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An Examination of the 'Marriage Effect' on
Desistance from Crime among U.S. Immigrants

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Interest in the relationship between immigration and crime has a long history in the United States. Since the late 19th and early 20th centuries much anxiety has been levied at the social ills associated with immigrants, and in particular, the criminal element they may bring with them (see, for example, Immigration Commission 1911). Despite these concerns, research spanning more than a century has revealed that the stereotype of the "criminal immigrant" is a myth (Hagan and Palloni 1999; Rumbaut and Ewing 2007) and that the foreign-born (e.g., first generation immigrants) are involved in significantly less crime than their native-born peers (Lee and Martinez 2009; Sampson and Laub 2005; Zhou and Bankston 2006). At the same time, however, research also demonstrates increasing rates of crime among the children of immigrants, (e.g., the second generation) (Bersani 2012; Morenoff and Astor 2006). As the second generation immigrant population continues to grow attention has shifted to understanding the reasons for the dramatic increase in offending among the children of immigrants as well as the factors that insulate the first generation from crime.

Alongside this shift in research attention, a related body of work posits a declining significance of marriage among the second and later generations (Oropesa and Landale 2004). This decline is noteworthy for two reasons: First, research on immigration and crime often identifies the family as an important protective factor among first generation immigrants (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001; Zhou 1997), suggesting that "immigrant families may…have an advantage because they are more likely to bond together and establish social ties and cooperative kin-based economic and childrearing practices" (MacDonald and Saunders 2012: 132). Second, the benefits of family bonds, and marriage in particular, for fostering desistance from crime have been well established in previous research (Laub and Sampson 2003;

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Sampson and Laub 1993). Thus, a decline in marriage among later generations holds the power to influence patterns of criminality among the children of immigrants.

The aim of this research is to merge separate but related bodies of work by integrating research on immigration, marriage and family, and crime to shed light on the factors that shape patterns of criminal offending among the children of immigrants as they transition to young adulthood. This research addresses three core questions: 1) are *second generation* immigrants (defined as individuals born in the U.S. with at least one foreign-born parent) entering into marriage at a slower pace than their *first generation* immigrant (defined as those born outside the U.S. with foreign-born parents) peers?; 2) what role does marriage play in understanding immigrant offending?; and 3) is the relationship between marriage and offending conditioned by immigrant generational status and/or country/region of birth (i.e., nativity)? To situate these findings in the larger body of research, we also examine a sample of native-born youth, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, for comparison purposes.

Our findings reveal important similarities and differences between immigrant generations with respect to patterns of marriage and offending. First, counter to expectations of a "retreat" from marriage (i.e., a declining rate), we find that second generation immigrants marry at rates comparable to their White, Hispanic, and first generation immigrant peers. Second, consistent with previous research, we find that marriage is negatively related to crime for both first and second generation immigrants. However, this 'marriage effect' is particularly strong the second generation.

Data and Measures

For this research, we utilize 13 waves of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of

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Youth 1997 (NLSY97), a representative survey of people living in the U.S. who were 12 to 16 years of age during the initial round of data collection in 1997. Youth are interviewed on an annual basis beginning in 1997 and complete a self-administered survey that collects information on sensitive topics such as crime/delinquency, arrest and substance use. This dataset also includes a wealth of information on family dynamics, structural factors, and individual characteristics. Of the 8,984 youth surveyed in the first wave, immigrant status could be calculated for 8,586 youth (96% of the full sample), of which there are 6,998 native-born youth (n = 4,007 non-Hispanic whites; n = 2,101 non-Hispanic blacks; n = 827 Hispanics; n = 63 non-Hispanic other race), 590 first generation immigrants, and 998 second generation immigrants.

While much research has focused on aggregate level immigration-crime trends, an understanding of the individual level predictors of criminal involvement among immigrants is limited, in part because of the lack of available longitudinal data with which to study patterns of immigrant offending. The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), for example, includes a wealth of immigration information but lacks detailed information on offending. At the same time, many data sources that are rich in crime data lack information on immigration status. The NLSY97 data are particularly well suited for examining the relationship between marriage and offending among immigrants for a number of reasons: First, a key feature of this dataset is its prospective, longitudinal nature, which tracks yearly measures of arrest and relationship transitions. Moreover, these data cover the period of the life course spanning the transition from adolescence through young adulthood, and as a result, capture both the peak years of involvement in crime and the period in which most people transition to marriage. Second, though the NLSY97 is a general population sample, respondents report a significant amount of crime, collectively amassing more than 10,000 arrests over the duration of the study.

