

POLICY ESSAY

THE SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE OF THE CRIME–IMMIGRATION NEXUS: MIGRANT MYTHOLOGIES IN THE AMERICAS

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CONTEXTUALIZING IMMIGRATION

For nearly a century, criminological research in the United States has debated implicitly and explicitly whether a link exists between crime and immigration. Research to date has tended to turn on a series of questions that parallel the public debate on this issue. The main questions that have been asked are (1) whether immigrants commit more or less crime than individuals born in the United States; (2) if individual, structural, or cultural differences exist, how might we understand them; and (3) how might these different trajectories unfold over time. We now have some answers, and we need to do more to advance theoretical and substantive research on this issue.

Through our analysis in this essay, we demonstrate the importance of contextualizing research on crime and immigration as part of a broader sociological analysis of the state. Building on the work of Abdelmalek Sayad (2004), a scholar of Algerian migration to France, our work takes the view that studies of immigration must be attuned equally to the dynamics of emigration that lead to it (2004:1–6). As a result, research on emigration–immigration requires a focusing of our attention on the social trajectories of migrants, including the challenges they experience, the “capital of origin” they bring with them, and their ability to convert or reproduce that capital successfully in these new locales (Sayad, 2004:170). Most centrally, Sayad demonstrates that we must acknowledge the role of the state in setting the terms of the crime–immigration debate; as we discuss in this essay, the continued and baseless identification of a crime–immigration nexus reveals a discomfort of the state with the immigrant condition, which is an official distrust that is reflected implicitly in scholarly and public discourse (2004:278–285). Indeed, the crime–immigration nexus often is the prime rhetoric through which this state distrust becomes

evident, and we identify this nexus below as a form of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990:5). We believe that recent empirical work in criminology provides us with a unique opportunity to break reflexively with this dominant, official (if at times latent) view of the immigrant condition (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2000:176–177).

As a result, for both conceptual and policy purposes, it is time to take stock. We begin by briefly considering how we have arrived at this juncture in public policy, which is driven partly by fear and prejudice and is strongly resistant to evidence.

A RENEWED SYMBOLIC CRUSADE

We have been here before. In response to public fears that linked immigration to crime in the 1920s, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that restricted immigration. The focus was on Southern and Eastern Europeans, specifically, and the foreign born, more generally. Immigrants were vilified for their alleged alcohol and drug abuse as well as for their putative criminality. The assumed link was clear and crude: Immigration caused crime (e.g., Immigration Commission, 1911; Industrial Commission, 1901).

Joseph Gusfield (1963) called the vilification of immigrants as drunken, drug-addicted, and criminal a “symbolic crusade.” He argued that the arrival of record numbers of immigrants early in the century provoked fears in rural, native-born Protestants that they were losing their advantaged positions in U.S. society. A tide of immigration ominously symbolized to the native-born groups the threatening forces of urbanization and industrialization that they perceived were restructuring American society. Prohibition and restrictive immigration laws symbolized the growing fear of, and opposition to, the forces of change. Political entrepreneurs seized the purported immigration and crime connection as a symbol for a moral crusade against these forces.

Few challenged the empirical validity of the role played by crime in the rhetorical politics of this crusade against immigration (see Tonry, 1997). A reduction in immigration instead served eventually to temper concerns linking immigration and crime in public discourse, from about the mid-1930s through the mid-1960s. The fears and opposition of established, native-born groups did not disappear, but they were subdued and for several decades remained less manifest in U.S. mass culture.

As with so much else in the United States, things changed in the late 1960s and 1970s. Between 1960 and 1990, annual immigration to the United States and the U.S. homicide rate both nearly doubled (from 1.7 to 3.0 per thousand and from 4.8 to 8.3 per hundred thousand population, respectively). The new era of immigration brought renewed relevance to

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Gusfield's thesis, and a parallel rise in homicide and imprisonment brought crime back into the picture. Crime ultimately and dramatically came back down in the 1990s and continued to decline in the early new millennium, whereas immigration continued to grow (e.g., Rumbaut, 1997). Meanwhile, the forces of urbanization and industrialization were replaced by globalization and technological change. Migration flows were an important component of this economic transition (Sassen, 1999), though continued anxieties were in many ways a renewal of the old symbolic politics of status displacement.

