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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNICITY, IMMIGRANT GENERATION, & DELINQUENCY: EXAMINING YOUTH IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNICITY, IMMIGRANT GENERATION, &

DELINQUENCY: EXAMINING YOUTH IN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES.

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ABSTRACT

Although minority youth are overrepresented in the makeup of the welfare and juvenile justice system, there is a lack of research that examines dually-involved youth. In recent years, there has been an escalation in the number of Hispanic youth that have become involved in the child welfare system, including youth that identify as Hispanic immigrants. This study uses nationally representative data of children receiving welfare services to examine the relationship between ethnicity, immigrant generation, and delinquency. The results of binomial regression models illustrated that there was no effect of Hispanic ethnicity or immigrant generation on delinquency. However, the analysis provided additional results that may aid targeted prevention programs for children within child welfare services.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Escalated immigration enforcement has caused Hispanic children, regardless of citizenship status, to face additional adversities, such as displacement from family, low academic performance, poverty, substance abuse, and discrimination (Akins et al., 2010; Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2018; Bellows, 2019; Conway et al., 2020; Dee & Murphy, 2020; Isom-Scott, 2020). Simultaneously, there has been a notable increase in the number of Hispanic youth that entered the child welfare system (Amuedo-Dorantes & Arenas-Arroyo, 2018). While some Hispanic youth were placed into foster care due to deportation efforts, other Hispanic youth experienced maltreatment as a result of the challenges associated with immigrant identity and ethnicity (Conway et al., 2020; Crea et al., 2018; Dettlaff, 2012). Overall, Hispanic youth in child protective services, regardless of their immigrant generation, continue to face challenges that increase their propensity for future criminal behavior. As a result, this study examines two major research questions: (1) Is there a relationship between ethnicity and offending among children involved in child welfare programs? (2) Are there differences in offending among Hispanic youth according to their immigrant generation (i.e., immigrant children compared to children of immigrants)?

When children in child welfare services become involved in the juvenile justice system, they are referred to as crossover youth (Vidal et al., 2017). Huang et al. (2012) examined 1,148 dually-involved children and found that Hispanic crossover youth made up 33% (n = 379) of the

sample as the second largest ethnic group. As a vulnerable population, Hispanic children are more likely to face additional adversities that heighten their propensity for criminal behavior while involved with the foster care system. To illustrate, prior research found that adverse childhood experiences among Hispanic youth in the child welfare system were indirectly significant with future recidivism rates (Baglivio, 2015). The concept of accumulated strains increasing the likelihood of criminal involvement aligns with the framework of Agnew's (1992) general strain theory (GST), which explains why those who lack the ability to cope with these stressors legitimately, respond with criminal behavior.

General strain theory is well-suited for providing a guided framework to analyze the delinquent behavior of Hispanic youth receiving child welfare services due to their exposure to multiple disadvantages (Cheng & Li, 2017). Although all children in the welfare system experience strains, Hispanic youth are more likely to experience additional structural disadvantages due to their ethnic status in society. However, not all strains lead to crime, which can be seen through differences in Hispanic offending among youth that are immigrants (first-generation) compared to those who are children of immigrants (second-generation) (Bersani & Pittman, 2019; Bersani & Piquero, 2017; McCann et al., 2021; Piquero et al., 2016). This study defines first-generation immigrants as youth born outside of the U.S., second-generation immigrants have at least one parent born outside of the U.S., and third-plus-generation immigrants have both the child and parents born in the U.S. but may have preceding immigrant family members (Child Trends, 2018). This research examines how delinquency varies among Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth as well as the differences among first- and second-generation Hispanic youth.

Statement of Problem

There is a dearth of research that examines Hispanic offending compared to non-Hispanics while also addressing offending among immigrant generations. Many studies examined immigrants that were already serious juvenile offenders (Bersani et al., 2014; Bersani & Piquero, 2017; Craig et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2021; Piquero et al., 2016) or limited the study to one geographic area (Isom-Scott, 2020; MacDonald & Saunders, 2012; Wolff et al., 2015; Wright & Rodriguez, 2014). Other research used the segmented assimilation theory to explain offending differences, which has proven challenging to operationalize criminal behavior (Bersani et al., 2014; Bersani & Pittman, 2019; Lopez & Miller, 2011; McCann et al., 2021). To better tailor services to prevent crossover youth, research is required that not only examines the relationship between Hispanic ethnicity and delinquency among youth in the child welfare system but also examines the ways in which different immigrant generations may affect this relationship. As a result, Hispanic youth in the foster care system may continue to succumb to incarceration, homelessness, and substance abuse (Amuedo-Dorantes & Arenas-Arroyo, 2018). The lack of research in this important area of study as well as the limitations of the few previous studies that limit the generalizability of their results create the need for further exploration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine offending behavior among Hispanic youth involved in child welfare programs. The objective of this study is two-fold. First, examine the ways in which Hispanic ethnicity relates to delinquency by comparing Hispanic youth in the child welfare system to their non-Hispanic counterparts. Second, evaluate the relationship between immigrant generation and delinquency among Hispanic youth by comparing children who are immigrants to those who are children of immigrants. Using nationally representative longitudinal data, this research seeks to examine the varying risk profiles and coping

mechanisms of children in the child welfare system based on their ethnic and immigrant status. Given that minority children are overrepresented in the makeup of the welfare and the juvenile justice system, these findings can be useful in building targeted prevention programs that encourage the development of healthy coping mechanisms (McWey & Cui, 2021).