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Additionally, many respondents have made relationship transitions in the study period, with more than a third of the respondents married by the most recent wave of data collection. Finally, these data contain a sizeable proportion of first and second generation immigrants, allowing for a comparison of the marriage effect across immigrant generations.

The main focus of this research is on the dynamic relationship between offending and marriage. We measure offending behavior as the incidence (arrested or not arrested) and frequency (number of times arrested) of self-reported arrests (excluding arrests for minor traffic violations) captured annually. Each year of the survey respondents were asked about their relationship status, allowing us to capture the year in which respondents transition from single to married. Recognizing that the environments in which individuals mature and develop influence their likelihood of both offending and marrying, we also include a number of sociodemographic background controls in the models, including family structure, family size, parental education, household disadvantage, socioeconomic structural position as well as controls for individual characteristics including gender, age, and criminal propensity. All controls were measured during the first wave of data collection in 1997 (with the exception of the socioeconomic structural position variable, which was calculated when respondents were 20 years of age).

Analytic Strategy

Our analysis proceeds in two steps: First we examine trends in marriage across immigrant and native-born groups to assess whether, on average, second generation immigrants are marrying at different rates than their first generation immigrant peers. To do so, we plot the percentage of youth in each subsample married in each wave over the course of the study. If

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there is a retreat from marriage among second generation immigrants, we would expect to see lower rates of marriage for these individuals compared to their foreign-born counterparts.

Second, we use a longitudinal regression modeling strategy to assess changes in the likelihood and frequency of arrest as individuals make relationship transitions (i.e., get married). Because annual observations of arrest and relationship status are 'nested' or clustered within individuals (each respondents can have up to 13 different observation points), we use a multilevel modeling strategy rather than the traditional, static ordinary least squares regression approach. Clustered data negatively influence statistical models by resulting in incorrect estimates of the standard errors, and increasing the likelihood of concluding that a statistically significant relationship exists when it does not (e.g., a type 1 error or a false positive). Moreover, because we focus on changes that occur 'within-individuals' over time comparing the offending behavior of individuals before, during and after marriage, individuals act as their own statistical control, eliminating the possibility that stable individual characteristics account for the observed relationship between marriage and arrest (see Osgood 2009). We begin by estimating a series of separate models for the first and second generation immigrant and native-born subsamples to examine the relationship between marriage and offending within each demographic group. Then, we test whether the strength of the marriage effect differs across groups by assessing statistical differences in the effect sizes across groups. With these analyses we investigate whether and to what extent we observe a "good marriage effect" among immigrant samples.

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Results

Research Question 1: Are second generation immigrants entering into marriage at a slower pace than their first generation immigrant peers?

Counter to claims of a declining rate of marriage among second generation immigrants, we find in these data that rates of marriage are similar across immigrant generations. In line with previous research (Fry and Cohn 2010; Harris, Hedwig Lee, and DeLeone 2010; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995), blacks have the lowest rates of marriage among the subgroups. By the final wave of data collection in 2009, when respondents are 25 to 29 years of age, just over 46% of whites, 40% of second generation immigrants and Hispanics, 37% of first generation immigrants, and 22% of blacks had ever been married. While we cannot measure the extent to which immigrants of different generations hold varying attitudes toward marriage, our behavioral indicators of actual marital status do not support assertions of a marriage retreat among second generation immigrants.

Research Question 2: What role does marriage play in understanding immigrant offending?

With respect to our second research question, we find that marriage is significantly and negatively related to offending among immigrants. In other words, the "good marriage effect" observed in other studies (Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993; Sampson, Laub, and Wimer 2006) appears to extend to immigrant populations. When married, immigrants are significantly less likely to offend compared to when they are not married. In fact, in these data the benefits of marriage appear to be universal and are found regardless of racial/ethnic/ immigrant group examined; being married is associated with a reduction in the likelihood and frequency of arrest.

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Research Question 3: Is the relationship between marriage and offending conditioned by immigrant generational status and/or country/region of birth (i.e., nativity)?

