Help or Hindrance?: A Multi-level Analysis of the Role of Families and Communities in Growing up American

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Introduction

Immigrants and their children make up the fastest growing component of the U.S. population. One in five Americans under the age of 18 is an immigrant or a child of an immigrant (Jensen 2001). How they are ultimately incorporated into American society is important, not only for immigrants and their children, but also for the rest of mainstream America, which is being simultaneously changed in the process (Alba and Nee 2003).

The existing evidence demonstrates that many of the children of immigrants are faring well. A comparison of the educational attainment of first- and second-generation immigrant groups from the Current Population Survey, demonstrates considerable gains in education from one generation to the next, across all national origin groups (Farley and Alba 2002). In addition, a recent analysis of data from the Miami segment of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), demonstrates that a sizable proportion of the initial sample of immigrant children had graduated from college (one-third) and less than 5 percent had become high school drop-outs, a figure below that for the Miami-Dade School System as a whole (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2003). Once immigrants and their children enter adulthood, there is also evidence of positive labor force outcomes, even among Mexican-Americans, one of the more disadvantaged of contemporary immigrant groups. Waldinger and Feliciano (2004) documented optimistic trends in Mexican-Origin adult employment rates, average weeks worked, and long-term joblessness, as compared to native-born whites in the CPS data. However, their analysis was restricted to the working-age population whose youngest member was 25 in 2001. The authors

caution that deteriorating reception contexts, at least in regard to safety in immigrant neighborhoods and the quality of inner-city schools, may be factors that make younger cohorts more vulnerable to a fate of downward assimilation.

The possibility of downward assimilation has received considerable attention in both the academic and popular press, but those voicing the loudest concern are the immigrant parents themselves. In their study of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), which included 5,200 children of immigrants and their parents in San Diego and Miami, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found a common perception among immigrant parents that "becoming Americanized" is a negative and even dangerous prospect facing their children. Nearly 80 percent of the interviewed parents said that they were worried about negative influences on their children in school, with Southeast Asian refugee parents expressing the highest rates of concern. The authors note that: "(o)verall, parents from all national backgrounds and all socioeconomic levels see the principal danger to their children's well-being and the fulfillment of their own aspirations in an external environment full of premature consumerism, permissiveness, and the alternative role models provided by street culture" (102).

While the bulk of evidence suggests that the concerns of immigrant parents may be exaggerated, there is also some indication that they are not completely unfounded, particularly for certain origin groups. In the case of Latino youth, recent work has found that those with deep generational roots in the U.S. may actually be faring worse than those in the first- or second-generation. In an analysis of the ADDHEALTH data, Harris (1999) compared foreign-born Latino immigrant groups to second and third generation Latino groups and found monotonic

increases in rates of substance use, health problems, delinquency, violence and sexual activity. Other analyses have documented a more curvilinear pattern in educational outcomes, with improvements in the second-generation, but less success as one moves from the second-generation to the third. An analysis of enrollment patterns among 15-17 year-olds from the 1990 census demonstrates that native-born Mexican-Origin youth are more likely to remain in school as compared to foreign-born youth, who demonstrate higher levels of non-enrollment (Hirschman 2001). Yet broken down by generational status, second-generation Mexican-Origin youth have higher levels of school enrollment than third-generation Mexican-Americans (Landale, Oropesa and Llanes 1998). This same curvilinear pattern also appears in patterns of teen pregnancy and female household headship, so that third-generation Mexican-Americans demonstrate worse outcomes than second-generation Mexican-Americans across a wide range of indices (Bean, Swicegood and Berg 2000; Frank and Heuveline 2003; Wildsmith Forthcoming). In part, the curvinlinear pattern observed across many outcomes for Mexican-American youth could be the result of selectivity in non-reporting of Mexican-Origin identity in the third-generation. Bean et al. (2000) addressed this possibility in their study of fertility and found no evidence for the selectivity hypothesis. As more immigrant groups begin to attain the generational depth characteristic of the Mexican-Origin population, more attention will need to be given to the issue of selectivity in non-reporting and its bearing on trends in the adaptive trajectories of children of immigrants (see Alba et al. 2004).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 310) give urban context center stage in explaining the patterns of downward mobility across generations in the U.S., arguing concentration in

disadvantaged communities "put immigrant children in close contact with the cultural models of the inner city" that encourages problem behavior. Yet beyond allusions to cumulative disadvantage and close proximity to other U.S. minority groups, very little is known regarding the process through which deleterious residential context may or may not influence the well-being of children of immigrants (Landale, Oropesa and Llanes 1998). Nor do we know whether some neighborhoods actually provide a buffer against such negative outcomes (Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002). Zhou and Bankston (1998) illustrate this latter possibility in their study of Vietnamese youth living in Versailles Village, a Vietnamese community located in a predominately poor African-American area in New Orleans. The authors found both "valedictorians and delinquents" in their sample of Vietnamese youth and argue that the former outcome is made possible by dense overlapping networks of social relations that result in community-prescribed values and norms. These values and norms then work to socially control the actions of the community's youth and limit delinquent behavior. But when social control fails, either through lapses in social networks or internal community prejudices, the latter outcome is far more likely, with the children assimilating into "the oppositional culture of low-income disaffected American youth" (228).

