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Evidence from New York City

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Abstract

Immigration and crime have received much popular and political attention in the past decade, and have been a focus of episodic social attention for much of the history of the U.S. Recent policy and legal discourse suggests that the stigmatic link between immigrants and crime has endured, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. This study addresses the relationship between immigration and crime in urban settings, focusing on areal units where immigrants tend to cluster spatially as well as socially. We ask whether immigration creates risks or benefits for neighborhoods in terms of lower crime rates. The question is animated in part by a durable claim in criminology that areas with large immigrant populations are burdened by elevated levels of social disorder and crime. In contrast, more recent theory and research suggests that “immigrant neighborhoods” may simply be differentially organized and function in a manner that reduces the incidence of crime. Accordingly, this research investigates whether immigrants are associated with differences in area crime rates. In addition, we ask whether there are differences in the effects of immigration on neighborhood crime rates by the racial and ethnic makeup of the foreign born populations. Finally, we examine the effects of immigration on patterns of enforcement.

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Keywords: Immigration; ethnicity; law enforcement; generalized propensity scores

Introduction

Historically, immigration has been associated with crime and other social ills in popular and political culture (Hagan and Palloni 1998; McDonald 2009). Waves of immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries brought with them moral panics on drugs and alcohol, gangs, delinquency, organized crime, wage suppression, and drains on public resources (Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008; Sampson 2008). More recently, the presumed link to crime has provided a significant rationale for a variety of punitive responses to immigration. In Arizona, the 2010 killing of Robert Krentz made tangible generalized anxiety about immigrant crime (Archibold 2010). Although no suspect was identified, speculation that the killer was an illegal alien helped secure the passage of Arizona’s draconian (anti)immigration bill. The spectre of immigrant-crime similarly aided in generating public support for “copy cat” legislation in Georgia and Alabama. Even laws that ostensibly were more about the economics of immigration, such

as California's Proposition 187, nonetheless were buttressed by allusions not just to the potential for financial burdens on labor markets, education and health care from illegal immigration, but also to criminal activity among some illegal immigrants.

Thus, as part of the broader debate about immigration, the putative connection between immigration crime is of considerable political and practical import. The presumptive connection has motivated new efforts to link local law enforcement with immigration enforcement (Varsanyi, Lewis, Provine, and Decker forthcoming). The new intersection of criminal enforcement with immigration has led some scholars to label illegal immigration as "crimigration," a linguistic and conceptual move to broaden the mandate of local police to systematically and routinely engage in immigration enforcement (Sklansky forthcoming).

Still, despite the recent involvement of local police in immigration enforcement, research and theoretical interest in immigration in criminology has been episodic (Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008). In the early 20th century, immigration figured prominently in theories of neighborhood and crime, particularly *social disorganization* (Shaw and McKay 1943; Bursik 1988; Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson 2008). Often arriving in poverty, many immigrants, principally from southern and eastern Europe, were forced to settle in the poorest, areas of the city. Subsequently, immigrants were scapegoated for the problems attendant with these urban slums. Studies of street gangs in the 1920s in Chicago depicted gang conflict as a function of ethnic and racial conflicts among first and second generation immigrant youths (e.g., Thrasher 1927). The early juvenile courts in Chicago and other urban areas targeted the children of immigrants for a paternalistic form of social control (Tanenhaus 2004; Platt 1969; Sealander 2003). Shaw and McKay's (1943) critical insight was that rates of delinquency remained pretty stable among Chicago's neighborhoods between 1900 and 1933, despite dramatic changes in the composition of these neighborhoods. In other words, crime rates were not contingent upon the racial and ethnic make-up of an area; rather, crime was related to neighborhood conditions, specifically poverty, anonymity, and heterogeneity. In this way, the legacy of social disorganization in relation to immigrants is somewhat mixed. On one hand, the theory offers a strong refutation of the notion that immigrants are inherently criminal. On the other hand, the theory does predict higher crime rates in areas inhabited by newly arrived immigrants.

Interest in immigration among criminologists has ebbed and flowed with immigration itself. Between the 1920s and 1965, restrictions on the number of immigrants entering the US pushed immigration to the background. When the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act ended quotas based on nationality, immigration rates leaped dramatically, and the stigmatic link between immigration and crime again became part of the political and popular discourse on immigration. Still, interest in immigration among criminologists has been revived only in the last decade, as theories of neighborhoods (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002) and social networks (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2009) began to incorporate the unique contexts of immigration. Much of this more recent research has challenged stereotypical assertions and suggested that the connection between immigration and crime is more myth than reality: immigrants are not more "crime-prone" than native-born Americans, and, on balance, immigration does not increase neighborhood crime rates

(Butcher and Piehl 1998). In fact, emerging evidence indicates that immigration may improve neighborhood conditions and reduce levels of crime.

Nonetheless, research on the immigration-crime nexus continues to be a work-in-progress, and a number of important issues remain. Among the most important of these concerns the disaggregation of immigration. As noted above, *total* immigration does not appear to promote higher crime rates. But this population is hardly homogeneous. Immigrants are drawn from a wide range of diverse countries, cultures and racial and ethnic groups. Nowhere is this more evident than in New York City (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2009). For this reason, this study examines patterns of crime among racial and ethnic subgroups in New York, and the effects of New York's Order Maintenance Policing strategy (Fagan, Geller, Davies, and West 2010; Zimring 2011) in immigrant neighborhoods.

Perspectives on Immigration, Crime, and Enforcement

As in the past, the spectre of elevated crime rates among immigrants has animated or reinforced specific law enforcement tactics that seek to counter unique forms of criminal activity or organizations among immigrants (Rumbaut and Ewing 2007). Programs such as the federal Secure Communities Program (United States Customs and Immigration Enforcement Agency (USCIEA) 2009; Homeland Security Advisory Council 2011) up the ante in this debate by attempting to establish a link between "ordinary" crime, immigration violations, and national security threats (Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008; Varsanyi, Lewis, Provine, and Decker forthcoming; Sklansky forthcoming). Some gang violence suppression initiatives also focus on the nexus of immigration and street gangs, and these links become even more contentious when immigration is linked to violence from drug trafficking (Stuntz 2002), as in the *Krentz* case.

These efforts are predicated on assumptions that immigrants commit more crimes, and that urban neighborhoods of immigrant concentration are important targets for enhanced law enforcement. Whether immigration contributes to or attenuates neighborhood crime rates is a contentious debate (see, e.g., Butcher and Piehl 1998; 2007). The sociological and criminological literature offers grounds both to support and reject these claims. Below we briefly sketch out the evidence on these competing perspectives on the effects of immigration, and follow that with empirical tests from New York City, a place that has been an important immigration reception context throughout the history of the U.S. (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2009; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

The Bad: Why might immigration increase neighborhood crime rates?

The presumptive association between immigration and crime does not only reflect simple nativism and prejudice. Immigration was, from the start, built into theories of crime in neighborhoods. Social disorganization theory was formulated by Shaw and McKay (1943) in response to the disruptions fostered by successive waves of immigration into Chicago. It was, in other words, largely a theory about the effects of immigration and political economy, and the basic argument linking immigration with crime have endured even as the terms of the debate changed (Bursik and Grasmick 1993).

