

# **Accounting for the Differences in Violent Behavior Between Immigrant and Native Youths**

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**Preliminary Draft—Please Do Not Cite**

## **Introduction**

### **Motivation**

According to the 2000 Census, approximate one of every five children in the United States is now living in the family with at least one parent who is an immigrant (Shields & Behrman 2004). Given this picture, examining how children of immigrants fare is of particular importance. Specifically, scholars should investigate characteristics associated with living in an immigrant family on the impact of successful child development. These researches would have critical public policy implications. They serve as the basis for better child and family policy to our more and more diverse society.

However, not every dimension associated with children of immigrant is given the same weight in the literature. One may surprise by the shortage of studies on immigrant children's behavioral development. Only few studies attempt to document the patterns of delinquent behaviors of immigrant children. Interestingly, children of immigrants are less deviant and violent compared to children in native families. For instance, children of immigrants are less likely to engage in violent behaviors and teenage child bearing, have less sexual intercourse during young adulthood, and are less involved in substance abuse compared to their native counterparts (Fuligni & Hardway 2004; Rumbaut, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff, & Raudenbush 2005; Tinkew et al., 2006). From these empirical studies, immigrant children seem to enjoy some sort of advantages: they are protected by some factors. But, no study provides a systematic analysis of factor contributes to such immigrant advantage. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in literature and provide a deep understanding of immigrant-native disparities in delinquency.

### **Why Immigrant and Native Youths Differ in Violent Behavior?**

The research question of this study is straightforward: what accounts for the difference of violent involvement between immigrant and native youths. Intuitively, differential exposure of risk/protective factors of delinquency across populations would lead to the gap in violent behaviors. Literature on immigration offers great insights on the potential sources of differential distribution of risk/protective factors between immigrant and native populations. First, most, if not all, immigrants are a self-selected. Successful immigrants are more likely to carry on positive attributes (i.e. health, aspiration, work ethic) due to the difficulty of immigration process. Empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, confirms the self-select hypothesis (for example, Shields & Behrman 2004; McDonald & Kennedy 2004). It is possible that these positive characteristics also manifest in immigrants' child-rearing methods, family management ability, and the creation of better family environment (Schmitz 2005). Thus, according to the self-selection hypothesis, family processes and family environment could be different between immigrant and native families, even if holding other factors constant.

On the other hand, immigrants tend to concentrate in co-ethnic enclave (Borjas 1999; Logan et al. 2004). Living in co-ethnic enclaves provides a distinct socialization context for children of immigrants. Co-ethnic networks not only reinforce the level of parental control but also help internalize traditional culture for younger generation (Portes & Zhou 1994; Zhou & Bankston 1998; Bankston & Zhou 2002). In addition, enclaves, as other neighborhoods, shape the content and quality of friendship network of children. In these aspects, it is reasonable to believe that the community characteristics as well as peers relationship would be different for native and immigrant youths. As a result,

it is very likely that immigrant-native gap in violent involvement is in part different in neighborhood environments.

My goals in this study are thus threefold. First, I compare involvement in violent behaviors between immigrant and native youths aged 9 to 15. Second, I also compare and analyze the distributions of risk/protective factors of the two groups. A detailed analysis of family environment, neighborhood characteristics, and peer relationships of children of immigrant is particular important since no prior studies have done such an analysis. Third, I investigate the role of various risk/protective factors in accounting for the difference in adolescent's violent behaviors between immigrant and native youths.

I organize the remaining part of this paper in following ways. First, I point out some of the most important factors' contribute to adolescent delinquency, and their mechanisms. Next I delineate the sample and methodological approach of this study. After research methodology is introduced, I provide detailed results of my analysis. Limitations and conclusion of this project will be the final section. I will also provide direction for further analysis and improvement.

## **Family, Community, Peers, & Delinquency**

### **Families and Deviant Behaviors**

When asking people about the main cause of adolescent delinquency, family factors always come to the top candidate. Indeed, a large body of research literature confirms the critical relationship between families and delinquent behaviors. Family factors such as family environment, household size, and child-rearing method are all strong predictor of offending behaviors in adolescents. In this section, I briefly review

important findings from previous works on the effects of families on adolescent delinquency.

*Demographic Features of the Household:* Two demographic factors are of criminologist's interest—family income and household size. Without doubt, family income is a strong and replicate predictor of delinquency. Previous empirical studies have illustrated that living in low-income families increases children's probability of involving delinquent behaviors (Duncan et al. 1998). Sampson and Laub (1994) also concluded that “poverty appears to inhibit the capacity of families to achieve informal social control, which in turn increases the likelihood of adolescent delinquency”. It is also worth noting that parents of low socio-economic status are more likely to tolerate deviant behaviors which may possibly foster the further development of more violent behaviors (Markowitz & Felson 1998). Another household feature predicts delinquency is the family size. Children from large family are more likely to exert deviant behaviors than those from a smaller family (Fisher 1984; Brownfield & Sorenson 1994). Explanations for the size effect are straightforward. As the number of children in a family increases, the amount of parental attention to each child decreases. In addition, increase in the number of family members also raises the probabilities of intra-family conflict. All then lead to increase the risk of child delinquency (Farrington 2002).

*Child-Rearing Methods:* Parental practices have also been a center in the literature on child delinquency, particular for developmental psychologists (for a review, see Maccoby 2000). Ineffective child-rearing method incase the risk of child delinquency. But what define ineffective child-rearing is ambiguous. For example, poor parental supervision is usually related to the delinquent behaviors (Wilson 1987; Smith & Stern

1997; Simons et al. 2005). However, since parental supervision are always sensitive and responsive to the ever-changing social environment, any ranking or classification of child-rearing practices as good or bad would be problematic (Furstenberg et al. 1999).