The possibility that social context and parental control may interact to contribute to the outcomes of children of immigrants is given further consideration in an analysis of the CILS data. In the case of children of immigrants in San Diego and Miami, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found that the nature of the parent-child relationship impinged on the ways in which social context influenced youth adaptation. Children in families where the parental authority was

undermined by generational gaps in acculturation were at a much greater risk of being influenced by negative residential context (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Conversely, the parent-child relationship was also found to be influenced by social context so that strong co-ethnic communities worked to reinforce parental authority (Zhou 1997). The authors hypothesize that when parental expectations are reinforced by others in the community, parents are able to increase control over their children and decrease the risk associated with residence in a disadvantaged neighborhood.

An appropriate test of the possibility that residential context and parental control interact to contribute to the outcomes of children of immigrants, as well as the possibility that residential location directly alters the adaptive trajectories of immigrant youth, necessitates a multi-level analysis, one that takes into account the error variance by level of analysis. The proposed analysis will test the possibility that the success of children of immigrants is linked to a mix of parental and community factors. In other words, I aim to examine how parental relationships, the surrounding U.S. context, and children's own development come together. The data for this analysis will come from the L.A.FANS (Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey), a L.A.-based survey designed specifically to model multi-level effects. The case of Los Angeles is unique because of the enormous size of the immigrant population and their descendents. This means that immigrants and their children are represented across a wide range of residential contexts, ranging from urban barrio communities to suburban enclaves (Li 1998). This diversity in residential context will enable us to evaluate whether particular contextual features have a protective or deleterious influence on youth well-being.

Data

The data for this analysis come from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (L.A.FANS). The L.A.FANS is a representative study of families in 65 different neighborhoods in Los Angeles County. The survey was designed explicitly to model multilevel processes and utilized a multistage clustered sampling scheme that involved sampling, first, by neighborhoods, then selecting families within the neighborhoods, and finally sampling children within these families. 3,250 households were chosen to participate in the survey, with 3,090 eventually completing the survey. In households with children under age 17, a randomly selected child (RSC) was chosen to be included in the child sample. If the RSC had any siblings in the household, one of their siblings were also randomly selected (SIB). Interviews were conducted with the RSC and SIB if they were between the ages of 9-17 (n=1,454). Interviews were also conducted with each child's primary care giver (PCG). Of the children aged 9-17 that were interviewed, the majority (63 percent) were either immigrants or children of immigrants.

The survey's focus on Los Angeles County is important for several reasons. First, Los Angeles County is the country's most populous county, with 9.8 million residents and 88 different cities within the County. Described as a "polymorphic and centrifugal metropolis," L.A. County includes a diverse set of neighborhoods, varying from densely populated central cities to relatively rural mountain and desert areas to the more suburban neighborhood type of the San Fernando Valley and the coast (Soja 1992). This diversity in neighborhoods is important because it allows us to model the effects of more concentrated inner-city communities on

adolescent outcomes as compared to the suburban ethnic clusters surrounding them (Li 1998). Second, Los Angeles County is unique in that it contains a large, diverse, concentrated, and historically mature immigrant population. Both Latin American and Asian immigrants have had a history of migration to L.A. County and both groups continue to post remarkably high rates of current immigration into the area. As a result, the Latin American and Asian populations boast considerable generational depth at the same time that they are characterized by a high number of foreign-born immigrants. The considerable diversity within the Latin American and Asian communities along nativity and generational lines will allow for a test of the hypotheses generated by segmented assimilation theory. Third, the age distribution of Los Angeles County is heavily influenced by the age distribution of the immigrant population, so that over half of the youth in Los Angeles were Latino or Asian in 2000. This pattern of "graying Anglos and youthful Latinos and Asians" gives added weight to the importance of understanding how these children fare in navigating their adolescence in Los Angeles (Sabagh and Bozorgmehr 1996).