For example, the key construct linking social disorganization and crime is informal social control (or lack thereof). Neighborhoods can accomplish collective goals, including crime control, through mechanisms of informal social control, such as local institutions, social networks, and shared expectations regarding behavioral regulation (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). One version of the immigration link to crime focuses on the compromising effects of immigrant concentration on local efforts at informal social control. Often arriving with few financial resources and limited job prospects, immigrants tend to be sorted or self-selected into already disadvantaged areas (Sampson 2008). Immigrants have little attachment to these neighborhoods upon their arrival, and leave for better social and material conditions as soon as possible, only to be succeeded by other immigrant groups (Shaw and McKay 1943). The population turnover caused by the influx and outflow of immigrants destabilizes these areas. The resulting racial and ethnic heterogeneity hampers interpersonal communication, renders trust more elusive and, at the extremes, leads to territorial conflict and ethnic rivalry. In short, the rapid social change brought on by widespread immigration serves to undermine local institutions and networks and weakens the foundations of informal social control.

The demographics of immigration may also increase crime rates, net of any individual criminal tendencies of newly arrived immigrants or their second generation children. In general though hardly uniformly, immigrants tend to be young, male, relatively poor, and uneducated (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). In other words, immigrants tend to share a demographic profile consistent with groups that already commit a disproportionate share of crime. So, immigration may increase crime levels simply by increasing the pool of more likely offenders. At the same time, immigration may also elevate crime by reinforcing existing disadvantage in high-risk neighborhoods. With low incomes and limited skills, immigrant populations can sustain the lower socioeconomic status of these areas. Over time, this status may become entrenched. In extreme circumstances, neighborhoods may reach a tipping point, with spiralling levels of crime and violence.

Opportunity structures may also be implicated in immigrant crime patterns. Often residing in distressed neighborhoods and lacking job skills, connections, and social capital, immigrants are confronted by blocked economic opportunities. One potential response to attenuated access to capital and legal markets is for immigrants to “innovate” (Merton, 1938) by resorting to crime as an alternative avenue for advancement. The probability of innovative crime is enhanced by greater access to illegitimate opportunity structures, which are more prevalent in disadvantaged areas (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

Finally, immigration may increase crime not as offenders, but as victims. Immigrant populations are at greater risk of victimization for several reasons. Immigrants tend to reside, at least initially, in high-crime areas. Alba, Logan, and Bellair (1994) found that Hispanics who were born outside the U.S., had immigrated only recently, or were less linguistically assimilated, lived in areas with higher crime rates than did other groups. Increasingly, research has paid particular attention to particular types of immigrant victimization, such as hate crimes (Hendricks, Ortiz, Sugie, and Miller 2007) and sexual violence against women (Decker, Raj, and Silverman 2007). But immigrants are also vulnerable to a wide range of exploitations, including unscrupulous landlords, bankers, financiers, and employers (Chiswick

and Miller 2008). Language barriers and cultural mistrust of the police may make immigrants reluctant to report crime and otherwise interact with authorities, making immigrants more open to predation.

The Good: Why might immigration reduce crime?

Running through the traditional theoretical perspectives are a series of assumptions about the process of immigration (see, e.g., Lewis, 1966; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). The simplistic image of socially isolated immigrants with little education and limited employment potential being funnelled into the disadvantaged neighborhoods is becoming anachronistic. The post-1965 wave of immigration has been marked by greater diversity in education, job skills, and access to employment networks (Wadsworth 2010). These changes to immigrants' profiles have forced a reconceptualization of the connection between immigration and crime. Rather than serving to increase crime rates, there are a number of ways in which immigration might instead be a protective factor that reduces crime.

One reason that immigration might mitigate crime is what Wadsworth (2010) has referred to as the "healthy immigrant thesis." Immigration is not a random process, and immigrants do not represent a random sample from their countries of origin. They are among the most highly motivated individuals, with the lowest propensities toward criminal behavior. After immigrants have arrived, they have greater stakes in conformity and are much less likely to jeopardize their achievements by participating in crime. It is also possible that immigrants have different frameworks for evaluating their neighborhood environments and work conditions. The "disadvantaged" neighborhoods and "low skilled" jobs immigrants might encounter in the US are still improvements compared to conditions in their countries of origins.

Similarly, there may be aspects of culture that serve to protect immigrants from crime. Immigrant communities foster closer social ties and networks, provide social support, promote cultural preservation, and aid in the maintenance of traditional norms and values. It has been suggested that immigrants may place greater emphasis on marriage and intact families (Ousey and Kurbrin 2009). More recent immigrants also benefit from the existing co-ethnic networks, enclaves that can provide assistance as immigrants navigate the new circumstances. The growth and concentration of ethnic enclaves may also offer economic opportunities that were previously unavailable to immigrants. Ethnically-organized or segmented economies often provide jobs in businesses established by earlier immigrants (Portes and Zhou 1992), affording opportunities perhaps inaccessible in the broader labor market. Niche employment may also improve the prospects of some immigrants that might otherwise find it difficult to find work (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2009). Some groups may be particularly entrepreneurial.

At the same time, widespread immigration can provide advantages that extend beyond the confines of enclaves, by repopulating moribund neighborhoods, rejuvenating local economies, and encouraging local development. More generally, the potential boon of immigration is captured by the "immigrant revitalization" perspective. Martinez (2006) has posited that the influx of immigrants fosters "new forms of social organization and adaptive social structures" which may mediate the deleterious consequences of residing in disadvantaged areas. In addition to reinvigorating economies and nurturing

familial ties and social networks, large scale immigration can expand and strengthen community institutions (Velez 2009). Immigrant revitalization does not represent a complete rebuttal of social disorganization, but rather, suggests that in some circumstances, instability is decoupled from the inhibition of social control, and thus does not necessarily function as a precursor to crime (Martinez, Stowell, and Lee 2010).

The evidence thus far

Although immigration and crime have long been conflated, both on theoretical grounds and in the popular imagination, there is strikingly little evidence to support this nexus. There is smattering of supporting examples (see, e.g., Taft 1933; Hagan and Palloni 1988), but these analyses are more anecdotal than systematic. Most early research on immigration and crime is beset with methodological shortcomings (Tonry 1997). In a detailed review of more contemporary aggregate-level studies, Ousey and Kubrin (2009) found that the supposition that immigration contributes to crime rates was unwarranted. With few exceptions, immigration was either a) was not associated with measures of crime and violence; or b) actually reduced violent levels.

These “neutral” or “protective” effects of immigration have been shown across a number of research setting and levels (see, Sampson 2008, for a review). For example, Butcher and Piehl (1998) concluded that, after controlling for demographic characteristics, immigration had no effect on either crime rates or changes in crime rates in a sample of 43 metropolitan areas. Analogous results were presented by Martinez (2000) in a study of 111 cities with at least 5,000 Latinos. Immigration was positively associated with total homicide rate and negatively associated with Latino homicide rates, but neither relationship was significant. Using a random sample of 150 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs and PMSAs), Reid, Weiss, Adelman, and Jaret (2005) found recent immigration had a significant negative effect on homicide rates, but otherwise showed no effect for robbery, burglary, or larceny rates. In a longitudinal study of 159 cities between 1980 and 2000, immigration had a mildly significant negative influence on violent crime rates (Ousey and Kubrin, 2009).