Another line of research focuses on the parental involvement with children's life. For example, parental behaviors could foster or reduce adolescent delinquency by managing children's opportunity to associate with deviant peers (Aseltine 1995; Chung & Steinberg 2006). Since the less time children are exposed to the risk factors such as deviance peers or negative role models, the probability they are to develop deviant behaviors decrease. Other studies done by Gottfredson and Soule's (2005 p.118) also suggested that, "crimes against persons are greatest during period of the day when youths are congregated in space and are therefore most exposed to peers". Given this, what parents can do is to avoid adolescents' contact with deviant friends. The more time adolescents spend with their families during weekends, afternoons, or evenings, the fewer deviant behaviors they have (Warr 1993).

*Family Environment:* In addition to child-rearing methods, the family environment/context whether children grew up is crucial for children's successful development. Strong empirical evidence shows the association between family environment/structure and violent behaviors of adolescent (Demuth & Brown 2004). Among various indicators of family environment, I focus on family structure, maternal employment, and parent-child relationship. Apparently, family structure directly relates to the environment children grew up. Deviations from traditional two-parent family are found to be detrimental to children's emotional and behavioral developments. For instance, children with a family history of marital transition are more likely to exhibit

anxiety and hyperactivity than their peers (Pagani, Boulerice & Tremblay 1997). In addition, children from single-parent family are more likely to develop aggressive behaviors compared to children in two-parent family (McNulty & Bellair 2003). This may partly due to that fact that single parent family also has less available parental time which leads to inadequate supervision (McLanahan & Sandefur 1994).

Lastly, parent-child relationships between child and parent can be view as a good indicator of family environment. Cold parents are more likely to have delinquent children than warm parents (McCord 1979). Importantly, studies also show that a supportive and warm family environment could counter the negative effect of other risk factors (McCord 1997).

### **The Community & Deviant Behaviors**

Community-level studies of crime can date back to early Chicago school and since 1990, the so-called “neighborhood effect” becomes so popular across academic disciplines. Here, I focus on two simple measures of community characteristics: economy and racial composition.

*Poverty.* When asking people to name a community feature that influence its crime rate, poverty always stands out. The economic condition of a neighborhood could contribute to its criminal and delinquent pattern in two ways. First, one line of research on neighborhood poverty focuses the independent effect of economic condition (Block 1979; Curry & Spergel 1988). However, empirical evidence for such a relationship is mixed (Sampson 2002). In contrast, others view economic condition of a neighborhood as a mediating factor. This line of research postulate concentrated poverty may affect

local social/organizational processes which, in turn, influence the level of criminal and delinquent activities (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson, Morenoff, Earls 1999). In general, empirical findings grant more support of this view. But most importantly, whether neighborhood economic condition has direct or indirect effect, living in poor neighborhood seems detrimental (Brooks-Gun 1993).

Racial Composition: Interestingly, racial composition seems to be a stronger predictor of crime than community poverty rate. Scholars have consistent show that the proportion of black in a neighborhood is positively associated with criminal activities (Block 1979; Sampson 1985; Smith & Jarjoura 1988). However, as Sampson (2002) noted, some study find no significant correlation between rate of violence and the concentration of black after family structure and socioeconomic status are accounted for. Thus, whether black concentration has an independent effect warrant further scrutinized. On the other hand, Sampson and his coauthors (2005) find that concentration of immigrant populations in a neighborhood is negative associated with violent behaviors. This seems to confirm to findings from some qualitative studies for the high level of social cohesion and informal social control within immigrant enclave (Zhou & Bankston 1998).

### **Peers & Deviant Behaviors**

Finally, interpersonal relations have a critical link to human behaviors. As children transit from childhood to adolescent, they spend more and more time with their friends whilst spend less and less time within the family. Peers' influence gradually surpasses the family as children aged. Also, many criminal or violent behaviors are

“companionate activities” which involves co-offenders (Hindelang 1976; Erickson & Jensen 1977). Evidence of strong positive association of the twos is abundant (Haynie & Osgood 2006). However, scholars should be careful about making any causal claim on the peers influence. The problem of endogeneity makes it difficult to conclude whether affiliation with violent peers is the cause or result of subject’s own violent behavior. More works are needed to identify the casual mechanism of peers’ influence.

### Sample

The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhood (PHDCN) was a longitudinal survey aimed at exploring the developmental pathways of negative and positive human social behaviors. It followed approximate six thousands children in seven randomly selected cohorts (i.e. children at birth and children from 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 years old) for four years (from 1997 to 2001). Participants of seven age cohorts were drawn from 343 neighborhood clusters<sup>1</sup> in the city of Chicago. My analysis uses the first wave (1997) of the longitudinal survey in the PHDCN project. Questions were designed to assess a wide range of child outcomes. Subjects’ primary caregivers were also interviewed and the focuses are family structure, home environment, parent-child relationships, parental behaviors, parental characteristics and so forth.

Subjects (children) older than 9 years old were interviewed on their offending behaviors. But I exclude the 18-year-old cohort from the analysis since no primary caregiver was interviewed and thus very little information about family environment and parental behaviors are unavailable for the 18-year-old cohort. The initial sample size of

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<sup>1</sup> The 343 neighborhood clusters result from the combinations of 825 census tracts. Neighborhoods instead of census tracts are used because they are ecologically meaningful units. Residences in the same neighborhood are similar in their demographic characteristics.

three age cohorts is 2,344. Further deletion of the cases is due to missing values of the independent variable. My final analytical sample is 2,135.

