly different across subgroups, the pattern of results suggests the causes of Asian and non-Asian youth violence may be quite different. Immigrant concentration is one of the few significant predictors of violence among Asian youth, and it is the only measure of neighborhood context that is significantly related to Asian youth violence. In contrast, more of the variables are significantly associated with non-Asian violence, and three of the four indicators of neighborhood context contribute to violence among non-Asian adolescents.

In addition to examining the effects of immigrant communities on minority adolescents, we compared foreign-born youth with those born in the United States. Table 4 presents the results of this comparison. As the table indicates, immigrant concentration has a significant negative effect on violence among foreign-born youths, but it is not significantly related to violence among native-born adolescents. However,

**TABLE 3.** Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Analysis of Asian Subgroups (Adjusted Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Asian	Non-Asian
Individual controls		
Male	1.443 (.507)**	.667 (.066)**
Age	.085 (.172)	-.194 (.024)**
African American		
Asian		
Native American		
Other race		
Hispanic		
Welfare	-.836 (.568)	.000 (.097)
Parent education	-.119 (.074)	-.054 (.016)**
Foreign born	-.825 (.470)	-.161 (.203)
Parent foreign born	.759 (.603)	.075 (.152)
Language Spanish	-3.746 (1.26)**	.090 (.173)
Language other	-.502 (.873)	-.249 (.438)
Moved	1.253 (.716)	-.015 (.186)
Biological family	-.863 (.451)	-.121 (.065)
Attachment to child	.124 (.088)	-.025 (.015)
Parental attachment	-.185 (.122)	-.009 (.011)
Supervision	-.112 (.137)	.016 (.018)
Grades	.104 (.334)	-.198 (.047)**
School attachment	.109 (.071)	-.006 (.010)
Delinquent peers	-.084 (.210)	.154 (.045)**
Prior delinquency	.497 (.089)**	.341 (.018)**
Urban	-.472 (.359)	.001 (.075)
Northeast	-.215 (.822)	.001 (.104)
Midwest	1.679 (1.141)	.053 (.088)
West	.581 (1.564)	.176 (.120)
Neighborhood		
Disadvantage	2.348 (4.903)	1.501 (.407)**
Residential mobility	-.490 (.970)	.444 (.219)*
Racial heterogeneity	2.471 (1.460)	.431 (.173)*
Immigrant concentration	-7.283 (3.603)*	-.491 (.344)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

the effect of immigrant concentration is not significantly different across the subgroups.

The results also suggest that two individual-level predictors of violence are significantly different for foreign- and native-born adolescents. First, foreign-born black youth are more likely to engage in violence compared with native-born black youth ( $t = 1.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ). And second, foreign-born youth that identify as “other race” are more likely to engage in violence compared with other race youth born in the United States ( $t = 2.77$ ,

TABLE 4. Ordered Logistic Regression Results for Analysis of Foreign-Born Subgroups (Adjusted Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Foreign born	Native born
Individual controls		
Male	1.078 (.312)**	.673 (.066)**
Age	-.379 (.105)**	-.194 (.025)**
African American	1.260 (.523)*	.264 (.113)*
Asian	.695 (.700)	.155 (.203)
Native American	1.597 (1.041)	.350 (.180)
Other race	1.177 (.426)**	-.088 (.166)
Hispanic	.039 (.517)	.451 (.154)**
Welfare	.012 (.407)	-.015 (.100)
Parent education	-.033 (.059)	-.052 (.016)**
Foreign born		
Parent foreign born	.074 (.479)	.072 (.173)
Language Spanish	.676 (.535)	-.138 (.209)
Language other	-.014 (.767)	-.458 (.384)
Moved	.342 (.521)	.029 (.189)
Biological family	-.234 (.333)	-.096 (.064)
Attachment to child	-.107 (.073)	-.022 (.015)
Parental attachment	-.090 (.061)	-.010 (.011)
Supervision	-.088 (.131)	.013 (.018)
Grades	-.127 (.220)	-.198 (.048)**
School attachment	.045 (.070)	-.007 (.009)
Delinquent peers	.176 (.232)	.151 (.045)**
Prior delinquency	.379 (.079)**	.338 (.018)**
Urban	.126 (.674)	-.027 (.074)
Northeast	-.627 (.445)	-.069 (.105)
Midwest	-1.575 (.950)	.093 (.086)
West	-.699 (.577)	.199 (.125)
Neighborhood		
Disadvantage	2.006 (3.257)	1.238 (.451)**
Residential mobility	-.801 (1.148)	.560 (.220)*
Racial heterogeneity	.118 (.807)	.260 (.171)
Immigrant concentration	-2.119 (.987)*	-.614 (.474)