CHAPTER II

A LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To date, few studies have examined Hispanic youth delinquent behavior through the framework of the general strain theory. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature. First, I discuss general strain theory and its application to youth involved in child welfare services and Hispanic youth in general and according to immigrant generations. Specifically, the central propositions of the theory are discussed and followed by specific components that relate to Hispanic youth - the types of strains that increase juvenile delinquency and the characteristics that affect criminal coping mechanisms. Second, I provide a synthesized analysis of previous empirical studies, beginning with a general discussion of juvenile delinquency in the child welfare system followed by a review of Hispanic juvenile crime and differences among immigrant children and children of immigrants. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of general strain theory and prior empirical research.

General Strain Theory and Hispanic Youth

The general strain theory utilizes psychological and sociological factors that encompass other criminological theories to explain a broad range of strains and criminal behavior (Agnew, 1992, 2006). Strains are described as "events or conditions that are disliked by individuals" (2006, p.4). According to Agnew, the three major types of strains include when individuals lose something they value, are treated negatively, or are unable to achieve their goals. A more recent

study found that one's propensity for criminal coping heightens when experiencing, witnessing, and expecting higher numbers of the major types of strains (see Thaxton & Agnew, 2018). Because Hispanic youth in the child welfare system experience an array of strains, GST will be used as a guide to examine whether Hispanic identity is significant with delinquent behavior. Specifically, factors that are more likely to make Hispanic youth offend, such as certain types of strains, individuals' characteristics, and surrounding environments, are discussed. Additionally, since immigrant children face typical strains related to Hispanic youth, plus additional strains due to their structural disadvantage of being an immigrant, their strains will be compared to non-immigrant Hispanic youth.

Strains Conducive to Criminal Behavior

It is important to note that most individuals refrain from criminal behavior (Agnew, 2006). Brezina (2010) empirically illustrated how aggression, and subsequent criminal behavior, is a function of emotional and attitudinal factors influenced by parental aggression and housing in poor neighborhoods. Correspondingly, Agnew explained that these strains "are likely to threaten individuals' core goals, needs, values, and/or activities" (p. 71). With such in mind, Hispanic youth encounter unique strains specific to their lived experiences, varying compared to non-Hispanic youth. Similarly, Hispanic immigrant children will likely experience different strains than Hispanic children of immigrants. Consequently, understanding the contextual circumstances further elucidates Agnew's explanation of why certain people refrain from criminal behavior and how specific strains may disproportionately affect Hispanic youth and may lead them to engage in more crime.

Family-Related Strains

Agnew (2006) explained that family strains are more likely to be seen as high in magnitude and unjust, which increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. Family strains stem from parental rejection, arbitrary or excessive punishment, child abuse and neglect, family conflict, divorce, and parental separation (2006, p. 54). Previous studies concurred that parental rejection correlates strongly with delinquent behavior (see Agnew, 2017; Maxwell, 2001; Watts & McNulty, 2013). Evidence suggests that nearly 21% of immigrant youth in childcare services experienced a form of maltreatment from family members (Crea et al., 2018). Although this statistic does not differentiate between immigrant generations, Johnson-Motoyama and Wu (2018) observed that Hispanic youth, in general, entered the foster care system due to supervisory neglect and physical abuse. Previous research also discerned that native-born Hispanic parents posed more risk factors, such as substance abuse and a criminal record, leading to higher child maltreatment rates compared to foreign-born families (see Dettlaff, 2012; Johnson-Motoyama, 2014). On the other hand, foreign-born immigrant parents were more likely to employ excessive discipline, such as corporal punishment, which is considered a form of parental rejection (Agnew, 2017; Dettlaff & Johnson, 2011). Altogether, these studies demonstrate that Hispanic, youth are exposed to familial strains, which vary according to immigrant generation, meaning the levels of coping through offending may vary as well.

Nonetheless, family strains can occur unintentionally, making them seem undeserving and unfair, such as separating family due to immigration efforts (Agnew, 2006). Of course, not all immigrant youth are placed into the foster care system due to immigration enforcement, but many anticipate permanent family separation. For example, a study on Hispanic children within the welfare system revealed that many suffered from mental illnesses and developmental delays due to the constant fear of familial exposure to deportation authorities (Johnson-Motoyama et al.,

2016). Prior research also indicated that Hispanic youth placed in out-of-home foster care, for any reason, reported more accounts of mental illnesses when unable to maintain frequent contact with their parents (McWey & Cui, 2021). Overall, prior research indicates that familial strains, whether deliberate or unintended, are strong predictors of future criminal behavior, making Hispanic youth more susceptible to juvenile delinquency.

Housing in Economically Deprived Areas

Families that reside within neighborhoods characterized by poverty are frequently associated with a range of strains (Agnew, 2006). To illustrate, from 2009 to 2013, nearly 75% of children living with one undocumented parent lived 185% below the federal poverty level (Capps et al., 2016). Further research revealed that immigrant children were more likely than other youth to remain in poverty through adolescence (MacDonald & Saunders, 2012). At the same time, Hispanic families in general also suffer from levels of poverty. A recent study revealed that strict immigration enforcement increased economic hardships among legal Hispanic families (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2018). These results indicated that the fear of involvement with immigration authorities increased poverty levels among Hispanics in general, affecting all generations of immigrant youth.

Economically deprived areas also negatively influence adolescents' exposure to violence (Agnew, 2006). Prior research demonstrated that Hispanic youth were more likely to experience parental abuse and supervisory neglect while living in neighborhoods characterized by poverty (Johnson-Motoyama & Wu, 2018). Hoffman's (2003) study illustrated this by examining areas with high rates of unemployment and low parental supervision and found increased levels of juvenile delinquency. Turanovic and Pratt (2013) revealed that victimization can cause precursors to delinquency, such as low self-control, maladaptive behaviors, and substance abuse.

In general, poverty-stricken housing increases experienced, vicarious, and expected strains that can alter an adolescent's proclivity to crime.