## **Measures & Methods**

### **Dependent Variable**

The Self-Report Scale of Offending in the survey offer extreme rich information on adolescent offending behaviors. I focus on following nine violent behaviors as Raudenbush, Johnson, and Sampson (2003): (1) carry a hidden weapon, (2) set fire, (3) snatch purse, (4) hit someone the subject lived with, (5) hit someone the subject does not live with, (6) attack someone with weapons, (7) throw objects at people, (8) use force to rob, (9) involve in gang fight. All items are dichotomous coded.

Next, I create a dummy indicator of violent behavior. If an adolescent commit any violent behaviors listed above, the value of the dummy indicator is one. Otherwise, the variable will be coded zero. A parallel approach is widely used in criminological research and has been used by Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush (2005) with the PHDCN dataset. It is worth noting that such a dependent variable does not account for the severity of different deviant behaviors. It treats aforementioned nine violent behaviors the same.

### **Independent Variable**

Children of Immigrant: Following the conventional definition in the research literature (e.g. Fuligni 1997; Borjas 1999; Portes & Rumbaut 2001), I define children of immigrant as children with at least one foreign-born parent. By default, foreign-born children will have foreign-born parents such that they are assigned to children of immigrants. However, since the PHDCN does not provide information on spouse's birth

place, I can only assign one to children of immigrant based on primary caregiver and subject's information. As a result, the number of children of immigrant maybe underestimated. Approximate 40% of cases (N=893) in the final sample are considered children of immigrants.

Family Environment: A nine items questionnaire of family conflict was available in the PHDCN dataset. Primary caregiver were asked about whether members in the family always (1) fight, (2) become openly angry, (3) become angry and throw thing, (4) lose tempers, (5) criticize each other, (6) hit each other, (7) smooth over disagreement, (8) outdo each other, and (9) get results by shouting. All measures were dichotomous and the 7<sup>th</sup> item is reverse coded. Since these items do not form a reliable scale using item response theory scaling, I keep all these variables in the following regression analysis.

Parental Supervision: Parenting behaviors are derived from the Home Inventory Scale. All these items were coded as binary responses—zero or one. Since I am more interested in the effects of parental supervision on adolescent delinquency, I dropped those rules seemed to be irrelevance. I also deleted items relating to cognitive stimulation such as number of books in the shelves which are not the main interest of this study. Measures for parent-child interaction were dropped as well since they cannot be classified as parental supervision. Eventually, seven parenting behaviors are selected: (1) curfew on weekdays, (2) curfew on weekend, (3) requesting subject to sleep at home, (4) setting procedures for subject to check with primary caregiver if she is away, (5) adult supervision after school, (6) not unsupervised in public space, and (7) not allow visiting friend alone. However, further psychometric analyses shows that these items fail to form

a reliable scale. Items of parental supervision will be kept and treated as dummy variables in the regressions.

Peers: Subjects were asked about the behaviors, including violent behaviors, of friends at school. Questionnaire required each subject identify the proportion of his/her peers having a specific behavior, including violent behaviors. Nevertheless, violent behaviors asked in the peer questionnaire are not comparable to violent behaviors measured in Self-Offending Scale. I therefore focus on four types of violent behaviors available in the peer questionnaire: (1) fight with each other at school, (2) hit people, (3) attack with weapons, and (4) use force to rob. I transform these items to dichotomous variables which one refers to having associated with violent peers and zero means not associate with any violent peer. I keep four dichotomous separate in the regressions.

Neighborhood Characteristics: In the PHDCN dataset, characteristics of neighborhoods are constructed from the 1990 Census data. Nevertheless, due to the issue of confidentiality, most neighborhoods statistics such as proportion of immigrants, concentration of poverty, homicide rate are blocked for data users. As a result, I am only able to control for the two basic demographic features of the neighborhoods—socioeconomic status and the racial composition—in this study. A three levels indicator of neighborhood's socioeconomic status is available to the users. It was defined by a six-item scale that summed standardized neighborhood measures of (1) median income, (2) percent college educated, (3) percent with household income over \$50,000, (4) percent families below poverty line, (5) percent on public assistance, and (6) percent with household income less than \$50,000. In the regression, I focus on whether the subject lived in a low-income neighborhood. In addition, the PHDCN provides a seven categories

variable of neighborhood racial composition. I re-group the variable as over 70% Blacks, over 70% Latinos, and Others, and make them a series of dummy variables in the regression.

Other Explanatory Variables: *Family structure* is represented by a series of dummy variable that distinguish two-parent families, cohabitation, and single-parent family. *Family size* is the number of persons in the family. *Family income* refers to total annual income measured in thousand dollars and breaks up into seven income categories. *Primary caregiver's level of education* is a categorical variable indicates highest level of education years of completed by the subject's primary caregiver. It ranges from less than high school to bachelor's degree or more. Finally, I control for *gender* and *age* of the subjects.

### **Analytical Strategy**

I use multivariate probit regression model for the following statistical analyses. To account for the possible heteroscedasticity, I use robust standard error in the regressions. For the following analysis, I regress violent behavior on demographics watched in the first model. In the second model, I include neighborhood characteristics. The third model, I add variables of family conflict and parental supervision. Finally, violent behaviors of peers are included in the statistical analysis.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the baseline characteristics of immigrant and native youths in this study and Table 2 shows the baseline characteristics of four major groups (i.e.

immigrant Hispanic, native Hispanic, Native Black, and Native White) in this study. As the table showed, about 87 percent of the immigrant youths are Latinos whilst the majority of native youths (58%) are Blacks. There are also substantial numbers of White (19%) and Latino (19%) in the native group. In short, native youths in the sample come from more heterogeneous racial and ethnic backgrounds than immigrant youths.