Sayad's (2004) sociological research and theorizing on immigration, however, suggest that these symbolic crusades cannot be reduced merely to racism or status politics. Instead, Sayad argues that the very category of the "immigrant" reflects how the state discriminates between different categories of residents. From the point of view of the state, the presence of immigrants "disturbs the mythical purity or perfection of [the national] order" (2004:280). This view likely is more evident in republican states such as France, but Sayad emphasizes how all states discriminate between nationals and non-nationals living within their borders. This state-based view of the immigrant, as potentially upsetting the national order, then becomes the framework for the public concerns over immigrants as well (2004:278–282).

It is important to highlight that it is in the area of crime and delinquency that we can discern most clearly this public distrust of immigrants. According to Sayad, the very status of being an immigrant presents a situational form of delinquency, or an "initial sin," so that when an immigrant is charged with a crime, he or she is perceived socially as committing not one, but two offenses (2004:282–283). Sayad refers to this occurrence as a type of *double punishment* that we impose on immigrants who commit an offense. His point is that immigrants always are viewed as being intrinsically delinquent by virtue of their displaced status—and this delinquency is compounded when a legal infraction is committed. What Sayad is drawing out is that immigration, itself, is perceived collectively as a "latent, camouflaged offence [sic]" and that when an immigrant commits a legal offense, he or she additionally is "breaking the unwritten law" about how foreigners should act (2004:282, 285). This perception has far-reaching implications when individual immigrants are charged with criminal offenses. Not only might they experience harsher juridical and social judgments, but also, most trenchantly, "any trial involving a delinquent immigrant puts the very process of immigration on trial, first as a form of delinquency and second as a source of delinquency" (2004:282).

The result is what we refer to as a crime–immigration nexus. In Sayad's (2004:284) terms, "the case against immigration is always inseparable from the case made against the immigrant because of some offence [sic], even a

minor one, that he has committed.” We see precisely this invocation of a crime–immigration nexus in the statements of political commentators such as Lou Dobbs and Patrick Buchanan, who articulate a broad base of nativist opposition to immigration that echoes the symbolic crusades identified by Gusfield. Buchanan based a 1996 presidential campaign around his promise that “I will stop illegal immigration cold by putting a double-linked security fence along the 200 miles of the border where millions pour in every year” (cited in Dillon, 1997). Buchanan’s campaign failed, but the fence building continues. The framing of the issue in terms of illegal immigration is mixed easily with fears of crime and deviance and the status displacement emphasized by Gusfield.

These comments about immigrants from the political field are reflected equally in public opinion. In the mid-1990s, a report by the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform concluded that “many people believe that undocumented aliens are the source of the increase in serious crime . . . and that the increasing number of undocumented aliens is due to the U.S. Government’s inability to control the border” (see Bean et al., 1994:3). In 2000, nearly three quarters of the respondents to the General Social Survey by the National Opinion Research Center agreed that it is “very likely” or “somewhat likely” that “more immigrants cause higher crime rates” (Rumbaut and Ewing, 2007). In 2006, a wave of city council ordinances copied a Hazleton, Pennsylvania declaration that “illegal immigration leads to higher crime rates” (see Rumbaut and Ewing, 2007). The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that lawmakers this year have submitted more than 1,400 immigration bills across the United States and that states have enacted 170 of these bills (Hegen, 2007). Nativism is a resilient force in U.S. politics and is highly resistant to social facts and evidence.

This parochialism and nativism is not, we should add, unique to the United States. The European Union is witnessing what Wacquant (2005:41) describes as a “criminalization of immigrants,” with a dramatic increase over the last two decades in the percentage of foreigners and non-nationals being incarcerated. For countries such as France, this is in part because of the harsher treatment that immigrants experience at all stages of the criminal process and because of the use of incarceration for immigration-related offenses to which the native-born residents are not subject (Wacquant, 1999, 2005). Wacquant goes on to conclude that non-nationals in Europe—“darker skinned, uneducated, unattached and uncouth, prone to crime and violence”—are increasingly perceived as “anti-persons” to be dealt with solely through the penal apparatus of the state (2005:46). In the United States, Jonathan Simon (1998) provides evidence for similar links between immigration offenses and incarceration, which he refers to as

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“immigration imprisonment.” The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy of a crime–immigration nexus (Wacquant, 2005:41).