Cities are an important unit of macro-level analysis, but it is possible that their size masks important variation between neighborhoods. A series of census tract-level studies by Martinez and colleagues have generally confirmed the results from the cities. For example, recent immigration did not affect Latino homicide rates in Miami or San Diego neighborhoods, nor Black homicide rates in El Paso (Lee, Martinez, and Rosenfeld 2001). Recent immigration was negatively, and significantly, related to Latino homicide in El Paso and Black homicide in Miami. Only for Black homicide rates in San Diego was immigration a significant positive predictor. Similar results were produced when homicide was disaggregated by motivational types (Nielsen, Lee, and Martinez 2005). When more nuanced measures of immigration are used, ethnic-specific models showed no association between immigration and violent crime rates in Houston and mostly significant negative effects for San Diego (Stowell and Martinez 2007; 2009). Finally, a longitudinal study of San Diego neighborhoods between 1980 and 2000 neighborhoods with higher proportions of immigrants had lower levels of total, Latino, and non-Latino white victimization (Martinez, Stowell, and Lee 2010).

Taken together these studies, utilizing a variety of crime types, measures of immigration, research designs, and units of analysis, offer a preponderance of evidence demonstrating that “immigration reduces crime.” Lee and Martinez (2009) have characterized this proposal as an “emerging scholarly consensus,” and several authors have begun to explain the precipitous crime decline of the 90s as a function of rising immigration (Sampson 2008; MacDonald, Hipp, and Gill 2008; Stowell, Messner, McGeever, and Raffalovich 2009; Wadsworth 2010). At a minimum, the findings of contemporary research call into question previous theoretical perspectives supposing a positive correlation between immigration and crime. Nonetheless, research on the immigration-crime nexus continues to be a work-in-progress, and a number of important issues remain. One such issue concerns the disaggregation of racial and ethnic effects. Much of the current wave of research has focused on Latino immigrants. Few if any studies have extended their comparisons to include African, West Indian, and Asian populations. The present study analyzes criminogenic effects across this wider spectrum of groups.

Enforcement

Interest in the overlap of policing and immigration has been expressed on a number of fronts (Stuntz 2002; Hagan, Levi, and Dinovitzer 2008; Sklansky forthcoming; Epp, Maynard-Moody, and Heider-Markel forthcoming). At present, special attention is being paid to the issue of illegal immigration, the security of U.S. borders, and the broader “war on terrorism”. Once a primarily federal issue, these concerns have increasingly playing out on more local stages (Harris 2006). September 11, 2001 led to a sea change, as the Department of Justice began utilizing local police to supplement immigration enforcement (Gladstein 2005), blurring the lines between immigration offenses under federal law and criminal offenses under state statutes. This, in turn, has altered substantially and problematized the relationship between immigrant communities and local agencies. Most notably, the shift in emphasis has proved difficult to reconcile with the dictates of “community policing” (Tyler, Schulhopfer, and Huq 2010). Tyler and colleagues show, in a survey of Muslim Americans in New York City, that the trust and legitimacy required for effective community policing is elusive when many residents fear that contact with the police could lead to deportation. In fact, the degradation of police-community relations has been most acute in immigrant communities (Jones and Supinski 2010).

A second line of inquiry has involved an expansion of the literature on public perceptions of the police to include immigrant populations. Race and ethnicity have long been central to understanding disparate levels of support for and satisfaction with the police, but only recently has immigrant status been incorporated into this literature. Some of the findings regarding immigrant attitudes are consistent with previous opinion surveys. For example, quantity of police contacts was negatively related to rating of the police for Chinese immigrants in NYC, while quality of interaction was a key determinant of satisfaction with the police (Chu, Song, and Dombrink, 2005). However, evaluations of the police may also reflect considerations unique to immigrants, such as their former experiences with and perceptions of the criminal justice systems of the countries from which they emigrated (Davis and Miller, 2002). The specific information about the police conveyed through social networks of family, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and co-workers similarly plays a pivotal role in the development of sentiments towards the police (Menjivar and Bejarano 2004).

As the scale of immigration has grown, the challenges inherent in policing immigrants and immigrant communities have also begun to garner more consideration. Perhaps the most prominent obstacle confronting police-immigrant relations is language. The inability to communicate effectively and efficiently is a source of considerable delay and frustration for officers. Moreover, many immigrants arrive from countries where violence, corruption, and incompetence are endemic to the police (Mears 2001; Skogan 2009). The fear of the police that may be imported from these originating countries can pose another significant barrier to communication. As well, newcomers often lack knowledge pertaining to the criminal justice system, which complicates relationship-building with the police. In certain circumstances, the specific nature of police-immigrant contacts may be a point of contention. Culver (2004) noted that the sizable number of interactions involving traffic and false identification offenses in one small Midwestern community resulted in disproportionately negative contacts between the police and Hispanic community.

Law enforcement has always been an important corollary to crime, but the correlation between the two has never been perfect. There are host of factors that can influence patterns of enforcement independent of crime. Of particular interest here are the contextual effects of neighborhoods on policing. In contrast to the issue of crime, the contingent relationship with law enforcement continues to be largely absent from the criminological treatment of immigration. To be more precise, the aggregate-level impact of immigration levels on rates of enforcement has not, as yet, received sufficient attention. This research is a first step in try to understand patterns of enforcement in immigrant neighborhoods.

Research Questions

As the quintessential “gateway” city, New York City provides a crucial platform for exploring the effects of immigration on local crime and enforcement. The sheer scale and variety of immigration in NYC allows for analyses to be disaggregated by racial/ethnic groups. The rich immigrant history facilitates a number of conceptually important comparisons, including those involving “newer” immigrants and native co-ethnics. And as with other large U.S. cities, patterns of immigration, crime, and enforcement continue to evolve. The period of time under consideration here, from 1990 to 2000, saw a notable increase in the diversity of New York’s immigrant population. In light of these ongoing changes, this study updates and reconsiders a series of questions relating to NYC neighborhoods.

First, where do immigrants settle in NYC? The choice of residential locations is not random. Rather, immigrants self-select into neighborhoods. Immigrants have traditionally settled in disadvantaged areas characterized by high levels of poverty, racial heterogeneity, mobility, and crime. If settlement patterns have changed, past theoretical explanations of immigration and crime need to be revisited. This study investigates the social, economic, and crime conditions that affect the self-selection process for immigrants. The non-random nature of residential location has an important methodological dimension as well. Criminological evaluations have not sufficiently addressed the potential for *selection bias* resulting from self-selection. That is, prior work has not accounted for the propensity of newly arriving groups to select specific areas for settlement where people look like them and have similar resources. This study uses a generalized propensity score (GPS) approach to control for selection bias in the analysis of immigration and crime.

Second, do local crime rates vary by level of immigration? Most current research indicates that immigration either is unrelated to, or mitigates, neighborhood crime. This study utilizes a larger number of more diverse neighborhoods, and a wider variety of crimes, than have previous efforts. In addition to assessing the broad effects of immigration on crime, this study also examines whether local crime rates vary by race- and ethnic-specific immigrant groups.

Third, is there a relationship between immigration and patterns of police enforcement? Prior research has not examined how immigration may influence neighborhood patterns of enforcement of “regular” crime. It is important to evaluate enforcement in addition to crime, given what is known about the complex dynamics of policing in relation to neighborhood and race more generally. Finally, as with crime, this study also disaggregates effects by various immigrant groups.