With respect to family income, the nature of income variable in the PHDCN prevents me from doing detailed analysis of family income across groups. Nevertheless, readers can see some patterns using categorical income variable. First, the distribution of income is more dispersed in native populations than immigrant populations. Both the proportion of extremely poor family and the proportion of middle-class family are higher for natives than immigrants. Second, native White seems to be the richest group, with about 21% of family having annual income above 50,000 dollars. Finally, it is worth noting that even income pattern of native White families in the PHDCN sample is relative low compared to the national average. Approximate 40% of native White lives with annual income below 20,000. This means that most of the families in the PHDCN survey are considered low-income or poor family.

Like family income, the education of primary caregiver shows substantial differences between native and immigrant populations. Native-born primary caregivers, on average, more education compared to immigrant primary caregivers. Approximate 70% of immigrant primary caregivers do not have a high school degree and only 17% of them have some college education. In contrast, about one-third of native primary caregivers do not complete high school and 43% of them receiving some college

education. The differences of level of schooling among three native groups are relative small.

The prevalence of family structure varies across populations. Immigrant children, for example, are the most likely to live in two-parent family (73%). In contrast, slightly less than one-half (44%) of the native youths come from two-parent family. There are also 62% of White children reside in two-parent family. These results are consistent with previous studies on immigrant's family structure (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Beavers & D'Amico 2005). Nevertheless, there are substantial variations of patterns of family structure within native populations (as revealed by Table 2). One interesting point is the sharp difference between immigrant and native Hispanics in family structure. Proportion of children resides in two-parent family is considerable lower in native Hispanics compared to immigrant Hispanics.

Finally, the pattern of neighborhood characters shows interesting findings. Immigrants are more likely to live in low-income neighborhoods but almost none of them live in predominant Black neighborhoods. Table 2 offers a more detailed pattern of residential locations among four major groups. Slightly over a half (56%) of Blacks live in the neighborhoods where their neighbors are mostly Blacks. Hispanics also tend to live in the neighborhoods with over 70% Hispanics. Such a tendency seems decline gradually as immigrants acculturated: approximate 24% of immigrant Hispanics in contrast to 18% of native Hispanics reside in predominant Hispanic neighborhoods.

### **Native versus Immigrant Differences**

Violent Behaviors: Table 3 presents the patterns of violent involvement between native and immigrant youths. As Table 2 showed, violent behaviors are not rare event for both populations. Behaviors such as carrying a hidden weapon, hitting some you live with, hitting someone you do not live with, and throwing objects at people are common. Cross groups comparisons show that native youths are two times more likely to commit violent behaviors than children of immigrants in seven (out of nine) violent behaviors examined. All these differences are statistical significance at the .001 level. As a rule, native children are more violent in all measures expect for some rare events such as set fire, snatch purse, or use forces to rob.

Family Environment: The analysis of family environment is presented in the Table 4. Surprisingly, clash is common within both native and immigrant families. Nevertheless, the table also shows considerable difference between immigrant and native family. In general, immigrant families fewer conflicts than their native counterparts. Native families rank higher in all nine measures of family conflict, and all items, except one, under this category are statistically significant at the .001 level. For example, family members in native families are more likely to criticize each other, fight with each other, and outdo each other. In addition, members in native families spend less effort to smooth disagreements and tend to get results by shouting. Although the reason why immigrant families are conflict-free is unknown, children of immigrants seem to enjoy a more favorable family environment.

Parental Supervision: In Table 5, I present the patterns of parental supervision for children between native and immigrant populations. Almost all families set rules on children after school. The pattern of rules remains largely the same. Only one measure—

not allowing children to visit friends alone—is statistically significant. Approximately 50% of immigrant parents do not allow their children to visit friends outside. In contrast, only 21% of native parents have established such a rule for their children. Otherwise, there seems to be no difference in terms of parental supervision.

Peers Deviance: The pattern of peers' behaviors of children of immigrants and children of natives is presented in the Table 6. Immigrant children remain less likely to associate with friends who have shown violent behaviors. For example, about a quarter of native children have friends who have attacked someone with weapons. On the contrary, only about 12% children of immigrants maintain friendships with children with such a violent behavior. Most importantly, all the differences of peers' violent behaviors between immigrant and native youths are significant. These statistics strongly suggests that friendship patterns of children of immigrants are different from that of native youths.

### **Results from Regression Analysis**

Results from the regression analysis are shown in the Table 7. The first model includes all demographic variables. I observe a large immigrant benefit in violent behavior. Controlling for demographic factors, children of immigrants are 11 percentage points less likely to involve in violent behavior compared to native youths. Gender is a strong predictor. Being a girl decreases one's probability of committing violent behaviors by 15 percentage points. Age also strongly correlates with violent involvement. Adolescents aged 15 and 12 are more likely to show violent behaviors compared to children at age 9 by approximate 51 percentage points and 24 percentage points respectively. Intuitively, as children getting older, the decreasing of family influence and

their increasing physical strength make them more likely to have violent behaviors. Black children are statistically more violent than Hispanics. But there is not difference of violent involvement between White and Hispanic children. Finally, family structure matters. Deviation from two-parent family is positively associated with children's violent behaviors.