Measurement

Outcome variable

This proposal is primarily interested in the well-being of children of immigrants and the ways in which their development is affected by their residential environments and by their family situations. In order to assess this relationship, I evaluate the prevalence of school-related problems for all adolescents ages 9-17. One of the key areas in which immigrants and children of immigrants are said to differ from their native-born counterparts involves their educational

experiences (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The survey asks each child if they ever left/skipped school in the last year without permission. If they responded yes then they were coded as having had experienced school truancy in the previous year. Each child's primary care giver was asked if the child had been suspended from school, and if so, at which age the suspension occurred. If the suspension had occurred within the last two years, the child was coded as having experienced a recent suspension. In addition, the primary care giver was asked if their children were disobedient in school or if they had problems with their teachers. The child was coded as being disobedient or having problems with their teacher if the care giver reported that this behavior occurred sometimes or often. A school-related problems index was then constructed by summing the incidence of these four different outcomes. The sample index average is .625 with a standard deviation of .980.

Individual-Level Explanatory Variables

Past analyses have shown that ethnic origin group is a strong and significant predictor of virtually every adaptation outcome (Rumbaut and Portes 2001). I will include dummy variables for each ethnic origin group included in the data (non-Latino White, non-Latino African-American, Latino) in order to account for the clear differences in their assimilation trajectories.

One of the key explanations behind the negative behavioral outcomes of immigrant youth of particular ethnic origin groups is the theory of segmented assimilation, which argues that more time in the U.S. is associated with increasingly negative behavior, at least to the extent that the child assimilates into disadvantaged segments of the U.S. population. In order to evaluate this

possibility for our sample of youth in L.A. County I will distinguish the nativity/generational status of each child. Information was obtained on year of immigration and country of birth of individuals and their primary care giver, allowing for the construction of detailed immigrant categories. The foreign-born generation includes all children who were born abroad. Sample size precludes further differentiation by age at arrival. The native-born population is differentiated by the country of origin of their primary care giving parent. The second-generation is defined as consisting of children who were born in the United States whose primary care giver was born outside of the U.S. Respondents are classified as belonging to the third-or-later generation if they were born in the U.S. and their primary care giver was also born inside the U.S. Taken together, the groups represent a linear pattern with each category indicating more time in the U.S., or in the case of the two native-born groups, a move from second-to-third generation Americans.

Other individual-level controls include the child's sex, age, and school level. Age and school level are kept continuous in the analysis. The only school-level information available in the L.A.FANS survey indicates the type of school the child attends. I created a dichotomous measure indicating whether the child attends private or public school.

Family-Level Variables

Adolescent behavior is strongly influenced by family context. The L.A.FANS contains detailed information on the primary care giver and the familial environment in which the child lived. Our focus on delineating how social context influences the behavior of children of

immigrants means that appropriately accounting for family-level effects is acutely important for the proposed analysis. Neighborhood-level analyses are often plagued by problems of endogeneity, which occurs, for example, when an effect attributed to neighborhood context is really an artifact of differential selection of adolescents or their families into that particular social context. The most obvious way to eliminate such bias is to adequately control for family structure and parental background, i.e. those aspects that may be correlated with neighborhood selection. Four variables will be included in the analysis as a first step in accounting for the effect of familial environment on children's school related problems. The educational background of the primary care giver is categorized dichotomously, indicating whether or not they completed high school. The L.A.FANS also includes detailed information on each household's income. Household income is kept continuous in the analysis. Family structure is captured by the marital status of the primary care giver at the time of the survey. A three-level variable categorization is used that distinguishes between cohabiting, formal unions, and single status.

Neighborhood-Level Variables

Information on neighborhood social context in the L.A.FANS come from a range of different sources including the respondents themselves, from tract and block observation forms, and a neighborhood characteristic file that will be assembled from the 2000 decennial census. Aspects of social environment that are important for adolescent development include both the structural features of a neighborhood as well as the social processes that characterize the

neighborhood. As this project develops, attention will be given to not only appropriately measuring the presence or absence of a co-ethnic community but also the nature of that community. For now, I include two different indices that capture two distinct aspects of neighborhood environment. The first index measures the strength of an immigrant presence in a neighborhood. I use a scale closely modeled after one created by Abma and Krivo (1991) in their 1980 analysis of Mexican-Origin fertility. This index includes the proportion of residents: 1) who are foreign born, 2) who immigrated to the U.S. within the past ten years (i.e. after 1990) and 3) who are linguistically isolated (defined as households in which all of the adults in the household have some difficulty speaking English).

A second index is included that is intended to capture the community's economic opportunity structure. This index includes 1) the proportion of neighborhood residents who were living in poverty 2) the proportion of residents who receive welfare benefits. Both indices are calculated as the sum of the z-scores of the two different sets of variables and each index demonstrated good internal consistency reliability with Cronback alpha values over .85.