We argue that these elements—the perception of immigrants as inherently delinquent, the political and public discourse that seeks to link crime and immigration, and the state penalization of immigrants—work together to effect symbolic violence. By “symbolic violence,” we refer to the conceptual linking of immigrants with crime and suspicion and, in turn, to the set of mental, legal, political, and social associations that are made and which come to stigmatize immigrants and to delineate their place within the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1998; Henry and Milovanovic, 1991; cf. Sampson and Bean, 2006). Any act of criminality then works to legitimate and naturalize those arbitrary associations. What Sayad refers to as “double punishment” is an example of how this idea of symbolic violence can produce a pernicious crime–immigration nexus.

In contrast, early in the last century, Edwin Sutherland (e.g., 1924) began challenging the conventional wisdom about the crime–immigration connection in his classic textbooks on crime. As a methodological matter, Sutherland worried that official crime statistics that were unadjusted for age and sex and also prone to police and court error and bias were dubious resources for reaching conclusions about immigration and crime. Yet more centrally, Sutherland argued that immigration simply was not connected with crime—and that, if anything, crime was an effect of increased acculturation into American society. To support this argument, Sutherland reported evidence that second-generation immigrants had higher rates of crime involvement than did first-generation immigrants, that immigrants who came to the United States as children were imprisoned at higher rates than were immigrants who came as adults, and that immigrants to the United States had higher rates of serious crime than did their counterparts in their countries of origin (see also National Commission on Law Observation and Enforcement, 1931). Given each of these instances, Sutherland’s argument was that rather than an existing crime–immigration connection, the very contrary is true: It is acculturation to the United States that, over time, exposes immigrants and their children to native-born levels of criminal involvement.

GENERATIONAL CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

It is important to acknowledge how prescient Sutherland was about the relationship between immigration and crime (see Hagan and Palloni, 1998, 1999). Now much evidence exists that first-generation immigrants commit significantly less crime than native-born counterparts and that immigrants only are likely to become involved in crime at levels similar to native-born citizens after spending time in their new settings; immigrants do not bring

crime to these locations. Sutherland's generational perspective on immigration and crime is well substantiated.

Any reliance on Sutherland's view to promote a specter of a crime-prone "second generation," however, is equally misplaced and misinformed. This view is what Tonry (1997:20) criticizes as the "not the foreign born but their children" view of immigration and crime. And, indeed, undue and overblown claims regarding second-generation criminality are prevalent now in the European context, such as in the Paris banlieus (Wacquant, 1999:216). Wacquant (1999:219) trenchantly demonstrates how the second generation of non-Western migrants to Europe is bearing the brunt of current social, political, and economic anxieties, precisely through a strategy of criminalization and penalization. Sayad (2004:291) explains this deep skepticism of the second generation by highlighting their status as "'immigrants' who are not immigrants" and who are viewed then as disrupting the division between nationals and non-nationals. This skepticism results in a *collective anxiety* about these second-generation "hybrids" (p. 290). The anticipated result is an increasingly heightened suspicion, stigma, and skepticism of this generation; "this type of offender is regarded as being illegitimate, as not being allowed to commit infractions, as being forbidden to offend and as not having the right to offend" (p. 291).

Rather than a crime-prone second generation, Sutherland's specific generational hypothesis is that second-generation residents, although generally more involved in criminal activity than their parents, continue to be less involved in criminal activity or at most as equally involved in criminal activity as their "national" counterparts. This cross-generational pattern merely is a slow process of "catching up" (or a social form of "naturalization") to the baseline rate of the native-born population. An overview of some of this evidence, including our own data gathered in Canada offers answers to the questions posed at the outset of our discussion.

Rumbaut and Ewing (2007) use the 2000 U.S. Census to show that across a variety of ethnic categories, the risk of current incarceration increases with the length of time in the United States; the children of immigrants, as well as immigrants of longer duration, become more likely to be incarcerated. For example, among foreign-born Hispanic men, the current incarceration rate is nearly three times higher for those individuals who have been in the United States 16 years or more compared with those who have been in the country 5 years or less. Yet, all of these groups still were far less likely to be incarcerated than the native-born group in 2000 (Rumbaut and Ewing, 2007:11–12).