Methods

The concentration of foreign born population is used to estimate the effects of immigration on crime and enforcement in New York City neighborhoods from 2004 to 2008. We begin by estimating the selection of immigrants into a neighborhood by adjusting immigration rates by their correlation with observed characteristics of the neighborhoods including social structure, political economy, and crime. We estimate the selection of immigrant groups into neighborhoods for four racial and ethnic groups, and also for specific varieties of crime and enforcement. We use Generalized Propensity Score (GPS) analysis (Hirano and Imbens 2004; Feng, Zhou, Zou, Fan, and Li 2011) to estimate the probability (p) of a proportion of immigrants residing in a neighborhood conditional on the observed characteristics of each neighborhood. Like the standard propensity score approach, GPS aims to establish the effect of a “treatment” (in this case level of immigration) with observational data where the treatment is not randomly assigned. But while propensity scores attempt to control for differences between treatment groups when the treatment is binary, GPS allows for continuous treatments (Imai and van Dyk 2004). The GPS approach begins by estimating a propensity score (the variables used to model immigration are illustrated in Table 1). GPS assumes that the disturbances for the estimation model are normally distributed and tests this assumption using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov equality-of-distributions test. Finally, the balance on the covariates is evaluated at specified intervals of the treatment variable (Bia and Mattei 2008).

Once the normality of disturbances and balancing properties have been confirmed, the generalized propensity score is used to identify the effects of immigration on crime and enforcement using a dose-response model. The dose-response model takes the form of a regression equation

$$Y = T + GPS$$

where:

Y = Outcome

T = Treatment

GPS = Generalized propensity score

That is, the dose-response models estimate the marginal effects of increases in the levels of concentration of immigrants in a neighborhood (the “treatment”) on the outcomes of interest. Similar to the use of propensity scores to estimate the non-random selection of individuals into neighborhoods

(MacDonald, this volume), this technique allows us to include both immigrant concentration and the control variables in models of both crime and enforcement. This estimation strategy produces an unbiased test of the effect of immigrant concentration on crime.

Data

Immigration. Immigration here refers to foreign born individuals. Immigration data were obtained from decennial census data on tracts in New York City in 2000. Race- and ethnic-specific data were taken from STF4 census files. “Newer” immigrants are those individuals who arrived in the U.S. between 1995 and 2000. We include immigrants from Caribbean and African nations among “Black” immigrants, despite potential differences in the countries of origin in each of these populations. One reason to combine these groups is the potential reactivity of police officers to Afro-centric features that are shared among this population as well as native born African Americans (Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, and Johnson 2006). We also include Latino immigrants who self-identify in the Census as both “black” and “Hispanic origin” among Blacks.

Neighborhood Social Structure. Data estimating the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of neighborhood were obtained from the 1990 and 2000 decennial census. Housing price sale data were obtained from an archive of real estate transactions maintained by the Department of Finance in New York City. Transactions were recorded by address and were geocoded and assigned to census tracts.

Crime. Homicide and assault rates between 1990 and 2000 were computed from the records provided by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Homicide data were obtained from Vital Statistics records. Assault data were obtained from emergency room and hospital admissions for intentional injuries. These data were geocoded and assigned to census block groups and tracts. Detailed data on crime incidents from 2004-8 were obtained from the Oniform records system of the NYPD, which is the method for compiling crime complaints.ⁱ Each record included spatial coordinates (i.e., latitude and longitude) of the crime location, as well as details on the specific offense (New York State Penal Law section). Crime rates were averaged over the 5 year period to provide stability, and were logged to minimize the influence of outliers.

Enforcement. Detailed data on arrests were obtained from the Online Booking System (OLBS) of the NYPD. Records include both offense and arrest location, as well as details on the specific Penal Law section.

Data on street stops were also obtained from the NYPD for the years 2004-8. Records include the specific location of the stop, the suspected crime, the rationale for and outcome of the stop, and demographic characteristics of the person stopped.

Arrests and street stops were combined to create an overall index of enforcement.ⁱⁱ Rates of enforcement were created by using crimes as a denominator. Thus, enforcement rate is a measure of enforcement per crime. Enforcement rates were averaged over the 5 year period and logged.

Results

Where Do Immigrants Settle?

Comparisons of modal neighborhood characteristics for each race- or ethnicity-specific population group are shown in Table 1.ⁱⁱⁱ In the main, each group tends to sort into tracts where people look like them and have similar resources. The proclivity is most pronounced among White immigrants, who reside in largely White (61%) neighborhoods. Black immigrants similarly settle in predominantly Black (55%) areas. While Latino immigrants also live where Latinos comprise the majority of residents, the distribution of race/ethnic groups is more even. Latino immigrants are much more likely than Black immigrants to reside near Whites and Asians. In contrast to other groups, Asian immigrants are living not in Asian neighborhoods, but in primarily White locations. It is possible that Asian immigrants have greater financial resources and are less constrained in terms of choice of residential neighborhood.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Black immigrants tend to settle in places where social and economic disadvantage are greatest. Relative to the other groups, modal Black immigrant neighborhoods have the highest rates of poverty, public assistance, unemployment, and female headed households. These areas also have lower access to wealth, as indicated by housing prices. A similar pattern is found in relation to violent crime. In addition socioeconomic distress, Black immigrants reside in areas with much higher levels of homicide and assault. At the other end of the spectrum, White and Asian immigrants face much less danger in their neighborhoods. Similar to immigrants of African descent, Latino immigrants also tend to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, but these places are less economically isolated than the places where Black immigrants settle. Whites tend to avoid socio-economic or structural disadvantage, and enjoy greater access to wealth in the neighborhoods where they settle. Areas occupied by Asian immigrants are less well off as those of Whites, but nonetheless are more like White neighborhoods than are other groups.

The results of the GPS models confirm these descriptive statistics. Table 2 shows the factors that predict the concentration of the total and race/ethnic-specific foreign-born population in 2000. As the goal of the propensity score approach is to improve estimates of immigration by using a large number of relevant variables, the coefficients presented in Table 2 should be interpreted cautiously. However, the results nonetheless reveal some interesting patterns. The large effect for immigrant concentration at the outset of the 1990-2000 decade is not surprising, and suggests that immigrant neighborhoods remain stable as reception contexts for new arrivals in New York City. The effect size for the 1990 baseline dwarfs the strength of the other factors. Beyond the stability of immigrant

concentration, the effects of wealth and safety are predictors of where immigrants settle. The results in Table 2 for total immigration reflect the skew toward wealth or less disadvantage for white immigrants: immigrant concentration is higher in neighborhoods with fewer indicia of disadvantage and in places that are safer.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Immigration & Crime

Next, GPS regressions of total and recent immigration on crime were estimated. Figure 1 shows the results of the full models, which include controls for GPS score for immigration at 2000. Race- and ethnic-specific immigration breakdowns are presented in Figure 2.^{iv} Immigration is a protective factor for both total crime and three specific categories of crime. Total immigration shows a significant (lower than -2) effect for all crime categories. The preventive effects of immigration are less pronounced for recent immigrants, as significant negative coefficients are found only for total and drug crime rates.

INSERT FIGURES 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE

Immigration effects vary by the specific crime and racial/ethnic group. Figure 2 shows that White immigration, mostly from Russia and other Eastern European countries, has strong insulating effects. Since white immigrants tend to settle in areas with low crime rates and greater access to economic wealth and resources, the strong negative parameter suggests that white immigration exerts a protective effect beyond other factors that also reduce crime risks.

Total and violent crime rates are lower when concentrations of foreign born persons of African descent are higher. This is particularly important given the racial components of the distribution of crime across NYC neighborhoods. We assume that these are largely Caribbean immigrants, although immigration from the African continent has increased in the past decade.

The effects of Latino and Asian immigration on crime are more modest. The direction of the effects is negative, but they do not reach significance in any of the models. It is possible that this attenuated influence of immigration reflects the heterogeneity of residential settlement that is

characteristic of these groups. Many Latino immigrants, for example, settle in diverse areas of the City, including both low crime places (northwest Queens) and high crime areas (Sunset Park in Brooklyn). The overall average effect may mask some important micro-effects.