While we find evidence of a "good marriage effect" for immigrants as well as for our native-born groups, the strength of this effect varied. Second generation immigrants experienced some of the largest reductions in the probability of criminal behavior with marriage. Further, while not the core focus of this research, because of the gendered nature of both marriage and offending, we split the sample by gender. Somewhat surprisingly, marriage was found to be more efficacious for first generation female immigrants compared to first generation males, a finding that may be attributable to the pool of men from which they have to choose partners. In other words, because the first generation are believed to "self-select" into their immigrant roles (Tonry 1997) it is likely that the pool of partners from which first generation females are choosing is comprised of individuals with lower criminal propensities. Conversely, marriage was found to more consistently decrease offending for second generation males, with inconsistent effects of marriage – depending upon the dependent variable – for second generation females.

In line with the extant immigration literature, our key indicators of immigrant generation are based upon country of birth information for youth and their parents. However, the first generation immigrant group is characterized by extensive diversity, particularly with respect to the age at which they migrated to the U.S. Though technically foreign-born, individuals who migrate to the U.S. at very young ages may be more similar to their native-born peers than their fellow immigrants. These individuals are often referred to as the "one-and-a-half" generation (Rumbaut 1997a; Zhou 1997). Recognizing the diversity that lies within our first generation immigrant group, we conduct a series of robustness checks to account for the influence of age at

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migration, language use, and country/region of origin. Notably, we find evidence of a stronger

effect of marriage among first generation immigrants who migrate to the U.S. at earlier ages and

who are more linguistically proficient. Combined, these two variables are proxy indicators for

acculturation and suggest that greater acculturation into the American mainstream is not only

associated with increased rates of offending, but also with an increasing benefit of marriage as a

facilitator of desistance from crime. When we disaggregate by nativity status we find that, while

the strength of the marriage effect differs for immigrants born in different countries/regions,

marriage is consistently related to a decline in offending across these different groups.

Taken together, the pattern of findings in this research highlights the significant role that

family, and specifically marriage, plays in the offending behavior of immigrants. Consistent

with previous criminological research on the marriage effect among the native-born, our results

demonstrate that being married fosters desistance from crime for first and second generation

immigrants. Notably, the effect of marriage appears to be most consequential for the children of

immigrants.

Policy Implications

What do our findings mean for immigration policy and criminal justice responses to

immigrant offending? The finding that marriage acts as a protective factor against crime,

reducing the likelihood of arrest across immigrant groups, suggests that efforts to preserve and

promote family connections among immigrants and within immigrant communities should be at

the vanguard of immigration policy reform. Put differently, our findings suggest that policies

resulting in deportation and the dissolution of immigrant families may actually hinder efforts to

enhance public safety, in part because the removal of individuals from immigrant communities

may diminish the pool of available marriage partners. The dire consequences of targeted criminal justice enforcement and the subsequent removal of men from disadvantaged communities are perhaps best illustrated by Wilson's (1987) research on African American inner city communities. Heeding the lessons gleaned from his work, this research suggests that maintaining the pool of men in immigrant communities and promoting their status as "marriageable" through pathways to citizenship, educational and work opportunities, may be the single most important way to ensuring the viability of immigrant communities.

This research does not suggest that marriage is singularly responsible for providing pathways to conformity among immigrants; however, the evidence does suggest that marriage and the emergent qualities tied to being married may be an important factor in facilitating desistance from crime, particularly among those acculturating and assimilating into the American mainstream (e.g., second generation immigrants). In light of their significantly higher rates of offending compared to their foreign-born peers, the strong marriage effect found among the children of immigrants is particularly notable. We can only speculate about the reasons for this trend, but one reason for this finding may be that marriage, as a traditional institution, may provide a link for these youth to their cultural and ancestral roots as a result of the attendant collectivist obligations and responsibilities to the family that come with marriage.

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Dramatic growth in the U.S. immigrant population since the 1970s has ushered in a new era of interest in the relationship between immigration and crime, and motivated strict policies aimed at controlling immigrant populations. Today, an estimated 40 million people in the U.S. are foreign-born and nearly 1 in 4 children has at least one foreign-born parent, making the second generation the fastest growing and most diverse segment of the U.S. population (Fortuny and Chaudry 2011). Research has consistently shown an intergenerational gap in offending between first and second generation immigrants: while the foreign-born (e.g., first generation immigrants) display relatively low levels of criminal involvement, offending rates among the children of the foreign-born (e.g., second generation immigrants) across diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds are significantly higher (Bersani 2012; Harris 1999; Morenoff and Astor 2006; Powell, Perreira, and Mullan Harris 2010; Sampson and Laub 2005).