Similarly, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health has collected unofficial panel survey data in the United States from emerging youth who were teenagers in the mid-1990s and are young adults now.

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These data reveal that second-generation immigrant youth were more likely, indeed, to engage in delinquency and violent behavior than were foreign-born youth. Yet, even then, native-born non-Hispanic whites continued to exceed the levels of such risk behaviors compared with all the first-generation nationality groups (see Bui and Thingniramol, 2005; Harris, 1999).

What we find, then, is that first-generation immigrants enjoy some protection, or resilience, from crime. Although this resilience may wear off with time in the United States, even the “second generation” continues to commit crime at levels *lower* than their national counterparts. And we would venture additionally that these studies represent conservative tests; because immigrant groups of either generation are likely to receive harsher treatment in the criminal justice system (Wacquant, 2005), they may be overrepresented in the official statistics of arrest and incarceration so that the true gap between new migrants (whether first- or second-generation) and their national counterparts probably is even larger.

Our own research looks elsewhere in the Americas. This research is based on two cohorts of youth surveyed in an “edge city” (Garreau, 1992) with a rapidly expanding immigrant population near Toronto, Canada. The first cohort attended secondary schools in this community in 1976, and they were born, thus, at about the time Canada began to open its doors to global immigration. The second cohort attended the same secondary schools in 1999, when Canada and the Toronto area in particular had emerged as full geopolitical participants in the world population flows of globalization. A reflection of the ethnic immigrant shift experienced in this community is that non-European youth increased from 10% to 66% of the sampled school populations between the 1976 and the 1999 cohorts. By returning to the same city area nearly a quarter century later, this study provides a unique opportunity to conduct a cross-generational analysis of immigration and delinquency over a period of remarkable social change.

The difference we found over time largely was the product of compositional change: the increase in size of the immigrant groups. To begin, in Table 1 we see that in *both* the 1976 and the 1999 cohorts, scores on a joined delinquency and drug use scale were notably higher among the top two Anglo-European groups than they were among the bottom non-European groups. That is, over time, within these groups, involvement in youthful deviance was about the same. Thus, an overall reduction in scale scores across the two cohorts was nearly entirely attributable to the compositional change associated with the much larger representation of the lower scoring, non-European groups in 1999.

This similarity across cohorts allows us to combine the two samples and to look with larger numbers within groupings at generational differences among the foreign born and in comparison with the native born in Table 2.

TABLE 1. MEAN SCORES FOR YOUTH DELINQUENCY BY ETHNIC ORIGIN

| | 1976 Cohort | | 1999 Cohort | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | Mean | Count | Mean | Count |
| Anglo Father | 16.12 | 499 | 14.93 | 188 |
| European Father | 15.7 | 250 | 14.92 | 118 |
| Asian American Father | 12.96 | 26 | 12.95 | 215 |
| African/Caribbean Father | 13.63 | 54 | 13.67 | 117 |
| Southeast & Mid Asian Father | 13.33 | 6 | 13.68 | 271 |

TABLE 2. MEAN SCORES FOR YOUTH DELINQUENCY BY GENERATIONAL STATUS

| | Mean | Count |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| First generation | 13.38 | 163 |
| One-and-a-half generation | 13.86 | 466 |
| Second-generation | 14.84 | 706 |
| Native born | 15.72 | 572 |

Following Zhou (1997), we separate the immigrant youth into first (i.e., immigrated after age 12 years), one and a half (i.e., immigrated after age 6 years), and second generations (i.e., born in Canada, but their parents were born abroad) for comparisons with the native-born youth. The result is that we observe in Table 2 the same linear pattern of social naturalization hypothesized by Sutherland more than three quarters of a century ago. The first-generation immigrant youth have the lowest scores (13.38), with the one-and-a-half generation scoring slightly higher (13.86) and the second generation scoring notably higher (14.84) and most like—but still lower than—the native-born youth (15.72) in their delinquency and drug deviance scores. Table 3 additionally breaks this analysis down into predominately Anglo, European, Asian, South Asian, and African/Caribbean groupings. The linear pattern of naturalization is remarkably uniform, with the most obvious exceptions involving the cell entries for the (predictably) small numbers of non-European native-born youth.