Illegitimate Coping Mechanisms

The characteristics of an individual and their environment influences their coping skills and resources, social support and social control, and expose them to situations that foster criminal behavior (Agnew, 2006). These factors can hinder one's ability to cope, reduce the perceived costs of crime, and increase one's disposition for offending. To demonstrate, Watts and McNulty's (2013) study on strains and coping mechanisms found that childhood abuse was significantly related to depressive symptoms, low self-control, and affiliation with deviant peers. Since Hispanic youth, specifically those involved in the child welfare system, are more likely to encounter strains commonly associated with offending, it is necessary to understand how an individual's insulated environment influences their perception and response to strain. These factors will prompt the likelihood of criminal coping among Hispanic youth.

Poor Coping Skills & Resources

When an individual possesses low levels of problem-solving abilities, social skills, self-control, self-efficacy, and income, it is increasingly difficult to cope with strains in a non-criminal manner (Agnew, 2006). Acquiring these characteristics occur during a child's developmental phase. For example, undocumented immigrant parents' fear of deportation and distrust in the government reduces their willingness to accept social services during times of economic hardship (Johnson-Motoyama et al., 2016). As a result, their children, although documented, are more likely to suffer from developmental delays and mental illnesses. These traits are commonly associated with low constraint and self-efficacy and can increase one's disposition for criminal behavior. Overall, prior research indicates that different generations of

Hispanic, immigrant youth are subjected to environments that prevent the acquisition of legitimate coping skills and resources.

Social Support & Social Control

Two factors that influence an individual's ability to cope are their levels of conventional social support and social control (Agnew, 2006). In regard to support, the stressors accompanying strains can be mitigated through assistance and support from others. However, Hispanic youth in foster care services during their physical and psychological development can inhibit levels of social support (Conway et al., 2020). On the other hand, social control can be referred to as both internal and external. Konty's (2005) study postulated that higher levels of strain can evoke the feeling of desperation, reducing one's feeling of internal control. Consequently, these individuals were more likely to respond to these strains in their best interest and without regard to others. Externally, social control refers to one's positive relationships with conventional others and institutions (Agnew, 2006). To illustrate, Craig et al.'s (2020) study provides an example of monitoring and a low tolerance for deviance within Hispanic youth relationships decreased the chances of offending.

Fostering Social Learning for Crime

The final factor that increases the likelihood of criminal coping is exposure to people, beliefs, and situations that allow for criminal behavior (Agnew, 2006). For example, an adolescent who maintains weakened conventional bonds is more likely to associate themselves with deviant peers (see Bao et al., 2014). Cheng and Li (2017) found that deviant peer association among youth in child welfare agencies fostered their social learning for crime and increased the rates of delinquent activity. Other scholars argue that Hispanic youth in welfare services exhibit criminal behavior due to the lack of emphasis on their culture and the pressure to

acculturate (Akins et al., 2010; Conway et al., 2020). Another point of contention is the idea that legal socialization reminds immigrant youth of the social and material costs associated with crime, which may explain offending differences among varying generations (Piquero et al., 2016). Overall, Hispanic involvement in child welfare agencies may foster an environment conducive to criminal coping.

Immigration, Youth, and Delinquency

Despite the empirical literature that provides compelling evidence that immigration does not increase crime, the media continues to publicly persecute those of Hispanic descent (Harris & Gruenewald, 2020). This continued polarization has deflected from an even more prominent issue: the overrepresentation of Hispanic children in child welfare agencies (Amuedo-Dorantes & Arenas-Arroyo, 2018). Incidentally, an estimated 30% of youth in foster care display criminal tendencies further perpetuating the cycle of deviance and crime (Vidal et al., 2017). For this reason, it is necessary to determine the risk factors associated with criminal behavior across different generations of Hispanic youth. To better understand how unique, insular experiences impact offending rates among children receiving welfare services, this study analyzes the prevalence of delinquency within child welfare services, Hispanic youth, and among different generations.

Welfare Services, Hispanic Youth, & Delinquency

Prior research has indicated that native-born Hispanic youth commit nearly the same amount of crime compared to native-born non-Hispanic youth (Bersani & Piquero, 2017; Piquero et al., 2016; McCann et al., 2021). Several studies have illustrated that large concentrations of Hispanic families with foreign-born parents do not increase crime, but act as a protective feature (Wolff et al., 2015; Wright & Rodriguez, 2014). However, both studies

examined a sample of Hispanic youths that had a previous record of criminal behavior and did not distinguish which generation of immigrants they were. Conversely, MacDonald and Saunder's (2012) study analyzed the exposure to violence between households with one foreign-born Hispanic parent and native-born households and found that despite similar levels of poverty, native-born households had higher rates of youth violence. On the other hand, additional research indicated that ethnic discrimination increased youth violence (Isom-Scott, 2020; Pérez et al., 2008). Specifically, police harassment and the use of microaggression led to increased anger among Hispanic youth and, subsequently, higher levels of violent criminal behavior.

Taking into consideration the various strains that Hispanic youth are more likely to encounter, it is critical to understand the additional pressures endured when involved in child welfare services. Similar to the work of Vidal et al. (2017), many studies have found that youth involved in the child welfare system face additional accumulated strains that are more likely to lead to criminal coping. For example, Cheng and Li (2017) used NSCAW-II and found that youth were predisposed to delinquent behavior primarily due to relationships with parents and peers, state of mental health, and substance abuse. Other studies found that specific characteristics, such as congregated care in group homes, increased the likelihood of offending (Yoon et al., 2018). Criminal activity was also influenced by the number of placements within foster care and living in neighborhoods with ethnic heterogeneity compared to more homogeneous neighborhoods. Overall, these prior studies revealed that intervention from welfare agencies led to higher juvenile delinquency.