Methods

Given that we expect to observe influences on adolescent behavior at the individual-, family- and community-levels of analysis, I will use hierarchical linear models (HLM) to predict the outcome. In this sample, individuals are nested within families, which are then nested within neighborhoods. As a result, there are potentially three levels of variation in the risk of each outcome measured: variation at the individual-level due to a respondent's own characteristics,

variation within a family, and variation at the neighborhood-level. To the extent that neighborhood (or family) characteristics exert an influence on individual outcomes, adolescents within a neighborhood (or within a family) may be more similar to one another than to adolescents in another neighborhood (or family) (Snijders and Bosker 1999). HLM separates the error variance by level of analysis thereby giving proper estimates of the variability of regression coefficients (Arnold 1992).

Multilevel models can be thought of as a system of equations, one for each level of analysis (Mosher, Deang and Bramlett 2003; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Teachman and Crowder 2002). The analyses proposed here will be explored with three equations. At the individual-level (level-1), a Poisson model estimates the number of school related problems:

$$Y_{ifn} = \pi_{0fn} + \pi_{1fn}a_{1ifn} + \pi_{2fn}a_{2ifn} + \ldots + \pi_{Pfn}a_{pifn} + e_{ijk}$$

Where Y_{ifn} is the number of school related problems experienced by individual i in family f within neighborhood n. Each a_{Pifn} term represents an individual-level attribute. π_{Pfn} are the regression coefficients that capture the association between each individual-level attribute and the outcome within family f and neighborhood n. e_{ijk} is a random level-1 or "child" effect that represents the deviation of child *ijk*'s number of school related problems from the family mean of school-related problems. In the level-2 equation, the level-1 regression coefficients, π_{Pfn}, are modeled as outcomes of observed and unobserved family-level effects. Because there are at most two children per family in this sample (the RSC and SIB), we will focus the majority of our attention on determining if the individual and family-level effects vary at the neighborhood level. In the level-2 equation, we will include only one family-level random effect in order to control

for the correlation in the outcome among siblings in the sample. In addition to correct standard error estimates, the level-2 error term for the intercept, r_0, will provide us with a measure of unobserved family-level characteristics. The level-2 equation is:

$$\pi_{pfn} = \beta_{p0n} + r_{pfn}$$

Where β_{p0n} are the intercepts for each neighborhood n and r_{pfn} are the level-2 error terms. For this analysis, we will only include a random effect for the level-2 intercept, r_0.

The neighborhood specific effects are captured in the level-3 equation:

$$\beta_{pqn} = \gamma_{pq0} + \sum_{s=1}^{S_{pq}} \gamma_{pqs} W_{sn} + u_{pqn}$$

Where the level-2 coefficients β_{pqn} are predicted by neighborhood-level characteristics, $W_{sn.}$ γ_{pq0} is the intercept and γ_{pqs} represent the level-3 coefficients that capture the association between neighborhood characteristics $W_{sn.}$ and β_{pqn}. u_{pqn} is the level-3 error term and is only allowed to vary randomly for the level-three intercept term.

There are several issues related to the analytic challenges involved in multilevel models that deserve comment. The one that looms the largest for contextual-effects research is the possibility of selection effects (Billy 2001). Because individuals are not randomly distributed across contextual units we must address the endogenous membership problem, which may bias the estimation of neighborhood-level effects. The problem is somewhat minimized for the proposed analysis because we are analyzing the outcomes and behavior of adolescents who, in contrast to adults, rarely decide where they will live. However, parental residential choice will pose a threat to unbiased neighborhood-level effects if parents make choices based on

characteristics which may also influence the behavior of their child (Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). For example, we may see an artifactual effect of neighborhood contextual factors on subsequent outcomes if, in neighborhoods with poor structural features and social process, advantaged parents move away, while more disadvantaged families are forced to stay or even migrate into the neighborhood from other areas which are too expensive. In this scenario the problem of endogenous membership would bias the neighborhood effects upward. Conversely, we might find an understatement of neighborhood effects if parents who are well-equipped to resist the effects of bad neighborhoods choose to live there in order to take advantage of cheaper housing, or parents who live in poor neighborhoods compensate for deficiencies in the neighborhood through additional time spent with their children. These selection processes may lead to either an underestimation or overestimation of neighborhood-level effects, although the latter is more common. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that few personal characteristics are truly exogenous to the social environment. As Macintyre and Ellaway note, "people make places but places also make people (26)." In this analysis, we will attempt to address the issue of endogeneity by controlling for all relevant parenting variables. We are in a good place to do this with the L.A.FANS data, given that it includes such an extensive set of questions regarding individual and family characteristics. Each primary care giver was given a questionnaire which provides detailed information on many of the parenting processes we are concerned with.