A multivariate analysis additionally substantiates the linear pattern identified above. We estimated the association between generational status and the probability of engaging in delinquent behavior, controlling for gender, age, socioeconomic background, ethnic origins, and cohort. The

TABLE 3. MEAN SCORES FOR YOUTH
DELINQUENCY BY GENERATIONAL
STATUS AND ETHNIC ORIGIN

| | First Generation | | One-and-a- Half Generation | | Second Generation | | Native Born | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | Mean | Count | Mean | Count | Mean | Count | Mean | Count |
| Anglo father | 14.56 | 19 | 15.03 | 94 | 16.8 | 177 | 15.67 | 443 |
| European father | 13.63 | 19 | 15.06 | 84 | 15.32 | 182 | 16.13 | 116 |
| Asian-American father | 12.54 | 41 | 12.71 | 95 | 13.24 | 131 | 11.8 | 5 |
| Southeast and Mid-Asian father | 13.31 | 64 | 13.28 | 123 | 13.84 | 116 | 17.25 | 4 |
| African/Caribbean father | 14 | 20 | 13.39 | 70 | 13.82 | 100 | 12 | 4 |

results in Table 4 indicate that even with these controls in place, the relationship between generational status and delinquent activity is linear, with the odds of engaging in these activities increasing as generational status increases, with both first- and one-and-a-half generation youth significantly less likely than native-born youth to engage in delinquent activity. And it is notable that the effect for second generation is null, which indicates no difference compared with native-born youth.

We also disaggregated the delinquency index into its component parts: uppers, downers, cannabis, chemical/LSD, narcotics, taken little things, taken things of some value, taken things of large value, taken a car ride, banged up something on purpose, and beaten up someone; then we estimated the log odds of youth engaging in any of these activities. Figure 1 provides a graphical display of the full sample of students and the predicted probabilities that immigrant youth engage in these activities; in almost every case, the linear pattern is maintained, with the probability of engaging in any delinquent activity increasing, as expected, with generational status.

Furthermore, when we go on to compare these youth with their national counterparts, we find that *for none of these delinquent activities are second-generation youth more likely to commit offenses than the other Canadian-born youth*. Indeed, across the sample, no statistical differences exist (all p values > 0.05 , two-tailed) in any of the delinquent behaviors of the second-generation group and the reference group of native-born youth.

As a final point of comparison for this brief review, it is useful to consider Morenoff and Astor's (2006) recent analysis of data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, which is also the focus of prominent work additionally considered below by Sampson et al. (1997, 1999). These data contain sizable representations of first-, second-,

TABLE 4. LOGISTIC REGRESSION PREDICTING
THE LOG ODDS OF ENGAGING IN
DELINQUENT ACTIVITY,
1976 AND 1999

| | B | Exp(B) |
|---|-------------------|--------|
| Cohort | -0.661 (0.139)*** | 0.517 |
| Male | 0.949 (0.113)*** | 2.584 |
| Father occupational prestige | -0.003 (0.003) | 0.997 |
| Age | 0.123 (0.040)** | 1.131 |
| Generational Status (reference group: native born) | | |
| First generation | -0.753 (0.210)*** | 0.471 |
| One-and-a-half generation | -0.344 (0.169)* | 0.709 |
| Second generation | 0.204 (0.149) | 1.227 |
| Ethnic Origin (reference group: Anglo father) | | |
| European father | -0.242 (0.164) | 0.785 |
| Asian father | -0.600 (0.197)** | 0.549 |
| African/Caribbean father | -0.356 (0.209) | 0.701 |
| South/Mid-Asian father | -0.308 (0.200) | 0.735 |
| Constant | -0.667 (0.638)*** | 0.513 |