First- and Second- Generation Offending

Despite the public's association with immigrants and increasing crime rates, a recent qualitative analysis found that society fails to differentiate the within-group differences among

generations of immigrants (Harris & Gruenewald, 2020). For example, Bersani and Piquero (2017) discovered that first-generation immigrants, compared to second-, and third-plus generations, maintained lower levels of criminal behavior. Similarly, Bersani et al. (2014) found that those first-generation immigrants who had committed crimes steered from serious and persistent offending and were able to desist more easily compared to successive generations and native-born peers. Another study observed a significant increase in criminal behavior between first-generation moms and their native-born Hispanic children (Bersani & Pittman, 2019).

More recently, scholars have examined the segmented assimilation theory to describe differences in offending among first- and second-generation immigrants. Piquero et al. (2016) reported that first-generation immigrant youth associated more social costs with punishment, whereas subsequent generations had weakened perceptions of trust and legitimacy for the criminal justice system. Likewise, a more recent study ascertained that first-generation immigrants' perception of social costs derived from the fear of deportation, shame, stigmatization, and deprivation (McCann et al., 2021). Previous literature has discredited the notion that newly arrived immigrants commit more crimes than the native-born population, yet there is no uniform explanation for this phenomenon.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the general strain theory and examined previous empirical literature on immigrant juvenile crime. Specifically, Hispanic youth involved in child welfare agencies were prone to specific strains conducive to criminal behavior, such as parental rejection, and impoverished childhoods (Brezina, 2010). Child abuse is a form of parental rejection strongly correlated with delinquent behavior, meaning Hispanic youth receiving childcare services were more inclined to familial strains (Agnew, 2017; Crea et al., 2018).

Hispanic youth were also more likely to live in poverty-stricken neighborhoods, making them more susceptible to parental abuse, supervisory neglect, and association with deviant peers (Johnson-Motoyama & Wu, 2018; MacDonald & Saunders, 2012). In terms of coping, Hispanic youth were less likely to obtain adequate coping skills, resources, social support, and social control, making them exposed to people, beliefs, and situations that perpetuate criminal behavior (Agnew, 2006; Akins et al., 2010; Chang, 2019; Conway et al., 2020).

A synthesized analysis of previous empirical research revealed that delinquent behavior among youth in child welfare services is quite common due to the accumulation of strains and inability to cope legitimately (Cheng & Li, 2017; Vidal et al., 2017; Yoon et al., 2018). For Hispanic juvenile crime, prior studies illustrated communities of Hispanic families with at least one foreign-born parent worked as a protective barrier to criminal activity (Wolff et al., 2015; Wright & Rodriguez, 2014). On the other hand, juvenile delinquency between native-born Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth remained similar (Bersani & Piquero, 2017; Piquero et al., 2016; McCann et al., 2021). Further examination revealed differences among second- and third-plus generation immigrants, such as the former possessing lower levels of delinquent behavior (Bersani & Pittman, 2019; Piquero et al., 2016; McCann et al., 2021). Overall, this chapter demonstrated how general strain theory can be applied to the concept of Hispanic juvenile delinquency.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. Specifically, the research questions, hypotheses, population and sample, data collection procedures, measures, and analytic strategy are discussed.

The Current Study

A review of the related literature revealed that Hispanic youth face several types of strains that influence their disposition for criminal behavior that vary from native-born youth and among immigrant generations. However, the existing research on this topic has either examined youth that were already involved in the criminal justice system (Bersani et al., 2014; Bersani & Piquero, 2017; Craig et al., 2020; McCann et al., 2021; Piquero et al., 2016), failed to examine a sample that was national representative (Isom-Scott, 2020; MacDonald & Saunders, 2012; Wolff et al., 2015; Wright & Rodriguez, 2014), or did not examine it through a guided framework of criminogenic strains (Bersani et al., 2014; Bersani & Pittman, 2019; Lopez & Miller, 2011; McCann et al., 2021). As a result, the current study seeks to expand the literature through the framework of the general strain theory to ascertain why some Hispanic youth cope with criminal behavior while others do not and identify the marginalized experiences of Hispanic youth that may vary according to generation. Overall, this research allows for future identification of risks for criminal behavior among Hispanic youth that can be translated into policy and practices

within child welfare agencies. The goal of the current study is to address the following research questions: (1) Is there a relationship between ethnicity and offending among children involved in child welfare programs? (2) Are there differences in offending among Hispanic youth according to their immigrant generation (i.e., immigrant children compared to children of immigrants)? Consistent with the general strain theory and empirical findings from prior research, I hypothesize that Hispanic youth will report either similar or higher levels of juvenile offending compared to their non-Hispanic counterparts. Within the sub-sample, I hypothesize that youth of immigrants will report higher levels of delinquent behavior compared to immigrant youth.

Description of Data Source

This study examined the relationship between Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth delinquency by analyzing data from the National Survey on Child and Adolescent Well-being II (NSCAW-II). To provide future policy recommendations on child welfare practices and ensure effective resource allocation, NSCAW-II collected data to be nationally representative of children and families involved in the child welfare system (see Dolan et al., 2011). NSCAW-II used a two-stage cluster sampling design by selecting 92 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) in 81 counties across the U.S. The longitudinal survey compiled three waves of data between 2008 and 2012 on children's entry into the system, type of services received, parent and guardian demographics, and the children's health and developmental risks (see Casanueva et al., 2011). All children within the study encountered strains that led to their involvement in the welfare system. However, Hispanic youth are more likely to experience additional adversities due to their unique status of being immigrants. The dataset enabled this study to empirically examine multiple measures of strain as well as the child's corresponding delinquent behavior.