Immigration & Enforcement

The relationship between immigration and enforcement is illustrated in Figure 3. The effects of immigration on enforcement are quite different from its protective effects on crime. Enforcement for total, violent, and property crimes is substantially higher in places with greater proportions of immigrants. This effect is especially pronounced for newer immigrants, those who have been in the country for fewer than five years. Although crime is on balance lower in neighborhoods with higher immigrant concentrations, the ratio of stops and arrests to crime is higher in these same places. The police response per crime seems to be more aggressive and legally formal in immigrant neighborhoods, despite the lower crime rates in these neighborhoods. The reasons for this disparity are neither obvious nor unambiguous. For example, one effect of the higher enforcement rates in immigrant neighborhoods may be lower crime overall, a trend we observed in Figures 1 and 2. But the higher crime rates in Black neighborhoods generally are not observed here: immigration exerts a protective effect on crime for Black and White immigrants, yet both groups are policed less intensively compared to Latino or Asian neighborhoods. Still, the effect of enforcement on crime is difficult to statistically identify and remains ambiguous absent a more complete empirical understanding of the simultaneous relationships among police stops, race or ethnicity, immigration and crime.

INSERT FIGURES 3 & 4 ABOUT HERE

The disaggregation of race- and ethnic-specific effects presented in Figure 4 further complicates the enforcement narrative. No particular group is driving the overall results from Figure 3; that is, the higher rates of enforcement activity are not concentrated among immigrants of particular races/ethnicities. Latino and Asian locales experience higher enforcement ratios, but the magnitude of the association fails to reach significance. Enforcement is lower in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of White immigrants, after controlling for crime, but again the effect is negligible. Only for African immigrant neighborhoods is there a significant relationship to enforcement, and here the effect is negative: enforcement in Black immigrant neighborhoods is far lower than in other immigrant enclaves. This finding is quite unexpected given that policing has tended to be a central feature of areas populated by native born African Americans (Fagan and Davies 2000; Fagan, Geller, Davies, and West 2010; Geller and Fagan 2010).

Figure 5 shows the extent of differences in enforcement patterns across foreign born versus native born Black neighborhoods in New York City. For other racial/ethnic groups, the rates of enforcement between native and foreign born enclaves tend to be similar. Interestingly, for both Latinos and Asians, enforcement rates for most types of crime are marginally higher in native born areas. It is only in White immigrant neighborhoods where immigrants see a greater concentration of enforcement. But for all groups, the differences are not striking, as the ratios of enforcement rates generally clusters around a value of one (1).^v Conversely, the ratios in African areas are markedly higher. For overall crime, the rate of enforcement is more than twice (2.34) as large in native born neighborhoods; the ratio is higher still for drug offenses. Simply stated, largely native born Black areas experience a much greater concentration of enforcement than do places where foreign born Blacks live.

INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Consistent with much contemporary research, this study confirms that immigration exerts a protective effect on crime, controlling for the characteristics of neighborhoods that tend to attract immigrants. In New York and other cities (Sampson 2008; Martinez et al., this volume), there is no evidence that crime rates are higher in places with higher immigration rates. On the contrary, immigration often functions as a prophylactic against crime. But the results here also demonstrate that all immigrants are not alike; immigration experiences vary across racial and ethnic groups. To a considerable extent, these pathways are influenced by broader patterns of race relations in the US. White immigrants have leveraged their relative advantage to reside in areas characterized by higher socio-economic status and lower crime, while Black immigrants, likely facing the some of the same discriminatory forces as native-born Blacks, have settled in more deprived, more dangerous areas. In other words, when disaggregated by race, the distributions of relevant characteristics in immigrant neighborhoods closely resemble those evident in native-born neighborhoods.

Race, however, does not tell the whole story. We find support for the notion that “culture matters” (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway 2008). It is true, for example, that white immigrants such as Russian Jews are less encumbered by invidious discrimination in housing and employment. But compared to other groups, Russian Jews also tend to be more urban, better educated, and have family structures (low levels of single-parent households and high levels of intergenerational living) that are more amenable to upward mobility (Orleck 2001; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway 2008). They may also arrive here with more capital and entry into networks of well-assimilated predecessors. At odds with outmoded expectations of social disorganization and crime,

these comparative advantages help explain why crime and violence are less prevalent in white immigrant communities.

A more ambiguous but no less telling example of cultural effects involves Haitians and Jamaicans, “West Indian” groups which together account for much of the Black immigration to NYC. Haitians and Jamaicans both are doubly stigmatized. Phenotypically Black, both groups are often identified simply as “Black” by whites and experience discrimination and residential segregation similar to native-born Blacks. But owing to differences in cultures and languages, both are distinguished within the Black population as immigrants (Stafford 1987; Foner 1987; 2007). Still, this “minorities within a minority” status has not increased crime and violence in Black immigrant neighborhoods. Instead, there are several aspects of West Indian life that appear to reduce crime: families are frequently multigenerational, parental employment rates are high, and the community has a high level of home ownership (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway 2008). Moreover, as English speakers, Jamaicans in particular are able to employment in service industries. And these advantages seem to translate into distinctly different treatment of immigrants of African descent compared to native born African Americans.

The two largest Latino groups, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans,^{vi} face greater disadvantages than do other immigrants groups, in terms of language and economic position upon entry into the US. However, the interpretation of social class is relative. Ethnographic research with Dominican garment workers in NYC indicates that, despite their hardships, most of these women judged their social status to be “middle class.” Pessar (1987) suggests that immigrants’ ability to secure prestigious consumer goods that were not necessarily available to the middle class in the Dominican provided the trappings of a middle class life in the US. To the extent that immigrants have tangibly improved their station they have vested interests in their stable, if relatively poor, neighborhoods where isolation is both spatial and social, compounding their economic and other structural disadvantages.

Latino immigrants from South America, including Columbians, Ecuadorans, and Peruvians, while encountering similar barriers related to language, nonetheless tend to have higher levels of education, two parent families, and settle in less distressed neighborhoods. The net effect of Latino immigration on total crime is negligible; it is negatively associated with violence, but the magnitude of the effect is not statistically significant.^{vii} The distinct social worlds of the various Latino subgroups highlight the need for research that further disaggregates ethnicity by sending country. This may be possible in the future, as the sizes of these subgroups grow.

The findings for Asian immigration are similarly ambiguous, and similarly illustrate the need for further refinement in the categorization of groups. Although they are growing quickly, Asians are the smallest of the race/ethnic groups. This is reflected in unique residential patterns. There are, for example, no solid Korean immigrant enclaves. There are “medium” sized settlements of Koreans in Koreatown (Manhattan) and Sunnyside (Queens), but no Korean analogs to Dominicans in Washington Heights (Manhattan), Puerto Ricans in Spanish Harlem (Manhattan), West Indians in Jamaica (Queens) or Russians in Brighton Beach (Brooklyn). This is not merely a function of the size of the Korean population; as with the other groups, culture plays a role. The most recent Korean immigrants are

urban, well-educated, and middle to upper-middle class. Utilizing a model of small business entrepreneurship, Korean immigrants have taken advantage of opportunities in commercial districts in minority neighborhoods presented by the outflow of “old immigrant” shopkeepers (Kim, 1987). This strategy has yielded tremendous economic benefit, but it has also left Koreans dispersed throughout the city. In lieu geographic proximity, Koreans have embraced modern institutions, including business associations and especially the Protestant Church, as substitutes for ethnic neighborhoods.