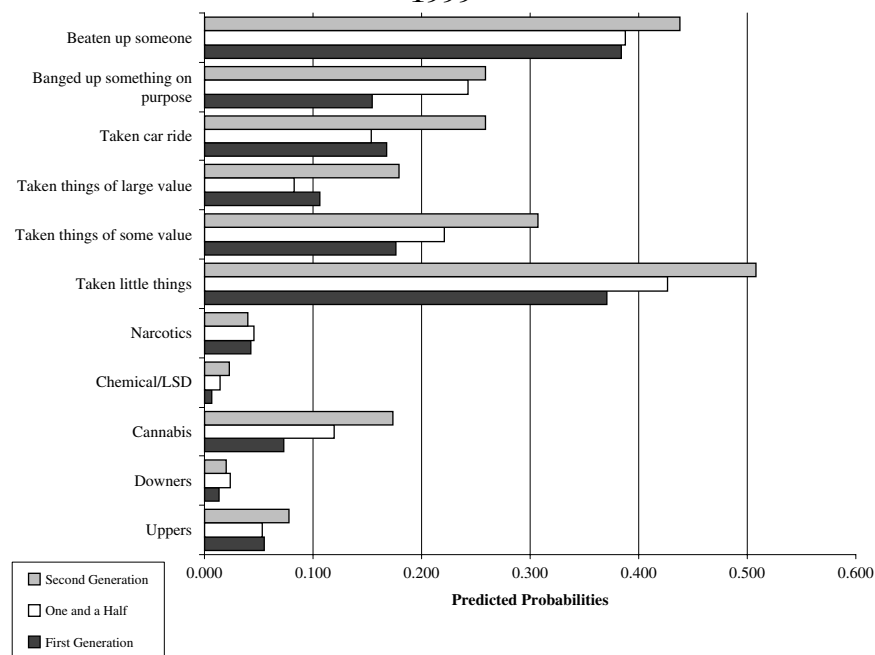
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed.

NOTES: Standard errors in parentheses.

and third-generation immigrants. With strikingly similar findings to those we report above, Morenoff and Astor (2006) show in these Chicago data that most types of violent behavior become more prevalent across immigrant generations. They conclude (2006:38) that “cross-national and national studies of immigrant crime abroad find, with few exceptions, that the crime rates of second-generation immigrants surpass those of first-generation immigrants.” But here too, it is important to emphasize that this is at most a process of naturalization and that nearly all studies continue to find that foreign-born youth are less likely overall than native-born youth to engage in crime and other forms of risky behavior (Tonry, 1997). Fears over the supposed criminality of the “second generation”—when this generation, at most, approximates the level of criminality of the baseline for the native born—can be understood analytically as a stigmatization of this group as a class in itself (see Sayad, 2004:292).

In returning to our questions above, we find that immigrants are *less likely* to be involved in crime than are the native born and that the pattern across time and generations is for the foreign born slowly to become more

FIGURE 1. PROBABILITY OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR BY GENERATIONAL STATUS, 1976 AND 1999



NOTES: None of the coefficients for second generation are significantly different from the reference group of native-born youth ($p > 0.05$, two tailed).

akin to their native-born counterparts. In neither case are the foreign born, or their children, more likely to offend. These statements are important empirical regularities that beg for criminological comment and explanation. The symbolic violence of the crime-immigration nexus, whether propagated by politicians or by public opinion, carries effects that cannot be ignored.

ASSIMILATION AND ACCULTURATION

Although the findings above might seem paradoxical from the perspective of widespread and firmly held public opinion, no real paradox may be involved. The chimeric nature of this finding is well known in the area of public health (Palloni and Morenoff, 2001) as well as in crime research (Hagan and Palloni, 1998, 1999). The point made in this research is that although it is tempting to infer that the rise in delinquency and crime across generations is the product of cultural assimilation or acculturation

into the new host society, it might also be the product of the kinds of individuals who choose to emigrate from their places of origin. If these early generation immigrants are different to start with from their peers who do not emigrate, then their lower likelihood for engaging in crime predates their arrival in the host societies and is not paradoxical. Most recently, Morenoff and Astor (2006:45) put the matter this way:

[I]f first generation immigrants possessed certain characteristics that made them selectively less crime prone and if these characteristics became less pronounced in subsequent generations, then we could observe increasing crime across generations even if there were no causal relation between assimilation and crime.