Population and Sample

The NSCAW-II sample includes 5,783 children involved in the child welfare system (Casanueva et al., 2011). Participants were victims of child abuse (Dolan et al., 2011). Due to their high-risk status, infants and children in out-of-home placement were oversampled to adequately represent this vulnerable group. On the other hand, cases that were not receiving services were under-sampled to represent subgroups of special interest, such as young children and adolescents. The sample provided a prospective cohort that is nationally representative of children and families involved in the child welfare system. The prospective cohort averaged 17.5 years old when the baseline data were collected between February 2008 and April 2009.

For the purpose of this study, the target population was youth in the foster care system. NSCAW-II baseline data specified the child's ethnicity and whether the child or parents were born outside of the United States, allowing the study to differentiate between Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth as well as create a subgroup that differentiates between different immigrant generations. Since youth had to be 11 years or older to report delinquency in wave 1, the sampling frame was limited to those ages to control for prior delinquency (n = 1020).

Measures

Dependent Variable

The main dependent variable, delinquent behavior, was measured using Elliot, Huizinga, and Ageton's (1985) delinquent behavior scale. Using the data recorded in wave 3, youth reported whether they engaged in delinquent behavior, and if so, how often they engaged in the offense over the past six months. Thirty-six different criminal acts were included, such as running away, skipping class, vandalism, theft, substance abuse, and physical violence towards others. The responses were added to create a composite, overall measure for juvenile delinquency to summarize each youth's delinquent behavior from the past six months.

Independent Variables

The two main independent variables in this study were ethnicity and immigrant generation, specifically focusing on Hispanic youth. Wave 1 asked children who were 11 years and older if they identified as Hispanic, which will be used to differentiate between Hispanic youth and non-Hispanic youth. The second independent variable was immigrant generation, which was determined from whether the Hispanic child and their parents were born in the United States. If the Hispanic youth was born outside of the United States, they were coded as a *first-generation immigrant*. If the Hispanic youth was born inside the United States, but had at least one parent born in another country, the child was labeled as a *second-generation immigrant*. Since there is no information regarding grandparents' immigrant generation, the remaining Hispanic youth were coded as *third-plus-generation* immigrants to provide a control group in the analysis.

Control Variables

Several demographic and theoretical variables were controlled that have been previously shown to influence delinquent behavior. All control measures for the current study were taken from wave 1, which includes information from the youth, biological parents, and current primary caregivers. The respondents' age, sex, and race were controlled for. Age was measured in years using children's self-reports, while sex was gathered from the primary caregiver reports (0 = male, 1 = female). Using self-reports from the children, race was categorized into three dichotomous measures with white being the reference variable (0 = White, 1 = Black, 2 = Other). To control for income, the analysis used a question to the child's primary caregiver asking if they were currently receiving food stamps (0 = did not, 1 = received).

Theoretical variables that indicated prior delinquency or a predisposition to future delinquency were controlled for as well (Hawkins et al., 1992). Using the same measures for the dependent variable, delinquent acts committed up to six months prior to wave 1 data collection was controlled for. Since association with deviant peers has been shown to increase delinquent acts among children in the welfare system (Cheng & Li, 2017), this was controlled for by creating a composite measure of youth responses to six questions regarding the criminal tendencies of their friends. Prior research has shown that out-of-home placement is associated with higher rates of offending (Yoon et al., 2018). As such, using self-reports from the children regarding the type of placement (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Additionally, because lower resilience is associated with higher rates of delinquency (Lee & Villagrana 2015) protective factors were controlled through a series of questions that assessed the child's relationships with parents, caregivers, and other adults. Internalizing and externalizing behaviors were controlled for using the Child Behavior' Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1991) due to the impact of these behaviors on future criminal behavior (Lee & Holmes, 2021; Slaughter & Nagoshi, 2020). Similarly, because lower levels of self-control have been viewed as stable predictors of delinquent behavior, it was controlled through the self-reports of whether the child "Is impulsive or acts without thinking". The responses were coded into three categories (0 = not true, 1 - sometimes true, 2 = very true) with not true being the reference group. Finally, previous research indicates that maltreatment is strongly associated with delinquent behavior (Benedini & Fagan, 2018). With that being said, physical and emotional abuse were controlled for through a composite measure of how many times the child experienced both physical and psychological maltreatment in the year prior to wave 1. Additionally, viewing violence was

controlled for with a composite measure that assessed the frequency of exposure to violent and criminal events within the home.

Analytic Strategy

Several methods were used to achieve the objectives of the study. First, a descriptive analysis was conducted to describe the characteristics of the sample and the distribution of responses among the respondents. Following the descriptive analysis, bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among the variables (See Appendix A). Additionally, collinearity analysis was conducted to further assess the data for multicollinearity issues. Finally, two multivariable regression models were used to estimate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Specifically, a negative binomial model was conducted to estimate the effects of ethnicity and immigrant generation on delinquency. This method was chosen because the dependent variable was a count measure that showed significant overdispersion.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study. Specifically, results from the various

analyses conducted in this study included the negative binomial analysis are presented.

Distribution of Responses

Descriptive statistics of the variables included in this study are provided in Table 1. The

average age of the respondents was 13.72 years old (SD = 1.86) with 29% living out-of-home

placements. At wave 1, approximately half of the sample (45%) identified as male; 53%

identified as White, 30% as Black, and 17% Other. With respect to ethnicity, a majority of the

respondents reported being Hispanic (75%). Moreover, 12% of the sample were first-generation

immigrants, 21% second-generation immigrants, and 68% third-plus-generation immigrants. The

average number of delinquent acts committed by the respondents was 1.98 acts, which is less

than two criminal acts. This decreased to an average of 1.32 delinquent acts in wave 3.