There is no mistaking the centre of immigrant life for New York’s Chinese population, as Manhattan’s Chinatown has continued to swell with the influx of settlers. Perhaps more than other groups, there is a distinct “old” vs. “new” dichotomy at play in relation to Chinese immigration. Once dominated by “sojourners” from Kwangtung Province, many of the post-1965 arrivals originally hailed from North China, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Fukien, and Taiwan (Wong, 1987). There more recent arrivals differ from earlier Chinese immigrants in a myriad of ways, but essentially, the newer immigrants consider themselves to be more urban, literate, and modern than their predecessors. As well, Cantonese has replaced the Toysan dialect as the primary means of communication, further adding to intergenerational difficulties. The superior social and economic resources of the current wave of Chinese immigrants may well herald lower rates of crime as they become a larger proportion of the population.

In short, the results presented here support the emerging consensus that immigration does not lead to higher rates of crime, and in some instances protects against crime. The story of immigration and crime in NYC comprises many chapters that reflect the unique experiences of different racial and ethnic groups. Each of the groups has added to the revitalization of the city in its own unique way, through repopulation, participation in niche economies, and entrepreneurial spirit. The nature of immigration has changed. At the very least, today’s newcomers are better positioned to leverage established ethnic networks for employment opportunities and social support. Writing about the second generation of post-1965 immigrants, Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway (2008: 63) assert that “the parents have developed *cultural understandings* and *strategic repertoires*” for responding to the opportunities and challenges of immigrant life. These understanding and repertoires helped to maintain relatively low crime rates in immigrant neighborhoods.

Despite reduced crime, however, immigrant areas experience disproportionately higher levels of enforcement. The present study does not allow for definitive explanations, but several are possible. First, immigrant neighborhoods tend to be geographically adjacent to traditionally high-crime neighborhoods. Elevated enforcement practices in these immigrant areas may reflect a spillover effect, where the crime risks associated proximate neighborhoods are also attributed to immigrant neighborhoods. Second, it is possible that the police are reacting to immigrant status of the neighborhood. Extending the idea of neighborhood racial stigma (Sampson and Raudenbush 2004), the police may see and interpret disorder and crime risk differently in neighborhoods marks by higher concentrations of immigrants. Immigration, like race, may be imbued with social meaning that leads to greater exercise of coercive authority.

As with crime, the results of this study also underscore the importance of disaggregating the relationship between immigration and enforcement. Of particular interest is the significant negative

association for Black immigrants. We can only speculate about the reasons for this finding. Reduced enforcement in Black immigrant neighborhoods may be indicative of underpolicing (Kane, 2005). These areas, which are particularly socially isolated (even in relation to other immigrant neighborhoods) and have limited political capital, may experience a form of “malign neglect” in the form of attenuated police resources. Future research should further investigate the nature of this relationship, and whether it is unique to New York City.

The policy implications of this study are complicated, not unexpectedly given the complexity of the associations between immigration, crime, and enforcement. The results presented here add further voice to the growing chorus cautioning against the politically simplistic and expedient scapegoating of immigrants. The stereotypical but erroneous linkage between immigration and crime is increasingly unsustainable, especially to the extent that it may be implicated in unduly high levels of enforcement. There are dangers in this disparity for the second and later generations of immigrants who experience more intrusive policing regimes as native born New Yorkers, yet who are not as involved in crime. The potential alienation of immigrant communities—even law abiding, cooperative individuals—from the criminal justice system can compromise safety through the loss of legitimacy and the withdrawal of citizens from cooperation with the police (Kirk, Papachristos, Fagan, and Tyler, this volume). Cooperation with the police is an essential component of the production of security (Tyler and Fagan, 2008), whereby citizens undertake both individual and collective actions to control crime. Cooperation and security are closely tied for all racial groups, whether immigrants or native born. Cooperation implies collaboration with the police, and trust in the police is a predicate for such actions. Differential policing of immigrant neighborhoods when crime rates suggest otherwise corrodes trust, and creates risks for crime both now and in the future as immigrants take their place in American society.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Modal Neighborhood Comparisons for Foreign-Born Populations

Variables	Foreign Born Black		Foreign Born Latino		Foreign Born Asian		Foreign Born White	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Foreign Born 2000 (%)	29.56	13.31	37.20	16.21	48.47	11.50	3.49	14.89
Foreign Born 1990 (%)	22.08	12.79	28.87	14.51	36.04	12.30	25.20	12.23
Black (%)	54.87	23.94	22.44	22.28	5.77	8.16	5.61	9.75
Latino (%)	27.69	19.21	34.52	16.09	22.33	17.10	17.21	15.20
Asian (%)	4.37	7.23	11.76	13.69	2.58	3.44	12.59	12.24
White (%)	8.12	13.37	25.03	22.81	44.34	23.21	61.15	22.41
Poverty (%)	27.67	12.69	24.81	13.47	16.60	9.07	13.01	1.74
Public Assistance (%)	12.99	7.75	1.12	7.90	4.78	3.47	3.26	3.75
Gini Index	.44	.07	.42	.06	.38	.07	.33	.08
Less than High School (%)	34.20	11.53	33.96	11.95	27.17	11.64	19.01	12.60
Unemployment (%)	14.83	7.54	11.84	7.50	7.29	3.22	6.20	4.15
Not in Labor Force (%)	45.09	7.42	45.04	9.01	42.81	6.89	38.52	1.81
Female Headed Households (%)	17.74	8.81	13.13	9.33	5.79	3.71	4.70	4.36
Supervision Ratio	.64	.18	.58	.20	.47	.13	.41	.23
White Isolation Index	.10	.14	.27	.24	.46	.23	.63	.21
Residential Mobility (% < 5 yrs)	62.36	7.83	6.59	7.76	6.37	7.86	59.83	11.87
Housing Vacancy Rate (%)	7.93	5.38	5.48	3.87	3.81	2.48	4.78	3.23
Renters (%)	71.11	23.10	73.31	19.58	61.28	2.65	58.18	24.70
Population (Logged)	8.09	.56	8.17	.52	8.21	.42	8.14	.64
Average Housing Price	29.92	9.10	34.96	19.55	48.29	133.48	62.79	116.13
Average Homicide Rate	2.95	1.79	1.82	1.60	.80	.65	.64	.73
Average Assault Rate	18.09	1.35	12.44	11.89	5.32	3.97	5.92	8.16

Table 2. Generalized Propensity Score Models – Foreign Born 2000, Overall and By Race