Yet the methodological and substantive difficulties in parsing this empirical question may be a product of how the question is itself imagined. The scholarly discourse of *assimilation*, or alternatively of *acculturation*, might hide more than it reveals. Both terms presume that immigrant groups will change, over time, to “fit” within U.S. society—without a sense that this culture is itself malleable through immigration (e.g., Zhou and Lin, 2005). Yet what is most striking is the lack of attention that these concepts pay to the continual discounting of the social, cultural, and human capital immigrants bring with them (see, e.g., Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Reitz, 2008) and to the harsh effects this may have over time and across generations. Analytical concepts such as assimilation and acculturation tend to excise the important role of the state in offering a warm institutional welcome (Reitz, 1998), instead shifting onto migrants a personal responsibility to acculturate. Along these lines, Morenoff and Astor’s (2006) analysis would certainly not preclude that it is the local *discounting* of migrants’ social, cultural, and human capital that can produce the generational effects they identify.

These issues of selection, assimilation, acculturation, or social naturalization are of considerable interest for criminologists who wish to find support or refutation for various theories of crime in the immigration experience. As the latter questions framed at the outset of this discussion suggest, it is of considerable interest to sort out potential individual, cultural, or structural sources of differences in explaining why immigrants fare so well, as well as the ways in which these various forces may operate in shaping the immigrant transition over time into the host society. Yet for immediate policy purposes, the important point is the simpler empirical consistency of the finding that immigrants in the United States and Canada present lower rates of offending and that delinquent behavior only begins to converge with the native born across time and generations. Although we are skeptical of views on immigration that turn merely on cost–benefit analyses for the receiving state (Bourdieu and Wacquant,

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2000), if any such ledger is drawn up, it is clear that when it comes to crime, immigration is favorable for receiving states.

REPORTING OF GOOD NEWS ON IMMIGRATION AND CRIME

Robert Sampson (2006) surprised many readers of *The New York Times* when he suggested last year that a drop in crime that began in the United States in the early 1990s might be explained partly by an increase in immigration. Readers of the Sampson article were skeptical, but they should not have been. A growing body of research indicates that immigrants are not only healthier but also more law-abiding than are the native born and in these ways contribute to positive trends in U.S. society (Martinez, 2006; Rumbaut and Ewing, 2007). Criminologists have been extolling similar findings for most of the last century. This article by Sampson was a continuation of a contribution that dates to the most famous American criminologist, Edwin Sutherland, who sought to counteract a mythology of immigration and crime that has proven highly resistant to clarification and change.

Most public readers likely missed what was new and potentially most important in Sampson's effort to shed new light on immigration issues. The novelty of Sampson's report was less that immigrants to the United States are less inclined to crime than are those individuals who are born here but more that immigrants who live in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants are especially law-abiding (e.g., Lee and Martinez, 2002). This immigrant neighborhood effect, which Sampson uncovered in his groundbreaking research in Chicago, suggested that whatever made these immigrants less inclined to crime was protected and sustained more by living in neighborhoods populated by other immigrants.

Sampson subsequently clarified this point by taking *The New York Times Magazine* reporter for a walk in a Latino neighborhood in Chicago (Press, 2006). As they walked, Sampson explained to the reporter and to his audience that the active and engaged roles of residents in the life of their Latino neighborhood was likely protective and an effective collective deterrent to crime. Alternatively, the implication was that leaving the immigrant community could bring the risk of becoming more vulnerable to crime and to whatever else it might mean to be more of a U.S.-based American, at least in a residential sense.

This latter interpretation of Sampson's finding about the protective benefit of immigrant neighborhoods and the alternative risks of time spent in the United States is consistent with a long-developing body of research on immigration, health, and crime. This interpretation raises an important set of questions that extends beyond countries such as the United States and

Canada; if selection processes are at work, we must also inquire into the *implications for countries of emigration*. This is a complicated area of research, and Morenoff and Astor (2006:56) continue to insist that we have not resolved the role of the selection processes that not only lead persons to cross borders but also to settle in particular kinds of neighborhoods. These issues will spur additional important research, but for more immediate policy purposes, the answers are clear. If a cost-benefit ledger is to be drawn, the states where immigrants settle are reaping the benefits. While the implications for emigration states are ignored by research caught up within the logic of state thought, receiving states come out ahead: immigration does not cause crime, and more likely is a net contributor to crime reduction.

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