Having demonstrated that the risk of crime is greater among later immigrant generations, researchers are eager to move beyond the question of whether an immigrant-crime link exists to the more pressing question of *why* the generational disparity in immigrant offending exists. Thus far, the research literature highlights several protective factors, including a strong family orientation (Fukuyama 1993; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001), limited exposure to deviant peers (Dipietro and McGloin 2012; Myers, Chou, Sussman, Baezconde-Garbanati, Pachon et al. 2009; Samaniego and Gonzales 1999), and residence in immigrant neighborhoods (Desmond and Kubrin 2009; MacDonald and Saunders 2012; Morenoff and Astor 2006), which may effectively insulate the first generation from risk. Notably, though, much of this research has relied on samples of adolescents, and neglected to examine patterns of offending among adults. As the second generation comes of age in the U.S. representing an ever-larger and more

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diverse segment of the population, a fuller understanding of their patterns of offending into adulthood is of the utmost importance to scholars and policy makers alike.

One potentially important, but traditionally understudied link between immigrant status and crime is marriage. A rich body of literature demonstrates that marriage inhibits criminal offending and promotes desistance from crime because it fosters informal social control and limits time spent with nonconventional peers (Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993). Importantly, though, most studies of this so-called "good marriage effect" have been conducted with samples of white men. This narrow research focus begs the questions of whether minorities, and especially immigrants, reap the same crime reducing benefits from marriage as whites and whether these benefits change as immigrants grow increasingly assimilated to the U.S.

There are both empirical and theoretical reasons to expect the relationship between marriage and crime to differ across immigrant generations. First, a growing research literature finds that the benefits of marriage are largely dependent on the particular group being studied. With respect to race, for example, recent studies show that African Americans benefit less than whites in outcomes ranging from health to criminal behavior (Harris et al. 2010; Piquero, MacDonald, and Parker 2002). Second, while strong ties to traditional marital expectations and the attendant roles and responsibilities among the foreign-born may insulate the first generation from crime, for the second generation, exposure to the American mainstream and subsequent shifts in the meaning of marriage itself may diminish the benefits of marriage. Absent empirical studies, these possibilities are speculative, but warrant consideration.

The aim of this research is to merge two important strands of criminological research–the immigration-crime nexus and life course criminology–to shed light on the perplexing pattern of

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findings of previous studies of immigrant offending. Specifically, we examine whether and to what extent marriage is related to offending among first and second generation immigrants. In doing so we not only advance our understanding of the immigration-crime nexus, but we also advance theoretical knowledge of life course criminology by examining the generalizability of key theoretical propositions to diverse racial/ethnic/immigrant groups.

Given the large influx of immigrants to the U.S. in recent decades, the question of how marriage affects the criminal trajectories of individuals who differ with respect to nativity status and country of origin has important implications for our understanding of the causes of offending and desistance in a rapidly changing demographic landscape. As policy makers continue to press for exclusionary immigration policies (e.g., deportation), a fuller understanding of the potential impact of these policies—particularly those that may result in family dissolution and the disruption of marriage markets in immigrant communities—becomes increasingly important. The aim of this research is to build theoretical and practical knowledge about marital patterns across immigrant generations and the relationship between marriage and offending across immigrant groups, for the purpose of informing sound immigration policy. We begin with an overview of the guiding theoretical framework for this work and a review of relevant literature before discussing the present study.

LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE ON OFFENDING

This research draws upon the strong tradition of the life course paradigm, which focuses on the development of behavior across the entire life span (i.e., childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) and on behavioral continuity and change over time. Rather than viewing individual development as static, the life course perspective considers the dynamic and malleable nature of human development. At the heart of this perspective is the notion that one's past does not

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determine his or her future. In other words, while the accumulation of negative experiences (e.g., delinquency, drug use, school failure) early in life may set in motion a trajectory of criminal behavior in adulthood, key life events or "turning points" such as marriage, employment, and family formation may serve as "triggers" that facilitate and sustain behavioral change and promote reductions in offending (Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993).