Respondents reported relatively low levels of internalizing (M = 9.36) and externalizing

behaviors (M = 13.03), physical and (M = 8.19) emotional abuse (M = 13.97), exposure to

violence (M = 5.86) and deviant peers (M = 9.33), and protective factors (M = 4.38).

Additionally, a majority of the respondents reported high levels of self-control (52.4%).

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline (n = 1.054).

	n	%	Range	M (SD)
Age	1054		11-17	13.72 (1.86)
Race	1020			
White		52.84		
Black		30.29		
Other		16.86		
Self-Control	1019			
Not True		52.40		
Sometimes True		35.33		
Very True		12.27		
Food Stamps	1021			
Did Not Receive		59.84		
Received		40.16		
Hispanic	1016			
Yes		25.39		
No		74.61		
Immigrant	234			
1st Generation		11.54		
2nd Generation		20.51		
3rd+ Generation		67.95		
Delinquency				
Wave 1	1054		0-36	1.98 (3.90)
Wave 3	763		0-36	1.32 (3.14)
Physical Abuse	1004		0-301	8.19 (25.55)
Emotional Abuse	1002		0-125	13.97 (24.49)
Exposure to Violence	1021		0-19	5.86 (4.30)
Protective Factors	1017		0-5	4.38 (1.08)
Deviant Peer Association	979		6-30	9.33 (4.41)
Internalizing Behavior	1020		0-46	9.36 (8.44)
Externalizing Behavior	1022		0-57	13.03 (11.37)
Gender	1054			
Male		44.69		
Female		55.31		
Out-of-Home Care	1054			
Yes		28.75		
No		71.25		

Bivariate Correlations

Table 2 presents the results from the correlation analysis. Several variables had a significant relationship with delinquency at wave 3. For instance, there was a significant, positive correlation between self-reported offending at wave 3 and internalizing behaviors ($r = .08$). Also, externalizing behaviors ($r = .20$), emotional abuse ($r = .08$), physical abuse ($r = .14$), exposure to violence ($r = .11$), deviant peer association ($r = .16$), and the "other" race ($r = .08$) had a positive relationship with the dependent variable. However, protective factors ($r = -.08$) had a negative relationship with delinquency at wave 3. At the bivariate level, the youth delinquent behavior at wave 1 positively and significantly influenced their delinquent behavior at wave 3.

Table 2

Correlations for Study Variables.

Variable	Y	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	X7	X8	X9	X10	X11	X12	X13	X14	X15	X16	X17	X18	X19	X20	X21
Y. Wave 3 Delinquency	1																					
X1 1st Generation Immigrant	.04	1																				
X2 2nd Generation Immigrant	-.04	-.61***	1																			
X3 3rd Generation Immigrant	-.02	-.76***	-.06	1																		
X4 Race: White	-.04	-.02	.04	-.01	1																	
X5 Race: Black	-.02	.07*	-.06	-.04	-.70***	1																
X6 Race: Other	.08*	-.05	.01	.06	-.48***	-.30***	1															
X7 Self-Control: Not True	-.09*	-.11***	.07*	.09**	-.08*	.11***	-.04	1														
X8 Self-Control: Sometimes True	.06	.07*	-.06	-.04	.07*	-.07*	.00	-.78*	1													
X9 Self-Control: Very True	.06	.07*	-.03	-.07*	.02	-.06	.05	-.40***	-.28***	1												
X10 Out-of-Home Care	.05	-.02	.03	.01	-.15***	.14***	.02	-.03	.01	.03	1											
X11 Gender	-.05	-.04	.05	.01	.05	-.05	.05	.09**	-.06*	-.05	-.04	1										
X12 Food Stamps	.01	-.04	-.10**	.04	-.05	.01	.05	.08*	-.05	-.05	-.33***	-.01	1									
X13 Internalized Behavior	.08*	.10**	-.08*	-.06	-.01	-.02	.03	-.43***	.19***	.38***	.03	.09**	-.01	1								
X14 Externalized Behavior	.20***	-.08*	-.02	-.02	.03	-.07*	.04	-.58***	.24***	.53***	-.01	-.02	-.06	.61***	1							
X15 Exposure to Violence	.11**	.05	-.02	-.04	.07*	-.06*	-.02	-.10**	.01	.14***	.12***	.16***	-.10**	.17***	.16***	1						
X16 Protective Factors	-.08*	-.07*	-.10**	-.07*	-.01	.06*	-.06*	.03	.05	.12***	.02	.03	.03	-.14***	-.13***	-.12***	1					
X17 Deviant Peer Association	.16***	.04	-.04	-.01	.00	.03	-.05	-.12***	.07*	.08*	.03	.05	-.07*	.11***	.15***	.38***	-.10**	1				
X18 Physical Abuse	.14***	.02	-.00	-.03	-.00	.03	-.04	-.08*	.01	.11**	.14***	.01	-.10**	.11***	.12***	.28***	-.08*	.56***	1			
X19 Emotional Abuse	.08*	.03	-.00	-.05	.02	.00	-.02	-.08*	-.02	.16***	.06	.13***	-.11**	.19***	.19***	.44***	-.07*	.33***	.20***	1		
X20 Wave 1 Delinquency	.25***	.04	-.03	-.02	-.01	-.00	.01	-.07*	.01	.08**	.05	.00	-.08**	.11***	.22***	.31***	-.16***	.32***	.14***	-.02	1	
X21 Hispanic	.02	-.40***	.21***	.33***	.07*	-.21***	.16***	.07*	-.04	-.03	.01	.03	-.00	-.02	-.06	-.02	-.07	-.01	.01	-.02	.00	1