Hierarchical linear models are an appealing alternative to other forms of multivariate statistical models because they allow researchers to account for the most basic of sociological

theorems; that individuals are not isolated from one another (Boardman 2004; Roux 2001). They give researchers the opportunity to describe complex social relationships by modeling this dependence as a function of individual and group-level characteristics. But the analytical insight provided by hierarchical linear modeling must be balanced alongside the substantial challenges they pose to their proper estimation. Attention to the issues of endogeneity, spatial dependence, and indirect neighborhood effects will aid us in our goal of estimating precise, robust and unbiased estimates of neighborhood effects.

A further concern specific to the present analysis is that we are modeling the incidence of school-related problems as a function of individual, family and neighborhood characteristics. An obvious omission here involves school-level characteristics. As mentioned above, the only school-level information provided by the L.A.FANS indicates the type of school the child attended. We give this issue more attention in the discussion section below.

Findings

Table 1 presents the percent distribution of the predictor variables, differentiating by the race/ethnic group to which the child belongs. Children who were identified as either Asian or Latino, are further differentiated by their generational status. Children identified as Asian are only distinguished by whether they belong to the foreign-born or second-generation groups, as there are only 3 Asian children in the data set who belonged to the third-generation. Non-Latino White and African-American children overwhelmingly belonged to the third generation (79

percent and 94 percent, respectively). For this reason, in the descriptive statistics, these two groups are not differentiated by generational status.

Latinos account for the majority of children in the data, encompassing 58 percent of the entire sample. Despite their larger presence in the true population of Los Angeles County, Asian children only make up 7 percent of the sample. This is likely due to the fact that the data collection team was restricted to interviewers who were bilingual in Spanish and English, and did not include interviewers who were bilingual in any other languages. Within the Latino population, the majority of children belong to the second-generation (60 percent), followed by the foreign-born group (23 percent). The smallest percentage belongs to the third-generation (15 percent).

The mean number of school-related problems ranges from a low of .180 found among native-born Asian immigrants to a high of 1.034 for African-American children. Non-Latino Whites and non-Latino African Americans have higher means than any of the Latino or Asian generational sub-groups. Once broken down by type of problem, African-American children post the highest percentages for nearly every one. Among the two Asian generational groups, there is a decrease in the prevalence of each problem when one compares the foreign-born to the native-born population. Among the Latino generational groups the patterns are more variable. Two of the school-related problems, skipping school and disobedience problems, display the same pattern observed among the Asian immigrant groups, so that their prevalence decreases across generations. Having experienced problems with their teacher and having been recently suspended from school exhibit a different pattern, so that their prevalence increases across the

Latino generations. By the third-generation, Latino children have roughly the same incidence of teacher-related problems as non-Latino Whites, although this level is still below that of non-Latino African American students.

There are no appreciable differences between the race/ethnic and generational groups by age or school level. For each group the mean age falls between 12 and 13 years and the school level falls between sixth and seventh grade. There are considerable differences, however, in the proportion of each population that attends public school. Across the board, the vast majority of children residing in Los Angeles County attend public school. First and second-generation Latinos post the highest levels, with 97 percent attending public school. African-American and first-generation Asian children also exhibit high percentages in public school (94 percent and 96 percent, respectively). For Asian children, this number falls considerably as one moves from the foreign-born to the second-generation where only two-thirds of the children attend public school. A similar decline in rates of public school attendance is seen in the Latino population, as one moves from the second-generation to the third-generation. Among non-Latino Whites, 85 percent attend public school.

In terms of the characteristics of the children's primary care givers, second-generation Asian children and Non-Latino White children exhibit the most advantaged profiles, with the highest mean household income and the highest rates of high school completion among primary care givers. The starkest difference in socioeconomic status is found between the two immigrant groups. As compared to foreign-born Latinos, the mean household income of second-generation Asians is 5-fold higher. Latino children born to foreign-born parents are by far the

most disadvantaged socioeconomically, with less than one-third having completed high school. A sharp reversal occurs among Latino primary care givers who were born in the U.S. Their high school completion rates flip as compared to their foreign-born counterparts, with over two-thirds having completed high school. That said, among the native-born groups, third-generation Latinos have the lowest rates of high school completion (75 percent as compared to 87 percent among African-Americans and 92 percent among non-Latino Whites. So while there is considerable mobility in educational (and income) profiles within the Latino population as one moves across generations, blocked mobility is still evident in the third-generation, both as compared to other immigrant groups as well as to native-born groups.