The (Good) Marriage Effect

One particularly potent life event or turning point appears to be marriage, with much empirical research demonstrating that individuals are much less likely to offend when they are married compared to when they are not married (see Bersani and Doherty 2013). This finding appears to be robust and consistent across gender (Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwbeerta 2009; Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002; Leverentz 2006; Uggen and Kruttschnitt 1998), race (Doherty and Ensminger 2013; Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995; Piquero et al. 2002), socio-historical context and place (Bersani et al. 2009; Blokland and Nieuwbeerta 2005; Farrington and West 1995; Knight, Osborn, and West 1977; Ouimet and Le Blanc 1996), in samples of high-risk offenders (Farrington and West 1995; Horney et al. 1995; Laub and Sampson 2003), as well as in general population samples (Bersani and Doherty 2013; King, Massoglia, and Macmillan 2007; Massoglia and Uggen 2007; Maume, Ousey, and Beaver 2005; Warr 1998). Stated simply, when an individual is in the state of marriage they are involved in significantly less crime. Moreover, recent research indicates that marriage has a causal impact on desistance from crime (King et al. 2007; Sampson et al. 2006).

The finding that the "deterrent capacities of 'good' and stable marriages are large and can constitute turning points in the criminal life course" is as King, Massoglia, and Macmillan (2007:36) recently noted, "the dominant paradigm in the study of marriage and crime."

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Recognizing important exceptions to the "good marriage effect" finding (see, for example, Giordano et al. 2002), the bulk of the research evidence indicates that marriage inhibits criminal offending because it promotes informal social control (Sampson and Laub 1990; Sampson and Laub 1993), alters routine activities that may be conducive to crime (Osgood and Lee 1993), separates individuals from criminogenic peers and places (Kirk 2012; Warr 1998) and/or functions to restrict opportunities for offending (Gottfredson 2005) (see Bersani and Doherty 2013, for a general discussion of the marriage effect mechanisms).

Although the protective effects of marriage on offending, and specifically desistance, have been well established, data limitations have resulted in much of this work being based on predominantly white, male samples. This inattention to demographic diversity is especially problematic, given that the opportunity and tendency to marry, as well as the influence of marriage on criminal behavior, have been found to vary along racial/ethnic and gender lines (Harris et al. 2010; King et al. 2007; Piquero et al. 2002). The inattention to immigrants in contemporary studies of the marriage-crime nexus is particularly problematic, as policies that inadvertently disrupt immigrant families and marriage markets (e.g., deportation) may have unintended negative consequences. Differential involvement in crime across racial/ethnic/ immigrant groups may be influenced by a lower likelihood of entering stable pro-social relationships, namely marriage, as well as by potentially differing connotations of what it means to be married. We begin with a brief review of the research examining rates of marriage within the U.S. population before exploring the factors thought to drive these patterns. While data restrictions prevent us from directly measuring many of these factors in the present study, these theoretical explanations form the foundation upon which we base our expectations that the

relationship between marriage and offending will differ between first and second generation immigrants.

In the 50 years since the publication of the controversial Moynihan report, which warned of the disintegration of African American families (Moynihan 1965), scholars have been interested in understanding patterns of marriage and family formation across racial groups. More recently, attention has turned to the implications of these patterns for criminal behavior and other social ills (Massey and Sampson 2009; Wilson 1987). Contemporary studies show that the rates of marriage vary across racial-ethnic groups with native-born whites displaying consistently higher rates of marriage than their African American counterparts (see e.g., Bennett, Bloom, and Craig 1989; Oropesa 1996). However, research that extends beyond the black-white dichotomy shows that marriage is not purely a "white" phenomenon; for example, rates of marriage among Hispanics have been found to mirror those of the native-born white population (Bean and Tienda 1987; Glick, Ruf, White, and Goldscheider 2006; Lloyd 2006; Oropesa 1996). Marriage rates in the immigrant population are characterized by more complexity; research shows important generational differences in marriage among immigrant groups, with rates being especially high among the foreign-born, but progressively lower among the second and later generations (Landale, Oropesa, and Bradatan 2006).

Structural and Cultural Explanations for Marriage Differences

Two broad types of explanations have been offered to account for observed differences in marriage rates. First, structural explanations suggest that both individual and macro-level structural factors, such as socioeconomic status and the waning viability of marriage markets in the wake of widespread deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s, have resulted in differential

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opportunities for marriage across racial and ethnic groups, with African Americans typically

facing the greatest obstacles to union formation (Lichter, LeClere, and McLaughlin 1991;

Oropesa, Lichter, and Anderson 1994; Wilson 1987). Economic models of union formation

characterize the decision to marry as one based on a rational cost-benefit analysis (Becker 1991;

Oppenheimer 1988). By this logic, "marriages are analogous to a trading partnership in which

men offer economic support through employment and women take on domestic responsibilities"

(Oropesa 1996:50). At minimum, for a male to be deemed suitable for marriage he must be

attached to the labor force or must demonstrate favorable employment prospects.