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

$p < .01$ ). Although not significantly different across the two groups, sex, age, and prior delinquency are related to violence for both foreign-born and native-born youth. On the other hand, there are many more predictors of native-born youth violence such as Hispanic ethnicity, parent education, grades, delinquent peers, neighborhood disadvantage, and residential mobility. None of these was significant in the foreign-born model.

In addition to the analyses just reported, we also examined the effect of immigrant concentration across other subgroups, including non-English and English-speaking

adolescents and immigrant youth who recently arrived in the United States compared with earlier arrivals. Concerning language use, the results were similar to those for Hispanic, Asian, and foreign-born adolescents. That is, immigrant concentration was negatively related to violence for non-English speakers. However, the effect of immigrant concentration was not significantly different across the groups. The results for arrival status indicate that immigrant concentration was not significantly related to violence for early or late arrivals, although the coefficient for recent arrivals was almost significant (coefficient =  $-3.12$ ,  $p = .051$ ). For both analyses, however, the sample sizes were quite small, so these results are only suggestive.

In addition to the findings for Hispanic, Asian, and foreign-born youth, the results for language use and arrival status also suggest the violence inhibiting effects of immigrant concentration may be limited to specific groups of adolescents. Specifically, minority youths or foreign-born adolescents who maintain ties to their original culture because they are recent arrivals in the United States or continue to use the language of their country of origin are less likely to commit acts of violence. As these youths become acculturated, however, the violence inhibiting effects of immigrant concentration may be reduced.

## CONCLUSION

Immigrants and immigration have been central to neighborhood research since the writings of the Chicago School theorists. Many would argue that immigration is just as important today, if not more so. According to some scholars, the latest wave of immigration is likely to have a greater impact on society than any other social issue (Martinez and Lee 2000:485). Unfortunately, it has been shown that the public's understanding of the immigration–crime link is informed more often by stereotypes than reliable data (Hagan and Palloni 1999:617; Martinez and Lee 2000:487). For this reason, studies such as this are critical in redefining public perception.

The main finding of this study is immigrant concentration in a community reduces adolescent violence. Youths that reside in neighborhoods with large numbers of foreign-born and non-English speaking residents report fewer acts of violence, controlling for a host of individual-level and neighborhood predictors. We also find that this effect is stronger for some populations than others. Asian, compared with non-Asian, youth are particularly less likely to engage in violence in communities with large concentrations of immigrants. Differences across Hispanic and non-Hispanic and foreign-born and non-foreign-born subgroups also suggest differences, although these differences are not statistically significant. In short, we find strong support for the idea that immigrant communities protect against youth violence, although whether or not these protective effects apply equally to all types of adolescents is less certain.

Do our findings regarding immigrant concentration suggest we promote creating racially homogeneous rather than heterogeneous neighborhoods? No. Instead of changing neighborhood racial composition, we believe, along with others, that efforts should extend to developing the associated mechanisms that hinder crime. In other words,

efforts should be directed toward building those mechanisms that “preserve, protect, and promote the social and cultural capital that . . . immigrants bring to their experience in the United States” (Hagan and Palloni 1999:631). As discussed in the article, these mechanisms include cultural preservation, social ties and networks, informal social control, employment, and opportunities for entrepreneurship.