Family structure, as captured by the marital status of the primary care giver, largely conforms to established patterns. Non-Latino African Americans have the highest rates of unwed status, with almost 60 percent single at the time of the survey. Non-Latino White and Asian primary care givers have the highest marriage rates, with over three-quarters reporting that they were married at the time of the survey. The Latino groups exhibit the highest rates of cohabitation, reflecting the unique status of consensual unions in many of the Latino immigrant-sending countries. Departing from past patterns is the relatively stable levels of single status among the Latino generational sub-groups. Nationally representative data demonstrates monotonic increases in the rates of unwed status as one moves across the generational groups. According to the 2002 Current Population Survey, over 50 percent of third-generation Mexican-American women giving birth in the previous year were unwed.

Table 2 presents the mean of each of the neighborhood-level indicators that are included in the indices used in the regression analysis. Latino children born to foreign-born parents live neighborhoods that are characterized by the highest proportion of foreign-born immigrants. First- and second-generation Latino children live in neighborhoods whose populations are, on average, over 50 percent immigrant, over one-quarter recent immigrant (i.e. those who arrived in the last 10 years) and almost one-quarter linguistically isolated (households in which all of the adults have some trouble communicating in English). In contrast, Latino children born to native-born parents (third-generation children), live in neighborhoods that have the lowest proportions of immigrants and look very similar to the neighborhoods of non-Latino Whites. Non-Latino African-American children tend to live in neighborhoods with levels of foreign-born immigrants that are comparable to levels found among children of Asian immigrants. Yet, despite equivalent rates of foreign-born concentration, children of Asian immigrants tend to live in neighborhoods that are socioeconomically more advantaged than neighborhoods inhabited by non-Latino African-American children. The group residing in most disadvantaged neighborhoods are foreign-born Latino children born to foreign-born parents. Only among third-generation children of Latino immigrants do we see socioeconomic neighborhood averages that approximate those found among Asian immigrants and non-Latino whites.

These neighborhood-level distributions suggest considerable mobility among native-born Latinos and among Asian immigrants. Yet while third-generation Latino children appear to live in neighborhoods that appear to be very similar to non-Latino whites, children of Asian

immigrants tend to live in areas that post higher concentrations of immigrants at the same time that they display lower levels of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Table 3 presents the results from the Poisson regression modeling the number of school-related problems. The estimates are presented as event incidence ratios. The incidence of school-related problems varies both by race/ethnic group and by generational status. Second-generation children are no different than foreign-born children in their experience of school-related problems, controlling for race/ethnicity, age, school level, sex and school type. In contrast, third-generation children experience a significantly higher predicted number of school-related problems as compared to foreign-born children. In this analysis, the third-generation group includes all native-born youth, including the overwhelming majority of non-Latino Whites and non-Latino African-Americans, as well as third-generation Latinos. The importance of accounting for race/ethnic group is underscored by the differential pattern of school-related problems by race/ethnicity. Non-Latino African American children have 70 percent more school-related problems as compared to non-Latino Whites. While Latino children are not significantly different from non-Latino Whites in their number of school-related problems, Asian children exhibit fewer school-related problems than Latino whites. These effects occur in the presence of controls for age, school-level, sex and public school. Male students exhibit considerably higher levels of school related problems. With regard to the one school-related variable, we see that children attending a public school exhibit over 60 percent more school related problems than children attending a private school.

The importance of the family environment in contributing to school-related problems is apparent in Model 2 which includes family-level controls. Children whose primary care giver has less than a high school education and/or who is a single parent, have a significantly increased number of school related problems. Household income also displays a significant effect, so that increases in family income are associated with corresponding decreases in school-related problems. When family-level controls are added to the model, the estimates for African-Americans and Latinos are decreased, reflecting their disadvantaged status along these variables. In contrast, the predicted number of school-related problems increases very slightly for Asian students, indicating their positive distribution along these variables. The same is true for the estimate of public school. The increased number of school-related problems for students attending public school diminishes once family controls are included, suggesting that some of the effect of public school operates through family socioeconomic status.

The final model adds controls for neighborhood environment. Index 1 represents an attempt to capture the immigrant influence on school-related problems. Index 2 serves as a proxy for neighborhood-level socioeconomic disadvantage. Both indices are positively related to the predicted number of school-related problems so that the higher the scores on the indices, the higher the neighborhood's average number of school-related problems. However, neither neighborhood-level effect is statistically significant. In fact, when we discompose the variation in school-related problems by level, we see there is virtually no variation at the level of the neighborhood.