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

Effects of Ethnicity on Offending Among the Youth

Table 3 illustrates the results from a negative binomial analysis examining the effects of ethnicity on delinquency at wave 3 after controlling for the effects of other variables. The model is significant ($X2 = 95.17$, $p<.001$) and explains about 5% of the variance in delinquency. After controlling for the effects of other variables in the model, Hispanic was found to be unrelated to delinquency. This means that, respondents who self-identified as Hispanic did not differ from those who self-identified as non-Hispanic in terms of the number of delinquent acts they committed over time. However, many control variables were significantly associated with delinquency. The use of food stamps ($z = 2.14$, $p = .033$), prior physical abuse ($z = 2.12$, $p = .034$), association with deviant peers ($z = 1.96$, $p = .051$), internalizing behavior ($z = -2.33$, $p = .020$), externalizing behavior ($z = 4.11$, $p = .000$), out-of-home placement ($z = 1.92$, $p = .055$), "other" race category ($z = 2.02$, $p = .044$), and wave 1 delinquency ($z = 2.62$, $p = .009$) were significantly associated with wave 3 delinquency. These results such that, youth that use food stamps were more likely to commit more delinquent acts than those who do not. Also, Youth with prior physical abuse were more likely to commit greater number of delinquent acts over time that those with no prior victimization. Also, wave 1 delinquent positively predicted wave 3 delinquency, suggesting that youth who committed at least one act of delinquent act at wave 1 were more likely to commit more delinquent acts at wave 3.

Table 3

Negative Binomial Estimates of the Association between Ethnicity and Delinquency (n = 546).

	b (S.E.)	z
Hispanic	.03 (.03)	.17
Gender	-.25 (.16)	-1.56
Self-Control (RC = Not True)		
Sometimes True	-.06 (.18)	-.33
Very True	-.34 (.30)	-1.16
Food Stamps	.35 (.16)*	2.14
Physical Abuse	.01 (.00)*	2.12
Emotional Abuse	-.01 (.00)	-1.26
Exposure to Violence	.03 (.02)	1.53
Protective Factors	-.06 (.07)	-.87
Deviant Peer Association	.04 (.02)*	1.96
Internalizing Behavior	-.03 (.01)*	-2.33
Externalizing Behavior	.04 (.01)***	4.11
Out-of-Home Care	.34 (.18)*	1.92
Race (RC = White)		
Black	-.14 (.18)	-.77
Other	.40 (.20)*	2.02
Wave 1 Delinquency	.07 (.03)**	2.62
Model fit		
Log Likelihood	-891.35	
X^2	95.17***	
R^2	.05	

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

Effects of Offending Among Immigrant-Groups

Table 4 illustrates the results from the second negative binomial regression model, which analyzed the relationship between immigrant generation and delinquency. The model is significant ($X2 = 23.13$, $p > .05$) and explains about 5% of the variance in delinquency. After controlling for the effects of other variables in the model, immigrant generation status was found to be unrelated to delinquency. This means that, respondents categorized as first- and second-generation immigrants did not differ from those who were labeled as third-plus-generation immigrants in terms of the number of delinquent acts they commit over time. However, the data found that externalizing behavior ($z = 2.27$, $p = .023$) remained significantly associated with wave 3 delinquency among the Hispanic only sample.

Table 4

Negative Binomial Estimates of the Association between Immigrant Generation and Delinquency (n = 156).

	b (S.E.)	z
Immigrant (RC = 3rd Generation)		
1st Generation	-.19 (.58)	-.32
2nd Generation	.03 (.41)	-.07
Gender	-.50 (.34)	-1.35
Self-Control (RC = Not True)		
Sometimes True	.12 (.35)	.34
Very True	-.13 (.71)	-.18
Food Stamps	-.06 (.37)	-.16
Physical Abuse	.01 (.01)	.72
Protective Factors	-.16 (.15)	-1.06
Internalizing Behavior	-.04 (.03)	-1.23
Externalizing Behavior	.05 (.02)*	2.27
Out-of-Home Care	.14 (.36)	.37
Race (RC = White)		
Black	.26 (.50)	.52
Other	.36 (.35)	1.05
Wave 1 Delinquency	.07 (.05)	1.38
Model fit		
Log Likelihood	-207.66	
X^{2}	23.13*	
R^{2}	.05	

Note. Prior to conducting the analysis, regressing the variables with the addition of the second independent variable, immigrant generation, showed that deviant peer association, exposure to violence, and emotional abuse had high VIF and were thus excluded from the model (See Appendix B). $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p <.01$, and $^{***}p <.001$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary and Contributions

The purpose of this study was to examine offending behavior among Hispanic youth involved in child welfare programs. First, this study examined the ways in which ethnicity relates to delinquency by comparing Hispanic youth in the child welfare system to their non-Hispanic counterparts. Second, the analysis evaluated the relationship between immigrant generation and delinquency among Hispanic youth by comparing children who are immigrants to those who are children of immigrants. Using a nationally representative dataset, this research provides additional insight into high-risk youth involved in child welfare services.

Based on the analysis, the results illustrated that there was no effect of Hispanic ethnicity or immigrant generation on delinquency. Although prior literature found Hispanic youth in the child welfare system as a significant predictor of future criminal behavior (Baglivio, 2015) this study found that ethnicity had no influence on delinquency. Additionally, the results of this study contradicted prior research that found differences in offending among varying immigrant generations (Bersani & Pittman, 2019; Bersani & Piquero, 2017; McCann et al., 2021; Piquero et al., 2016). Krohn et al. (2013) study of self-reported delinquency and official records found that Hispanic youth were more likely to under-report offending compared to their White counterparts and about the same as their Black counterparts. It is possible that the lack of significance in this study is attributed to self-reporting bias, which may be exacerbated among immigrants that may

fear repercussion. While the study found delinquent behavior to irrespective of both ethnicity and immigrant status, the results provided other significant findings.