Model 2 assesses the explanatory power of neighborhood features in explaining racial differences in violence. After adding variables of neighborhood factors, the effect of being a child of immigrant remains unchanged. Coefficients of other demographic variables are almost the same. Although the coefficients of neighborhood measures are in the expected direction, the values are very small and none of them are statistically significant. They have little, if any, prediction power on the violent behaviors between native and immigrant populations.

Next, the Model 3, I add measures of family conflict and parental supervision to the previous model. With the inclusion of these variables, the marginal effect of immigrant drops substantially. Being a child of immigrant is associated with a lower probability of committing violent behavior by approximately 7 percentage points, a 40% decrease. Further, the effect now becomes insignificant at the .05 level (but it is statistically significant at the 0.1 level). Interestingly, adding these variables does not change the marginal effects of other demographic factors. For instance, being a Black increases a child's chance of committing violent behavior by 15 percentage point which is exactly the same effect as Model 1. This suggests that the effects of gender, age, and even race on the onset of violent behaviors are not mediated by family environment and parental supervision. Among measures of family conflict, only one of them—hit each

other—significantly associates with violent behavior. It correlates with a higher probability of having violent behavior by approximate 12 percentage point. Other items do not have statistically significant effects. For measures of parental supervision, the effects are mixed. Two strategies—sleeping at home and now allowing visiting friends alone—significantly correlates with lower level of violent behaviors. Sleeping at home is associated with a decrease of violent involvement by approximate 13 percentage points. Children who are prevented from visiting friends alone show lower level of violent involvement by 6 percentage points. In short, family conflict and parental supervision in part account for the gap of violent behaviors between immigrant and native youths.

Finally, Model 4 examines the peers' deviance. Peers' behaviors exert great explanatory power in native-immigrant disparity of violent involvement. With the inclusion of measures of peers' behaviors, the effect of being children of immigrants becomes almost zero. Such results indicate that peers' behaviors account for the gap of violent involvement between immigrant and native youths. Additionally, three out of four measures of peers' violence is statistically significant. Having friends who fight at school is positively associated with subjects' violent behavior by 15 percentage points. Associating with friends who have attacked people with weapons correlates with children's chance of committing violent behaviors by about 20 percentage points. Peers effect is huge. Marginal effects of other variables seem remain unchanged after adding measures of peers' behaviors. However, it is worth noting that the effect of gender is reduced by about 25%, implying that part of the gender difference in violent involvement can be attributed to the friendship patterns.

Comparing results of four models, I show that differences in violence between native and immigrant youths cannot be explained by differences in demographic factors. Family conflict and parental supervision do partially explain the differences in violence between immigrant and native populations. It seems that association with violent peers has the strongest explanatory power of disparity in violence.

### **Robustness Check 1: Latino Subsample**

Previous regression analysis shows the explanatory of family conflict, parental supervision, and association with violent peers on the native-immigrant disparity of violence involvement. However, it could be possible that I am comparing immigrant Latino versus native Black since the majority in immigrant sample is Latino and over half of the subjects in the native population is Black. If the comparison group changes, the aforementioned results may change as well. To address this issue and to test the robustness of my results, I run the same regression on a subsample of Latinos. Given the substantial numbers of native Latino in the sample, I am able to limit my analysis to the Latino population and see whether the native-immigrant gap of violent involvement can be explained by the same factors.

Table 8 shows the results of statistical analysis on the Latino subsample. As Model 1 showed, children of immigrants are 10 percentage points less likely to engage in violent behaviors compared to their native counterparts, after demographic factors are account for. Gender and age remain strong predictors of violent behaviors, as previous analysis. Family size has no effect on children's violent involvement.

Next, I include neighborhood characteristics. Results do not change. None of the neighborhood measures are statistical significant. Children of immigrants, compared to native youths, still enjoy a benefit in terms of violent involvement by 10 percentage points.

Things are different when family conflict and parental supervision are controlled for in the Model 3. The effect of being children of immigrants decreases by a half. Children of immigrant are still less likely to commit violent behaviors compared to their native counterpart by approximately 6 percentage points. But, it is not statistically insignificant anymore. Violent behavior within the family—family members hit each other—is positively correlated with children’s violent behaviors by 12 percentage points. Otherwise, none of the items in either family conflict or parental supervision achieve statistical significance at the .05 level.

Finally, measures of peers are included in the Model 4. Interestingly, the effect of being children of immigrant is almost eliminated by the inclusion of these variables. When friendship is controlled for, Children of immigrants perform no better than native youths in violent behaviors. All measures of peers; violent behaviors have strong and statistically significant effect.

The pattern of statistical analysis of Latino subsample replicates that of the total sample. Family conflict, parental supervision, and peers’ violence stand out as the explanatory factors of native-immigrant gap of violent involvement. Such results suggest that my findings are quite robust and are not an artifact of particular comparison group.

## **Robustness Check 2: Violence Index**

The dependent variable in previous analysis does not account for the severity of violent behaviors: it treats more or less severe behaviors equally. Nor does it account for the difference between those who commit multiple violent behaviors and those who report only one violent behavior. To address these issues, I construct another dependent variable using Item Response Theory (IRT) scaling. When all items are binary, a widely use IRT method is the Rasch Model. Rasch Model creates a meaningful metric which can be interpreted as the latent index of delinquency when several conditions are met<sup>2</sup>. I replace the original binary indicator with latent index of violence and replicate the aforementioned statistical procedures. I also standardize the violence index since it has no intrinsic value and this makes interpretation of regression coefficients easier.