There are some weaknesses in this study that warrant attention. First, we do not have a measure that differentiates types of immigrant communities. Future research must disaggregate immigrant communities to better distinguish between “communities of choice” and “ghettoes of last resort,” particularly since research has documented stark differences across these types of neighborhoods. For example, Glaser et al. (2003) find that if residents view their neighborhood as a community of choice, they will be more likely to hold positive perceptions of neighbors and to join with local government to coproduce community improvement, and they will be less fearful of crime. Conversely, those who view where they live as a ghetto of last resort are less likely to believe their neighbors will come to their assistance if needed, are more concerned about the desirability of their neighborhood, and are more likely to define crime as a big problem in their community.

Qualitative research will go a long way in efforts to distinguish different types of immigrant communities, particularly as such differences affect neighboring relations among residents (see Waters and Eschbach 1995:439). Research outside of criminology has identified several aspects of “place” that are central to residential life for immigrants. These include location (which helps to determine a community’s access to needed resources), material culture (such as architectural design, the layout of a neighborhood, street signage, monuments, and public art, which build tradition and character and allow residents to organize and comprehend their surroundings), and representation (which refers to the process by which places are hooked to social meaning, history, or purpose) (Aguilar-San Juan 2005:39–40). It is through qualitative research on ethnic and immigrant communities—through fieldwork and in-depth interviews with residents, elected officials, clergy, community advocates, and social workers—that researchers will be able to more fully specify the relationship between “place” and community, and ultimately determine its effects on crime and delinquency.

A second limitation is our study does not include measures that capture the intervening processes by which immigrant concentration influences crime and delinquency. In line with our findings, studies outside of criminology consistently document that individuals residing in immigrant communities or enclaves fare better along a number of important health and social dimensions. What is less certain from both this study and other research, however, is *why* this is the case. Researchers who study health outcomes suggest, and we agree, that “the process by which a community enhances longevity may need to be captured not in its structural characteristics but rather in its social content” (LeClere et al. 1997:191). Once again, researchers will likely need to move beyond quantitative data to accurately capture these intervening mechanisms. In short, this study has not been able to properly distinguish between types of immigrant communities, nor has it been able to directly measure neighborhood-level processes that

differentiate these communities. Yet we agree wholeheartedly with the claim that “concentrated populations do not necessarily give rise to powerful communities or recognizable places without people consciously working to build them” (Aguilar-San Juan 2005:60).

As an additional consideration, future research should attempt to examine the effect of immigrant concentration on specific racial/ethnic groups, given there are substantial differences across subgroups within each race and ethnicity. Unfortunately, because of Add Health data limitations, we are unable to assess how, for example, immigrant concentration differentially affects Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos or Vietnamese, Japanese, and Filipinos. Yet there are likely to be differences among these groups in terms of migration histories, settlement patterns, legal statuses, and so on, with implications for how immigrant concentration may influence violence and other adolescent behaviors.

Finally, we also encourage future research to examine the influence of neighborhood immigrant concentration on adolescent violence over the life course. Based on data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, Rumbaut (2005) argues incarceration can constitute a significant turning point in the lives of many immigrant youth. In the current study, we use measures of adolescent violence from wave 2 of the Add Health survey. Since additional waves of Add Health also contain measures of violence and other forms of delinquency, longitudinal studies covering a longer period of time can be conducted with these data.

Future directions aside, this national study builds on a growing literature that documents a negative relationship between immigrant concentration and crime. As other studies have documented, immigrant communities are a vital part of urban life, and our findings indicate that immigrant concentration constitutes an important aspect of local context that influences youth behavior. In this sense, immigrant communities exist not merely as locations for settlement. They are not simply spaces or empty vessels into which immigrants are poured. Instead, as the immigration revitalization thesis suggests, they can be viewed as the medium through which communities are established, as locales that contextualize immigrant social life and provide opportunities (and, in some cases, constraints), which ultimately affect a variety of behaviors, including crime and delinquency.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the findings of this study refute popular stereotypes about the immigration–crime relationship. As discussed in a recent Open Letter on Immigrants and Crime signed by noted sociologists and criminologists, “myths and stereotypes about immigrants, rather than established facts, far too often serve as the basis for public perceptions that drive misguided immigration policies.” The time for empirical findings to replace misinformed public opinion is long overdue.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See also Butcher and Piehl (1998) and Reid et al. (2005) for similar findings using cities and metropolitan areas.

