

ACCULTURATION AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE LAW IN CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS

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Background & Purpose: Immigrants in the U.S. have a complex relationship with the law. On the one hand, many immigrants come to the U.S. for the protections guaranteed under the law: freedom of speech, religion, due process, assembly, and other rights guaranteed by the Constitution and upheld by our legal institutions. Immigrants are generally a self-selected group whose motivations for relocation to the U.S. suggest that their social and political values are compatible with the moral underpinnings of American laws. Not surprisingly, then, first generation immigrants tend to be less criminally-inclined than native-born blacks, Latinos, and whites, a research finding that has been replicated time and again in studies over the past one hundred years (U.S. Immigration Commission 1911; Wickersham Commission 1931; Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush 2005; Morenoff and Astor 2006).

On the other hand, immigrants have reason to be wary of American legal institutions, and especially the police. Both the civil and criminal legal systems in the U.S. often treat immigrants more harshly than native-born citizens, even though immigrants are generally less crime-prone and more attentive to civil legal obligations. From the Naturalization Act of 1790 and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the Patriot Act, immigrants face greater intrusions on their privacy and considerably higher penalties and legal consequences for their actions, at times without the due process granted to native-born citizens.

Given the seeming paradox revealed in the preceding paragraphs, in this study we seek to examine the extent to which immigrant generations differ in their normative orientations to the law, net of individual and neighborhood correlates. Specifically, we ask: does immigrant generation explain satisfaction with the police and cynicism of the law, as well as tolerance of deviant behavior? If so, why is there variation across immigrant generation in cultural orientations toward the law?

Theoretical Framework: Legal cynicism is a cultural orientation in which the law and the police are viewed as *illegitimate*, *unresponsive*, and *ill-equipped* to ensure public safety (Kirk and Papachristos 2011). Prior research on legal cynicism has demonstrated that cynical views of the law in a neighborhood are generally the product of the structural conditions of the neighborhood, particularly socioeconomic disadvantage, and variation in criminal justice practices, especially policing (Kirk and Papachristos 2011; Sampson and Bartusch 1998). In socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, people come to perceive that the dominant societal institutions (of which the police and the justice system are emblematic) will offer them little in the way of security, either economic or personal. In particular, harassing behavior by the police and insufficient or ineffective crime control breeds cynicism (Fagan and Meares 2008; Tyler and Fagan 2008). Through interaction among neighborhood residents, cynicism of the law can become embedded into the culture of a community. In this way, legal cynicism represents a quality of *neighborhoods*, and not simply the views of a particular individual (Sampson and Bartusch 1998; Kirk and Papachristos 2011). In turn, crime may

flourish in neighborhoods characterized by a culture of cynicism, yet because of legal cynicism these crimes may go unreported and therefore unsolved. Whereas there is an expansive and growing body of research on the predictors of perceptions of the law and its agents of enforcement, relatively understudied are differences across immigrant status in perceptions of the law.

Data & Methods: We use data from the 2001-2003 Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS) merged with 2000 population estimates from the census to address our research questions. The CCAHS provides rich information on both individual and ecological characteristics, beliefs and attitudes, and activities, from adults (N=3,105) living across Chicago neighborhoods. The CCAHS research team transformed Chicago's 847 populated census tracts into 343 neighborhood clusters (NCs) that represent geographically meaningful areas composed of internally homogeneous structural characteristics.

We employ multi-level hierarchical models utilizing both the person- and neighborhood-level data to uncover the relationship between normative orientations to the law (i.e., satisfaction with the police, legal cynicism and tolerance of deviance) and immigrant status and generation.

Preliminary Findings: Table 1 provides the descriptive results for tolerance of deviance, legal cynicism, and dissatisfaction with the police divided into equal thirds for a variety of socio-demographic groups. Specifically, the results display patterns of low, medium, and high values by sex, race and ethnicity, level of education, immigrant status, and immigrant generations.

Unlike recent studies that found less cynical views toward the law among immigrant communities (i.e., Tyler, Schulhofer, and Huq 2010), our results suggest an alternate scenario. We observe that foreign-born groups have higher levels of cynicism than their native-born counterparts. We disaggregate the foreign-born group by Latin origin, and we find that such immigrants have the highest levels of cynicism relative to the non-Latin group of foreign-born residents and native-born groups. Simultaneously, we find that Latin immigrants have the lowest tolerance of deviance as well as the lowest dissatisfaction with the police despite their cynicism.

Among subsequent generations of immigrants, however, we find the reverse patterns for their cultural attitudes. Cynicism decreases among subsequent immigrant generations while tolerance of deviance and police dissatisfaction increases. Police dissatisfaction, however, slightly decreases among third-generation immigrants relative to such views among the second-generation.

Broader Impact: Our initial results shed light on levels of variation in cultural attitudes toward the law among immigrant subgroups and subsequent generations. We plan to further examine the relationship between disparate attitudes toward the law among immigrants and subsequent generations by investigating how specific ethnic origins and regions relate to these differences. We expect that ethnic origin will significantly predict immigrants' views of the law due to varying criminal justice systems across their home countries. Contrastingly, we do not expect ethnic origin to significantly predict differences in views among subsequent immigrant generations due to their non-exposure to other systems of justice. By completing an analysis on the heterogeneity of attitudes toward the law among immigrants and subsequent generations, we aim to address an important gap in the demographic literature of cultural frames toward the law, legal compliance, and crime.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Attitudinal Variables

	Legal Cynicism			Tolerance of Deviance			Police Dissatisfaction		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Sex									
Female	37%	34%	28%	39%	34%	28%	33%	33%	34%
Male	35%	37%	28%	33%	33%	34%	35%	33%	32%
Race/Ethnicity									
Black	34%	34%	32%	41%	32%	27%	21%	30%	49%
Latino	22%	37%	41%	43%	36%	21%	38%	32%	30%
White	47%	34%	19%	26%	33%	41%	46%	37%	17%
Education									
Less than HS	22%	37%	41%	44%	34%	22%	37%	28%	35%
HS	31%	36%	33%	37%	32%	30%	34%	30%	36%
Some College	41%	36%	23%	37%	33%	31%	31%	32%	37%
College +	54%	33%	13%	25%	34%	40%	35%	42%	23%
Immigrant Status									
Native-Born	39%	34%	27%	37%	33%	30%	26%	33%	41%
Foreign-born	35%	37%	28%	36%	34%	30%	42%	32%	25%
Foreign-born Latino	27%	41%	32%	43%	36%	21%	38%	32%	30%
Foreign-born									
First-generation	26%	39%	36%	40%	33%	27%	45%	31%	24%
Second-generation	39%	38%	23%	35%	31%	34%	38%	35%	27%
Third-generation	48%	32%	20%	29%	37%	34%	40%	33%	26%

Data: CCAHS, 2001-2003