Results are reported in the Table 9. In general, the results follow the same pattern as previous. Family conflict and parental supervision in part account for the difference in violence between immigrant and native youths, and the remaining difference is then explained by interpersonal relationships. Almost all measures of peers' violence are positively associated with children's score of violence index. Gender, age, and family structure are other strong predictors of violence. In sum, adopting a more sophisticated measure of adolescent violence does not change the results of my findings. This suggests that my measures do capture some of the important factors in explaining immigrant-native gap in violent behaviors.

## **Discussions & Conclusions**

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<sup>2</sup> The violence index ranges from -4.11 to 3.20 with a mean of -3.24 and standard deviation of 1.29. The average score is -3.04 for children of immigrants and -3.54 for children of natives. Therefore, it confirms that native youths are more violent than immigrant youths.

Children of immigrants consistently show better performance than their native counterparts in empirical literature. Given the fact that most immigrant families are poor, live in unfavorable neighborhoods, and lack of essential human capitals (i.e. language, knowledge of the host society), it is quite puzzling why their children have fewer violent behaviors. Digging into the factors and even mechanisms on promoting the positive outcome of children of immigrants is important. Such studies not only provide empirical evidence for future theory building but also offer insights for a better social policy.

My paper has the following findings. First, I find a large immigrant benefit in terms of violent involvement. Such an immigrant advantage is concentrated on violent behavior, but almost vanishes in violent crime. Second, the gap of violent involvement between immigrant and native youths is partially explained by difference in the level of family conflict and parental supervision, and the remaining gap is completely explained by the degree to which children associate with violent peers. Third, the results are quite robust regardless of the comparison group. This suggests they are some fundamental differences between immigrant and native families.

Nevertheless, there are several limitations of my current study which deserve further examination. First, I avoid making any causal interpretations of my study. Apparently, most of variables I used are endogenous by nature. Parenting practices have shown to be responsive to children's performance and social environment (Furstenberg et al 1999.). The strong association between peers' behaviors and children's violent outcome could be a result of peer influence or social homophily. Statistical techniques adopted in this study can not solve such reverse casualty problems. The bottom line is: these factors do have explanatory power but need further investigations to make

convincing casual arguments. My crucial next step is finding strategies to purge the endogeneity of three important factors identified in this study: family conflict, parental supervision, and peers.

Second, my measures of neighborhood characteristics are very crude. Dichotomous indicators of racial composition and economic condition may not accurately capture the social and organizational dynamics of the neighborhoods. I, therefore, am hesitating to conclude that neighborhood does not matter. It is possible that difference in the level of informal social control or collective efficacy accounts part of the gap of violent involvement between immigrant and native youths. Incorporating more sophisticated measures of neighborhood dynamics is another extension of this project.

Third, the dependent variable—a dichotomous indicator of violent behavior—is far from perfect. The variable construction does not account for the severity of each violent behavior and treat them as equal. To fully use the information provide by the survey, one should construct a dependent variable that could not only account for the level of severity of different violent behaviors but also the frequency associated with the behaviors, for instance, using Item Response Theory (IRT) scaling.

Finally, this study is cross-section by its nature. It is important to trace the native and immigrant youths over time to see whether the gap is consistent over time. If the gap does change over time, what accounts for the variation? These questions would be of particular important to the burgeoning literature on immigrant families and child development.

Child development within immigrant families is a field relative understudied. My paper shows that how differential distributions of family and environmental factors are

related to the difference in violent behavior between immigrant and native youths. I hope my study shed some light on the future study within this area.

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**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Native (N=1,281)</b>	<b>Immigrant (N=854)</b>
<b>Race (Subject)</b>		
Hispanic (%)	19	87
White (%)	19	7
Black (%)	58	2
Others (%)	4	4
<b>Family Structure</b>		
Married (%)	44	73
Cohabitated (%)	11	12
Single (%)	44	15
<b>PC Relationship to Subject</b>		
Biological Mom (%)	81	86
Biological Dad (%)	8	11
Grandma (%)	6	1
Others (%)	5	2
<b>Education (Primary Caregiver)</b>		
Less than High School (%)	30	68
High School (%)	15	10
Some College (%)	43	17
College or Above (%)	12	5
<b>Reside in Low Income Neighborhood (%)</b>		
Reside in Low Income Neighborhood (%)	35	41
Neighborhood Has 70% or More Blacks (%)	34	1
Neighborhood Has 70% or More Hispanics (%)	4	21
Household Size	5.1 (2.1)	5.7 (1.8)
<b>Family Income</b>		
< 5,000 (%)	14	7
5,000-9,999 (%)	10	9
10,000-19,999 (%)	14	28
20,000-29,999 (%)	17	24
30,000-39,999 (%)	13	14
40,000-49,999 (%)	10	8
> 50,000 (%)	21	9