<sup>2</sup>Here we wish to acknowledge a sizable literature that demonstrates that low-wage employment and crime are linked. In particular, studies report that young adults employed in what dual labor market theory calls “secondary sector jobs” are more likely to engage in crime than those in more stable jobs (Crutchfield 1989; Crutchfield and Pitchford 1997), and that metropolitan areas with few quality jobs for less educated workers have higher crime rates than other areas (Weiss and Reid 2005). These findings notwithstanding, we suggest that low-wage employment is still preferable to unemployment and can help reduce poverty levels for immigrants, which can minimize delinquency.

<sup>3</sup>The same may not be true, however, for African American youth who reside in immigrant communities. As we have theorized, immigrant concentration may reduce adolescent violence through creating ethnic solidarity, maintaining elements of ethnic culture such as language, customs, and religious beliefs, providing employment in the ethnic economy, creating and maintaining an ethnic identity, and shielding ethnic minorities from acculturation into American society. Theoretically, we do not believe that immersion into a community of foreign-born, non-English-speaking immigrants would provide these same benefits to many African American youth. Therefore, in the analyses, we do not make comparisons between African and non-African American youth.

<sup>4</sup>To protect confidentiality, Add Health researchers did not use paper questionnaires. Instead, respondents’ answers were recorded on laptop computers. For less sensitive topics, interviewers read the questions and entered respondents’ answers. For more sensitive topics, respondents listened to prerecorded questions using earphones and entered their answers directly. These procedures minimized the potential for parents and interviewers to influence adolescents’ responses to sensitive questions.

<sup>5</sup>Unfortunately, since the Add Health study used a school-based sampling design, high school dropouts are unlikely to be included in the sample. Particularly important for our study, Latinos are more likely to drop out of school, as are the most violent youths. Thus, although these data have many advantages, the school-based sampling design is a limitation of our study that we are unable to address.

<sup>6</sup>The heterogeneity measure is based on the following formula:  $D = k(N^2 - \sum f_i^2) / N^2(k - 1)$ , where  $k$  is the number of racial categories (white, black, other race/ethnicity),  $N^2$  is the sum of all categories squared, and  $\sum f_i^2$  is the sum of squared category frequencies over all  $i$  ( $=1, k$ ) groups. If  $D = 0$ , only one category is nonzero; if  $D = 1$ , all category frequencies are equal.

<sup>7</sup>Neighborhood measures can be highly correlated, which can cause multicollinearity. For the analysis, however, the highest correlation was only .38 (between immigrant concentration and racial heterogeneity). Diagnostics also indicate that collinearity is not a problem; the highest variance inflation factor was only 2.51.

<sup>8</sup>Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) may seem an appropriate methodological approach given that our sample consists of individuals nested within schools and neighborhoods. Although others may disagree, we believe it is unwise to conduct a neighborhood (block-group) analysis on Add Health using HLM because most block groups have very few individuals. The Add Health data contain more than 4,400 block groups. On average, there are less than five adolescents in each block group, and in many of the block groups, there is only one adolescent. We could use HLM if we restricted the data to those block groups with a sufficient number of adolescents to obtain reliable estimates. But for a substantive study focused on the effects of neighborhood context, deleting a large number of block groups for the sake of using a multilevel model seems difficult to justify, especially since the “design effects” (e.g., clustering) of Add Health can be corrected without HLM (see Chantala and Tabor 1999), which we do in the current study.

<sup>9</sup>To clarify, our subgroup analyses are not limited to immigrant youth. When comparing Latino with non-Latino youth, we use the entire sample. We do not compare Latino immigrants with non-Latino immigrants. We also use the entire sample for the comparison of Asian and non-Asian youth. For our third subgroup analysis, we compare foreign-born youth (of any race/ethnicity) with native-born youth (of any race/ethnicity).

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