Another observation made in this study was that effect externalizing behavior on delinquent behavior. Externalizing behavior was measured through questions regarding rule-breaking behavior, aggressive behavior, conduct problems, and oppositional defiant problems (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1991). Although not a direct measure of delinquency, such as stealing, vandalism, or substance abuse, externalizing symptoms reflect deviant behaviors that could eventually translate into criminal activity (Lee & Holmes, 2021, Slaughter & Nagoshi, 2020). As a result, this study found that youth exhibiting higher levels of externalizing were more likely to commit delinquent acts, which is consistent with previous research.

Although no other variables were significant within the immigrant generation model, there were several significant effects within the Hispanic analysis. In addition to externalizing behavior, internalizing behavior was negatively associated with delinquent behavior, meaning youth who reported lower levels of anxiety, depression, and attention problems were more likely to engage in delinquent behavior. This finding contradicts previous research that found higher levels of internalizing behavior to be indicative of future delinquent behavior (Lee & Holmes, 2021, Slaughter & Nagoshi, 2020).

On the other hand, consistent with existing research, prior delinquent behavior at wave 1 was associated with delinquent behavior at wave 3, meaning that, those who had committed delinquent acts in the past were more likely to commit delinquent behaviors in the future (Hawkins et al., 1992). Similarly, previous studies found that increased affiliation with deviant peers makes children more likely to commit delinquent acts, which was consistent with the findings of this study (Bao et al., 2014; Cheng & Li, 2017). In addition, the results indicated that

youth who had experienced physical abuse were more likely to commit delinquent acts, which coincides with previous literature that indicates maltreatment was positively associated with offending behavior (Benedini & Fagan, 2018). Youth whose family had received food stamps, which was used as a measure of low income, made youth more likely to commit delinquent acts (Hoffman, 2003). This study also found that out-of-home placement made youth more likely to participate in delinquent activity. Ryan et al. (2010) found that Hispanic youth in child welfare services were less likely to demonstrate delinquent behavior if living with relatives. Because the majority of the Hispanic sample was not living in out-of-home care, but with other family members or close relatives, it could explain why there was no relationship between delinquency and ethnicity.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

There are several limitations in this study that should be noted. First, the study's results are limited by the small sample size. Because self-reported delinquency was measured for youth that were 11 years or older at wave 1, controlling for prior delinquency significantly decreased the available sample size. Additionally, the small sample size and limited number of youth who self-reported delinquent behavior caused nearly 38% missingness in self-reported delinquency at wave 3. The small sample size and missingness also made it difficult to examine the impact of several other important variables that have been found by prior studies to influence juvenile delinquency. The data failed to elaborate on participants' birthplace, inhibiting the study to examine specific immigrant groups that were born outside of the United States, but did not identify as Hispanic. In addition, because wave 1 delinquency was controlled for, the study did not account for change in delinquency over time. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether there were youth who desisted from offending or if their delinquent behavior was exacerbated

from their involvement in child welfare services. Finally, the primary dependent variable, delinquency, focused on property offenses, whereas externalizing behaviors measured more aggressive behavior and conduct problems. As a result, it is possible that the delinquency variable was too closely related to externalizing behaviors making it difficult to examine the relationship between the sample size and delinquency.

Recommendations and Future Research

Although this study provides new insights to the relationship between delinquency among children in child welfare services, there are several areas for improvement in future research. First, it is important to replicate this study on a larger sample size that has longer follow up periods. Because there were less than three years in between wave 1 and wave 3 data collection, it would be beneficial to analyze longitudinal data from more waves that are farther apart to better analyze the change in delinquent behavior. Second, future data collection should provide information regarding the children's country of origin. Specifically, collecting information on immigrants from Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and European countries would determine whether the immigrant experience is cohesive across immigrant groups in general, or if they maintain different experiences.

In addition, future research should provide immigrant-specific experiences, such as assimilation and acculturation, to differentiate between ethnic-specific strains. This dataset failed to observe the level of ethnic concentration where the youth lived, which may provide further insight to the levels of acculturation each immigrant group was exposed to. Similarly, future research should include variables on ethnic discrimination, including data on peer, school, and law enforcement victimization. Finally, it is necessary that future research continues to analyze

the relationship between ethnicity, immigrant generation, and delinquency to provide more

targeted prevention programs for youth involved in child welfare services.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A

Multicollinearity of Table 3 Study Variables.

	Tolerance Values 1/VIF	VIF Values
Externalizing Behavior	.41	2.47
Internalizing Behavior	.54	1.85
Self-Control (RC = Not True)		
Sometimes True	.67	1.49
Very True	.50	1.98
Emotional Abuse	.58	1.72
Physical Abuse	.67	1.50
Exposure to Violence	.71	1.42
Deviant Peer Association	.77	1.30
Wave 1 Delinquency	.81	1.23
Hispanic	.93	1.08
Out-of-Home Care	.83	1.21
Food Stamps	.86	1.16
Gender	.91	1.10
Protective Factors	.91	1.10
Race (RC = White)		
Black	.83	1.20
Other	.88	1.14

Appendix B

Multicollinearity of Table 4 Study Variables.

	Tolerance Values 1/VIF	VIF Values
Externalizing Behavior	.41	2.43
Internalizing Behavior	.55	1.81
Self-Control (RC = Not True)		
Sometimes True	.68	1.47
Very True	.50	2.01
Physical Abuse	.95	1.05
Wave 1 Delinquency	.91	1.10
Hispanic	.82	1.22
Out-of-Home Care	.87	1.15
Food Stamps	.88	1.13
Gender	.96	1.04
Protective Factors	.92	1.09
Race (RC = White)		
Black	.84	1.19
Other	.88	1.14
Immigrant (RC = 3rd Generation)		
1st Generation	.94	1.06
2nd Generation	.87	1.15

VITA

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