	Overall		Black		Latino		Asian		White	
	<i>Est.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>SE</i>
Foreign Born 1990	.139 ***	.003	-.005	.015	.009	.033	2.122 ***	.205	.198 ***	.018
Poverty	-.042 ***	.006	-.087 *	.035	-.175 *	.075	1.164 *	.474	-.144 ***	.042
Public Assistance	-.014 **	.005	-.253 ***	.030	.340 ***	.064	1.457 ***	.404	.136 ***	.036
Gini Index	.051 ***	.005	.214 ***	.029	-.183 **	.062	.758	.392	.285 ***	.035
% Less than High School	.034 ***	.005	-.403 ***	.024	.656 ***	.052	.327	.328	-.143 ***	.029
% Unemployment	-.011 **	.004	.016 ***	.021	-.039	.045	-.500	.284	-.024	.025
% Labor Force Nonparticipation	.003	.004	-.091 ***	.020	.063	.042	.820 **	.267	.163 ***	.024
% Female Headed Households	-.009	.005	.383 ***	.027	-.198 ***	.058	-4.638 ***	.367	-.249 ***	.033
Supervision Ratio (Pop 25-50/5-15)	-.014 ***	.003	.104 ***	.019	-.036	.042	-1.101 ***	.264	-.075 **	.024
White Isolation Index	-.030 ***	.004	-.561 ***	.022	-.322 ***	.047	-1.666 ***	.295	1.175 ***	.026
Residential Mobility	-.027 ***	.003	.155 ***	.016	-.296 ***	.034	-2.002 ***	.212	-.132 ***	.019
Housing Vacancy	-.015 ***	.003	.023	.015	-.158 ***	.031	-.598 **	.198	-.081 ***	.018
% Renters	-.021 ***	.004	-.086 ***	.023	.332 ***	.050	-1.986 ***	.317	.035	.028
Population (Logged)	-.006 *	.003	.096 ***	.015	.440 ***	.032	2.637 ***	.201	.053 *	.018
Mean Housing Sale Price	.000	.002	.001	.012	-.078 **	.026	-.045	.166	-.017	.015
Homicide Rate per 100,000	-.007	.004	.137 ***	.020	-.160 ***	.043	-1.349 ***	.274	-.110 ***	.024
Assault Rate per 100,000	.003	.003	-.002	.017	-.055	.037	-.107	.233	-.033	.021
Log likelihood	-1811.890		-1459.010		-2984.620		-6622.130		-1845.390	
Wald chi-square	5806.540 ***		4002.670 ***		1783.070 ***		1233.480 ***		10036.320 ***	

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Figure 1. Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Crime by Type of Crime (Z-score)

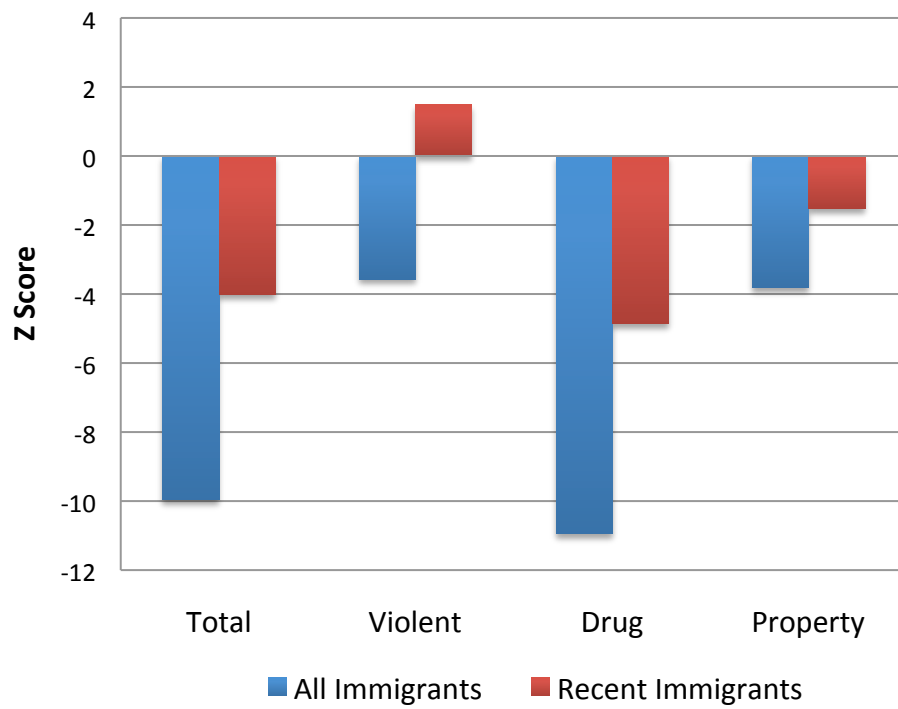


Figure 2. Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Crime by Ethnicity (Z-score)

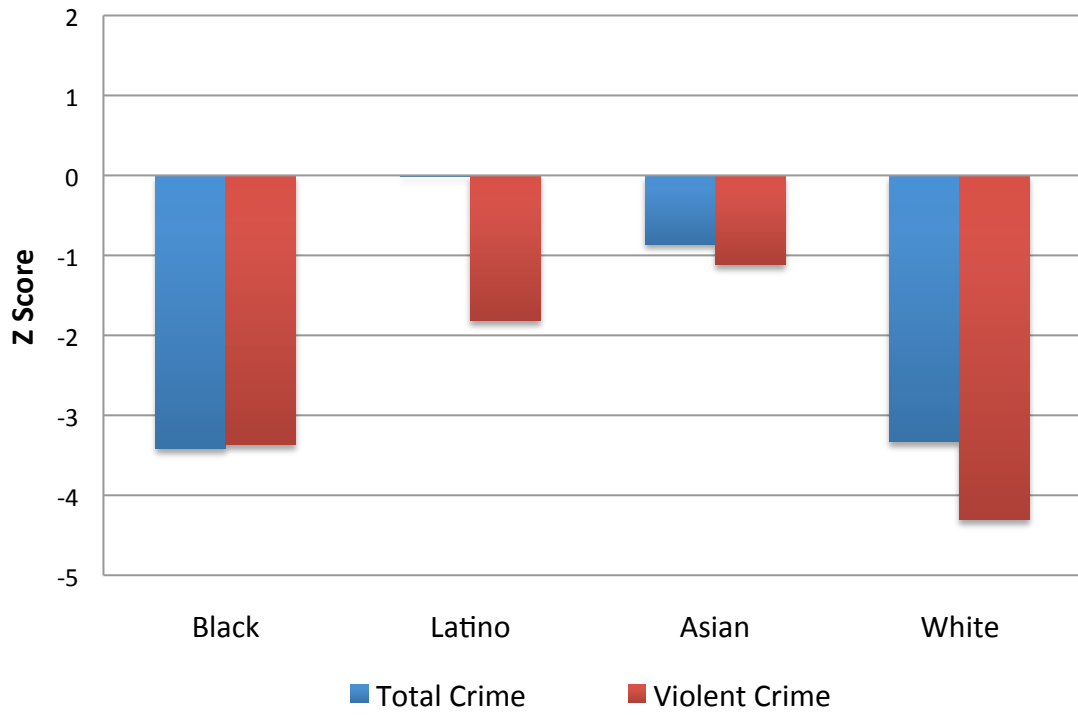


Figure 3. Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Enforcement by Type of Crime (Z-score)

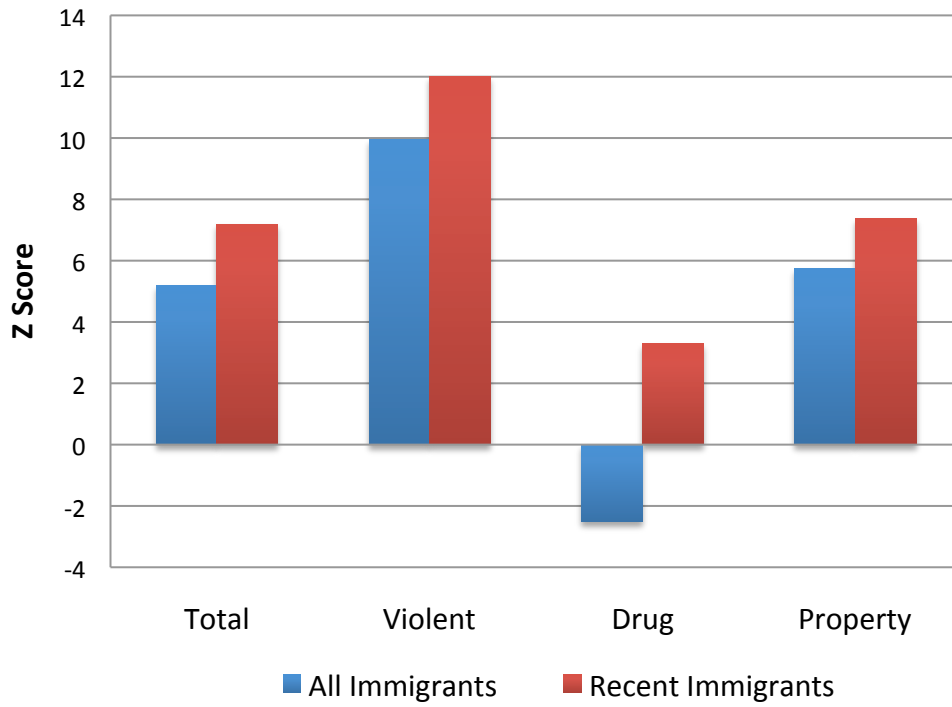


Figure 4. Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Enforcement by Ethnicity (Z-score)