Next Steps

Past research has demonstrated a downward or curvilinear pattern by immigrant generation status across a wide range of adolescent outcomes. The general trend appears to be declines across the generations or an initial improvement in the second-generation, followed by declines in the third-generation. The present analysis of school-related problems does not provide strong support for this pattern. Although the regression analysis does document that third-generation children have a significantly increased number of school-related problems as compared to the foreign-born population, it must be remembered that the third-generation category in this analysis includes all native-born children with native-born parents, regardless of race/ethnic group. This includes non-Latino whites and non-Latino African Americans, who exhibited higher averages of school-related problems than either of the two immigrant groups. In the regression analysis, African American children were the only group to exhibit significantly higher number of school-related problems as compared to non-Hispanic whites. As a result, the observed curvilinear pattern by generational status observed in this data is being driven primarily by native-born African-Americans and non-Latino Whites.

Among the two race/ethnic groups with sizable immigrant populations, i.e. Latino and Asian children, there are several clear differences. In the regression analysis, Asian children were the only group to demonstrate a significantly decreased number of school-related problems, as compared to non-Latino Whites. By generation, a clear pattern was evident in the descriptive statistics, whereby Asian children demonstrate fewer school-related problems as one moves from the foreign-born to the native-born generation. The native-born segment of the Asian population

was also the most socioeconomically advantaged, with the highest household income of all the groups. Yet while children of Asian immigrants tended to live in more socioeconomically advantaged neighborhoods, they also tended to live in neighborhoods with higher levels of immigrant concentration and linguistic isolation. These patterns likely reflect the successful Asian immigrant enclaves in Los Angeles.

The case of the Latino population is less straightforward in its generational pattern. Along the outcome variable, Latino children did not exhibit a significantly increased number of school-related problems as compared to non-Latino Whites. The descriptive statistics demonstrated that once broken down by type of problem, Latino children tended to fall in between non-Latino Whites and non-Latino African-Americans. By generational status, the pattern is more variable. Along some outcomes, we see the same pattern exhibited by Asian children, with a decrease in the incidence of school-related problems across generations. But along other outcomes, e.g. suspension and having had problems with teachers, the classic curvilinear pattern emerges whereby children fare worse across generations. These patterns occur in the context of considerable differences by socioeconomic status, both by race/ethnic group and by generational group. Latino children with foreign-born parents exhibit the most disadvantaged profiles as compared to all other groups. They also tend to live in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods and in areas with high concentrations of immigrants. A considerably different profile emerges for native-born Latinos with native-born parents (i.e. third-generation Latinos). They live in more socioeconomically advantaged households and in neighborhoods that appear to be very similar to non-Latino Whites in terms of

socioeconomic status and in immigrant concentration. These patterns suggests that native-born Latinos with native-born parents should appear more similar to non-Latino Whites than to their Latino counterparts. And this is indeed the pattern that emerges in the data. In fact, third-generation Latinos have fewer problems than non-Latino Whites along every type of school-related problem.

The lack of correspondence between our data and previous research that documents generational decline among children of immigrants, and specifically among Latinos, may be due to several possibilities. One of the more obvious involves our data source. The data are restricted to Los Angeles County, a unique context in that it is a majority minority county, with 45 percent of the population identifying as Latino, 12 percent as Asian and 10 percent as African American. In addition, 36 percent of the county's population is foreign-born. While such a context provides a unique opportunity to explore issues of immigrant adaptation and assimilation, it is also likely that it creates additional complexities that work to differentiate it from other areas and from the nation as a whole.

One considerable limitation to understanding differences between race/ethnic and immigrant groups in the propensity for school-related problems is our inability to account for school-level effects. The singular variable we were able to include, i.e. whether or not the child attended public school, exhibited one of the largest effects in the regression model. This finding suggests that school environment, as in the case of nearly all school-related outcomes, is a key aspect underlying individual variation. Our inability to account for variation at this level is

unfortunate and acts as an incentive to explore other dimensions of adolescent well-being that are not directly connected to the school context.

Where we did not find any discernible variation was at the level of the neighborhood. This analysis provided no support to the contention that residential context is an important factor influencing adolescent well-being as measured by school-related problems. In Los Angeles County, 90 percent of all school-age children who attend public schools attend schools in their neighborhood. The considerable overlap between school and neighborhood context was one reason we anticipated more pronounced neighborhood-level effects on our outcome. An additional reason comes from the literature on segmented assimilation which posits that the neighborhood is a key factor in determining assimilation trajectories. Our next step in this analysis is to explore the reasons behind the lack of variation in the outcome at the neighborhood level.