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Four Major Groups**

	<b>Imm. Hispanic (N=744)</b>	<b>Native Hispanic (N=242)</b>	<b>Black (N=744)</b>	<b>White (N=248)</b>
<b>Family Structure</b>				
Married (%)	72	55	35	65
Cohabitated (%)	13	12	12	8
Single (%)	15	33	53	27
<b>PC Relationship to Subject</b>				
Biological Mom (%)	88	90	77	84
Biological Dad (%)	9	6	7	12
Grandma (%)	1	2	8	1
Others (%)	2	2	8	3
<b>Education (Primary Caregiver)</b>				
Less than High School (%)	74	40	28	21
High School (%)	9	17	13	18
Some College (%)	13	35	48	36
College or Above (%)	3	8	9	24
<b>Reside in Low Income Neighborhood (%)</b>	44	34	44	11
Neighborhood Has 70% or More Blacks (%)	0	3	56	1
Neighborhood Has 70% or More Hispanics (%)	24	18	1	1
Household Size	5.8	5.3	5.2	4.7
<b>Family Income</b>				
< 5,000 (%)	7	14	16	11
5,000-9,999 (%)	10	7	13	9
10,000-19,999 (%)	29	15	17	21
20,000-29,999 (%)	26	17	19	19
30,000-39,999 (%)	14	14	13	15
40,000-49,999 (%)	7	13	8	4
> 50,000 (%)	6	19	14	21

**Table 3: Difference in Violent Behavior between Immigrant and Native Youths**

<b>Violent Behavior</b>	<b>Native (N=1,370)</b>	<b>Immigrant (N=893)</b>
Carried Hidden Weapon (%)	10.7***	4.7***
Set Fire	1.5	1.0
Snatch Purse	0.7	1.0
Hit Someone in the Household	17.8***	9.5***
Hit Someone	33.4***	16.2***
Attack with Weapon	4.7***	1.7***
Throw Objects at People	18.6***	9.5***
Used Force to Rob	0.2	0.4
Gang Fight	6.7***	3.6***

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 4: Difference in Level of Family Conflict between Immigrant and Native Families**

<b>Family Members...</b>	<b>Native (N=1,370)</b>	<b>Immigrant (N=893)</b>
Fight a Lot	18.4	16.6
Become Openly Angry	58.1***	45.7***
Angry and Throw Thing	18.8**	14.6**
Often Lose Tempers	63.9***	52.4***
Criticize Each Other	39.4***	30.1***
Hit Each Other	39.0***	14.4***
Not Smooth Over Disagreements	6.5***	2.9***
Outdo Each Other	24.1***	14.4***
Get Result by Shouting	32.4***	24.6***

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 5: Difference in Level of Parental Supervision between Immigrant and Native Families**

<b>Supervision</b>	<b>Native (N=1,370)</b>	<b>Immigrant (N=893)</b>
Curfew on Weekdays	99	98.4
Curfew on Weekend	97.4	96.5
Sleep at Home	90.1	92.5
Check with PC if Away	94.5	96.1
Adult Supervised after School	91.4	91.7
Not Unsupervised in Public	99.0	98.4
Not Allow to Visit Friend Alone	20.6***	48.4***

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 6: Difference in Affiliation with Violent Peers between Immigrant and Native Youths**

<b>Peers' Violent Behavior</b>	<b>Native (N=1,370)</b>	<b>Immigrant (N=893)</b>
Fight with Each Other	83.9***	73.8***
Hit People	70.0***	52.0***
Attack with Weapons	22.8***	12.3***
Rob with Weapons	11.9**	8.3**

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 7: Marginal Effects of Demographics, Neighborhood, Family, and Peers on Violent Behavior (N=2,105)**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Immigrant	-.109** (.033)	-.108** (.034)	-.065 (.035)	-.008 (.037)
Gender	-.151*** (.023)	-.150*** (.023)	-.149*** (.023)	-.111 (.024)
12 Years Old (9 Years Old Omitted)	.240*** (.028)	.241*** (.028)	.235*** (.028)	.236 (.030)
15 Years Old	.505*** (.025)	.505*** (.025)	.493*** (.026)	.483 (.028)
Black (Latino Omitted)	.152*** (.036)	.142*** (.041)	.151*** (.042)	.136 (.044)
White	-.005 (.043)	-.006 (.043)	-.043 (.043)	-.004 (.046)
Others	-.001 (.062)	-.005 (.063)	.004 (.065)	.008 (.066)
Family Size	-.000 (.006)	-.001 (.006)	-.003 (.006)	-.005 (.006)
Single-Parent Family (Two-Parent Family Omitted)	.076* (.039)	.075* (.039)	.057 (.039)	.041 (.040)
Cohabitation	.090** (.032)	.088* (.032)	.077* (.032)	.081* (.033)
Low-Income Neighborhoods		.012 (.026)	.013 (.026)	-.001 (.027)
Above 70% Black		.014 (.037)	.006 (.037)	-.008 (.038)
Above 70% Latino		-.017 (.040)	-.021 (.041)	-.017 (.043)
Family Member Fight a Lot			.022 (.035)	.036 (.037)
Family Member Become Openly Angry			-.005 (.025)	.004 (.026)
Family Member Angry and Throw Thing			-.006 (.035)	-.022 (.036)
Family Member Often Lose Tempers			.010 (.026)	.014 (.027)