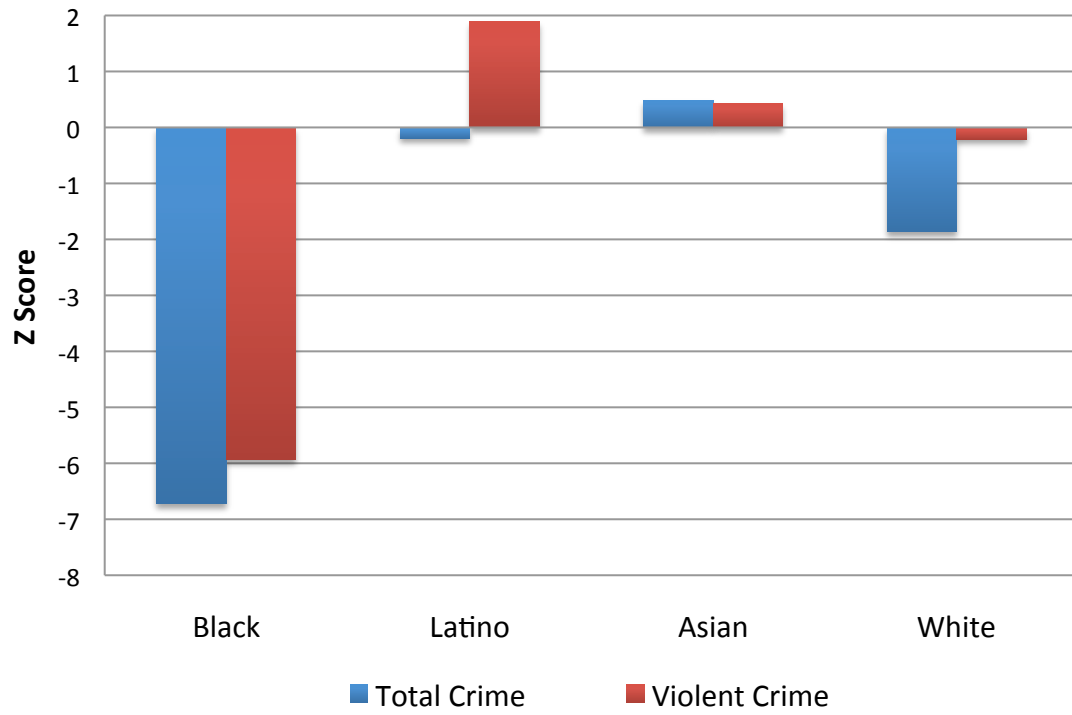
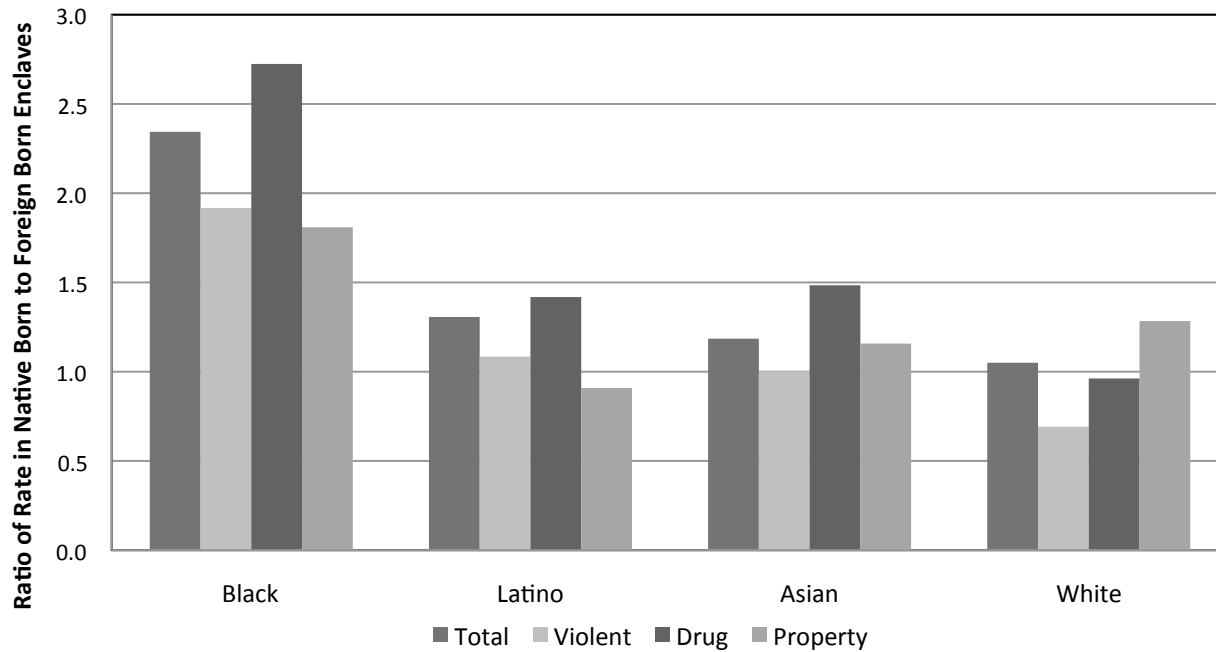


Figure 5. Ratio of Enforcement in Native Born to Foreign Born Enclaves, by Type of Enforcement (2004-8)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, STF-3A, 2000; New York City Police Department, Stop and Frisk Archive, On-Line Booking System

Endnotes

- i. The Omniform record collects the 200 pieces of information for each crime complaint that are entered into the Compstat system used by the NYPD for crime analysis. See, Office of the Comptroller, City of New York, 200X.
- ii. Since the arrest rates pursuant to street stops are less than 5 percent, there is little overlap in these two measures. See, Fagan, Geller, Davies, and West (2010).
- iii. For each population group, census tracts with no immigrant population for that group were excluded. The remaining tracts were divided into three quantiles. Tracts in the second, or middle, quantile were categorized as modal neighborhoods.
- iv. Race- and ethnic-specific models also include the interaction of % Foreign Born with the GPS score.
- v. A ratio of 1 indicates that the enforcement rate in native born enclaves is equal to the enforcement rate in foreign born enclaves.
- vi. Although geographically West Indian, Dominicans are ethnically Latino.
- vii. It is important to note that there is substantial heterogeneity in Latino populations across cities. The finding here may reflect New York's specific composition, and the effect of Latino population may vary from other cities with different compositions.

Bios

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