We also plan to spend more time examining the role of families in contributing to the incidence of school-related problems. Our model demonstrated that a significant amount of variation in the outcome occurred at the level of the family. The L.A.FANS contains much more information on the family, and specifically social-interactional aspects of family life, that we will be able to include in our next set of models.

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Table 1. Percent Distribution of Outcome and Predictor Variables, by Race/Ethnicity and Generational Group.

	Non-Latino White	Non-Latino AA	Latino			Asian	
			1st Gener.	2nd Gener.	3rd Gener.	1st Gener.	2nd Gener
Individual-level							
Unweighted N	357	141	186	501	123	35	52
Percent of Total	25.5	10.1	13.3	35.8	8.8	2.5	3.7
Generational Group							
1st Generation	9.2	1.4	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
2nd Generation	11.9	4.7	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
3rd Generation	78.9	94.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Age (mean)	12.8	12.8	13.8	12.4	12.6	13.6	12.4
Number of school-related problems (mean)	.696	1.034	.575	.602	.544	.380	.180
Skip School	22.9	19.9	22.1	19.1	16.8	18.2	14.4
Suspension	14.7	28.7	6.3	10.5	7.8	4.0	2.7
Disobedience Problems	16.8	32.2	23.3	20.3	17.1	11.7	1.2
Teacher-related Problems	16.3	23.6	7.8	12.3	15.1	5.0	0.0
Sex							
Male	51.5	54.1	55.1	52.8	52.5	45.0	61.2
Female	48.5	45.9	44.9	47.2	47.5	54.1	38.8
School level (mean)	6.75	6.82	7.66	6.42	6.57	7.71	6.41
School Type							
Public	85.5	94.1	97.0	97.2	82.6	96.0	67.8
Private	14.5	5.9	3.0	2.8	17.4	4.0	32.2
Family-level							
PCG Marital Status							
Unwed	74.5	32.9	62.1	69.4	61.7	73.0	83.2
Cohabit	3.5	8.6	14.2	11.0	11.0	10.8	4.5
Wed	22.0	58.4	23.7	19.6	27.4	16.2	12.3
PCG Education							
<12 years	7.7	13.0	71.5	72.3	24.8	0.0	5.9
12 ≥ years	92.4	87.0	28.5	27.7	75.2	100.0	94.1
Mean HH income	100,349	44,301	24,807	31,299	55,042	50,369	131,674

Data source: Los Angeles Neighbohood and Family Survey (L.A.FANS 2001).

Table 2. Means of Neighborhood Characteristics across 65 Neighborhoods in Los Angeles County.

	White	AA	Latino			Asian	
			1st Gener	2nd Gener	3rd Gener	1st Gener	2nd Gener
Neighborhood-level Indicators							
Mean level across neighborhoods							
Mean proportion foreign-born	.27	.351	.483	.447	.333	.386	.365
Mean proportion *recent* foreign-born	.08	.126	.187	.158	.109	.143	.102
Mean proportion ling. Isolated	.09	.168	.303	.256	.152	.141	.124
Mean proportion living in poverty	.12	.218	.282	.248	.155	.126	.099
Mean proportion receiving welfare	.09	.182	.195	.178	.122	.103	.089
(N)	357	141	186	501	123	35	52

Source: L.A. FANS 2001.

Table 3. Results of Poisson Regression Model of Number of School-Related Problems by Nativity/Generational Group. Coefficients are exponentiated and expressed as incidence rate ratios (IRRs).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Race/Ethnic Group [White]			
African-American	1.700***	1.412**	1.379**
Latino	0.936	0.915	0.899
Asian	0.504***	0.537***	0.543**
Generational Group [1st Generation]			
2nd Generation	1.062	1.050	1.064
3rd Generation	1.324*	1.401*	1.445**
Sex [Female]			
Male	1.598***	1.637***	1.638***
Age	1.074	1.063	1.064
School-level	1.013	1.020	1.019
School [Private]			
Public	1.528**	1.377*	1.377*
Household Income		0.999**	0.999**
PCG Schooling [12+ years]			
<12 years		1.308*	1.291*
PCG Marital Status [Wed]			
Cohabiting		1.235	1.226
Single		1.223*	1.215*
Neighborhood-level			
Index 1			1.008
Index 2			1.007
Intercept	0.255***	0.253***	0.253***
Variance Components			
Levels 1 and 2	0.443	0.425	0.423
Level 3	0.001	0.001	0.001
N	1342	1328	1328

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

Data source: Los Angeles Neighbohood and Family Survey (L.A.FANS 2001).