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Family Member Criticize Each Other			-.008 (.027)	-.030 (.029)
Family Member Hit Each Other			.118*** (.030)	.102*** (.031)
Family Member Not Smooth Over Disagreements			-.022 (.053)	.019 (.059)
Family Member Outdo Each Other			-.037 (.032)	-.029 (.034)
Family Member Get Result by Shouting			.041 (.027)	.035 (.028)
Curfew on Weekdays			-.015 (.117)	-.051 (.127)
Curfew on Weekend			.004 (.074)	.029 (.072)
Sleep at Home			-.125** (.044)	-.111* (.045)
Check with PC if Away			-.076 (.060)	-.046 (.062)
Adult Supervised after School			-.036 (.047)	-.044 (.049)
Not Unsupervised in Public			-.028 (.031)	-.016 (.032)
Not Allow to Visit Friend Alone			-.064* (.026)	-.061 (.027)
Fight with Each Other				.152*** (.031)
Hit People				.241*** (.025)
Attack with Weapons				.197*** (.036)
Rob with Weapons				-.003 (.042)
<b>Control for Income &amp; PC's Education</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 8: Marginal Effects of Demographics, Neighborhood, Family, and Peers on Violent Behavior (Latino Subsample; N=970)**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Immigrant	-.099* (.041)	-.097* (.041)	-.059 (.041)	-.014 (.039)
Gender	-.149*** (.031)	-.148*** (.031)	-.146*** (.032)	-.104*** (.032)
12 Years Old (9 Years Old Omitted)	.259*** (.041)	.265*** (.042)	.266*** (.042)	.261*** (.044)
15 Years Old	.544*** (.038)	.549*** (.038)	.541*** (.040)	.544*** (.042)
Family Size	-.006 (.009)	-.007 (.009)	-.007 (.009)	-.008 (.009)
Low-Income Neighborhoods		.021 (.032)	.017 (.032)	-.006 (.032)
Above 70% Black		.308 (.184)	.342 (.200)	.363 (.203)
Above 70% Latino		.016 (.038)	.017 (.038)	.015 (.039)
Family Member Fight a Lot			.020 (.044)	.026 (.045)
Family Member Become Openly Angry			-.073 (.033)	-.063 (.033)
Family Member Angry and Throw Thing			.021 (.046)	.029 (.048)
Family Member Often Lose Tempers			.010 (.034)	.008 (.034)
Family Member Criticize Each Other			.008 (.037)	-.010 (.038)
Family Member Hit Each Other			.120** (.047)	.098* (.048)
Family Member Not Smooth Over Disagreements			-.060 (.074)	.001 (.089)
Family Member Outdo Each Other			.051 (.043)	-.053 (.043)

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Family Member Get Result by Shouting			.031 (.035)	.015 (.035)
Curfew on Weekdays			.025 (.122)	-.060 (.149)
Curfew on Weekend			.032 (.089)	.055 (.080)
Sleep at Home			-.064 (.067)	-.042 (.067)
Check with PC if Away			-.071 (.083)	-.037 (.075)
Adult Supervised after School			-.056 (.062)	-.079 (.068)
Not Unsupervised in Public			-.024 (.043)	-.022 (.043)
Not Allow to Visit Friend Alone			-.047 (.032)	-.048 (.032)
Fight with Each Other				.103* (.037)
Hit People				.196*** (.033)
Attack with Weapons				.126* (.059)
Rob with Weapons				.140* (.067)
<b>Control for Income &amp; PC's Education</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 9: Coefficients of the Effects of Demographics, Neighborhood, Family, and Peers on Standardized Violence Index (N=2,105)**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Immigrant	-.185*** (.054)	-.179*** (.054)	-.107 (.055)	-.015 (.052)
Gender	-.207*** (.039)	-.206*** (.039)	-.196*** (.038)	-.114** (.036)
12 Years Old (9 Years Old Omitted)	.334*** (.041)	.338*** (.041)	.319*** (.041)	.303*** (.040)
15 Years Old	.934*** (.050)	.937*** (.050)	.882*** (.051)	.781*** (.045)
Black (Latino Omitted)	.245*** (.060)	.194** (.069)	.203** (.070)	.126 (.066)
White	-.010 (.069)	-.000 (.070)	-.062 (.071)	.017 (.066)
Others	.060 (.106)	.052 (.107)	.056 (.107)	.062 (.094)
Family Size	.003 (.011)	.000 (.011)	-.002 (.011)	-.004 (.010)
Single-Parent Family (Two-Parent Family Omitted)	.100 (.065)	.095 (.065)	.066 (.064)	.032 (.059)
Cohabitation	.212*** (.056)	.205*** (.056)	.176 (.056)	.167*** (.052)
Low-Income Neighborhoods		.057 (.043)	.056 (.043)	.032 (.040)
Above 70% Black		.089 (.070)	.082 (.070)	.057 (.064)
Above 70% Latino		-.021 (.065)	-.026 (.063)	-.010 (.059)
Family Member Fight a Lot			.028 (.060)	.048 (.056)
Family Member Become Openly Angry			-.008 (.042)	.013 (.039)
Family Member Angry and Throw Thing			.030 (.062)	-.003 (.057)
Family Member Often Lose Tempers			.021 (.043)	.020 (.040)

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Family Member Criticize Each Other			-.008 (.049)	-.040 (.045)
Family Member Hit Each Other			.183*** (.054)	.140** (.049)
Family Member Not Smooth Over Disagreements			-.012 (.101)	.057 (.096)
Family Member Outdo Each Other			-.054 (.057)	-.024 (.052)
Family Member Get Result by Shouting			.035 (.045)	.012 (.042)
Curfew on Weekdays			.055 (.187)	-.019 (.178)
Curfew on Weekend			-.031 (.126)	.046 (.117)
Sleep at Home			-.251** (.086)	-.209** (.075)
Check with PC if Away			-.239* (.113)	-.175 (.099)
Adult Supervised after School			-.117 (.084)	-.109 (.076)
Not Unsupervised in Public			-.055 (.057)	-.031 (.051)
Not Allow to Visit Friend Alone			-.098* (.043)	-.081* (.040)
Fight with Each Other				.156*** (.038)
Hit People				.349*** (.037)
Attack with Weapons				.550*** (.066)
Rob with Weapons				.153 (.080)
<b>Control for Income &amp; PC' Education</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001