Wilson (1987) argued that one of most deleterious consequences of the

deindustrialization of U.S. cities and loss of manufacturing jobs in the 1960s and 1970s was the

substantial decline in the pool of marriageable men, which disproportionately affected the

African American community. As the proportion of employed men waned, men suitable for

marriage became a scarce commodity in American inner cities. The vast majority of research in

this area has built upon Wilson's thesis and thus, lower rates of marriage among African

Americans compared to whites have most often been attributed to the weaker marriage markets

available to the former.

Whereas the lack of suitable partners may be a driving force in low marriage rates among

some marginalized groups, research suggests that these macro-structural factors cannot fully

explain group differences in the prevalence of marriage. Higher levels of human capital and

women's economic independence may individually or collectively reduce the need and/or

desirability of marriage as well (Banks 2011; Lichter et al. 1991; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan

1995) In other words, as women's economic dependence upon men wanes, giving them greater

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leverage in negotiating whom they deem a worthy partner, their entry into marriage may be delayed or avoided entirely (Oropesa et al. 1994).

A second line of reasoning aimed at explaining group differences in rates of marriage focuses on cultural factors, such as familism, religiosity and kinship ties, which may not only influence the prevalence of marriage in some groups but may condition the meaning of marriage itself (Cherlin 1992). Whereas "both race and access to economic resources are important in determining expectations of and pathways to family formation" (Glick et al. 2006:1392), a growing literature underscores the importance of culture in explanations of marriage across groups, which are most often expressed in terms of imported traditions and shared beliefs about marriage and family (Cherlin 1992) and the variable emphasis placed on conjugal versus consanguineous (e.g., kinship) bonds. Oropesa, Lichter, and Anderson (1994), for example, have argued that black families are more likely to rely upon extended family for support, often prioritizing kinship bonds ahead of conjugal bonds. In other words, the observed retreat from marriage among African Americans "reflects a traditional black 'cultural repertoire' of reliance on extended consanguineous bonds over conjugal bonds, reinforced by a larger cultural shift toward individualism" (Oropesa et al. 1994: 889). Thus, the cornerstone of cultural explanations for group differences in marriage is that rates of marriage will be higher among groups for which the nuclear family occupies a more central role in the social life of the community.

Beyond the Black/White Dichotomy: Structural and Cultural Influences on Marriage across Ethnicity and Immigrant Status

To date, much of the research on marriage rates has drawn comparisons between blacks and whites; substantially less attention has been given to differences by ethnicity and immigrant status. The small body of empirical work examining ethnic variation in marriage rates shows that

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marital patterns are not easily mapped on to white or black patterns (Bean and Tienda 1987; Lloyd 2006; Oropesa et al. 1994). For instance, structural explanations are challenged by the finding that despite comparable levels of socioeconomic disadvantage between African Americans and Hispanics—particularly Mexicans who make up the largest proportion of first and second generation immigrants in the U.S. (U.S. Bureau 2010)—rates of marriage among Hispanics resemble more closely those of non-Hispanic whites, or Anglos. Recently, using a sample of 745 Latinas from the NLSY79, Lloyd (2006) found that foreign-born Latina and Anglo women have virtually identical marriage trajectories. These similarities persist in spite of higher levels of unemployment and lower earnings among Hispanics (Bean and Tienda 1987; Lloyd 2006). Disaggregation of the "Hispanic" group by country of origin reveals a more complicated story; whereas Puerto Ricans have marriage rates similar to their black peers, Mexicans appear to have marriage rates similar to their white peers (Oropesa et al. 1994).

Although even less attention has been given to marital patterns among immigrant groups, it is likely that both incentives and opportunities to marry differ across generations. Immigrant groups have unique economic incentives to marry, such as the goal of obtaining citizenship. Moreover, labor force attachment may vary across immigrant generations, with first generation immigrants who came to the U.S. seeking economic mobility more likely to be employed (and thus, "marriageable") than subsequent generations (Glick et al. 2006). In the aforementioned Oropesa, Lichter, and Anderson (1994) study, for example, the authors found that the importance of structural factors for marriage waned over immigrant generations, suggesting that the common practice of "treating Mexican Americans as a monolithic entity" may "mask[s] substantial *generational* heterogeneity in the marriage process" (1994:904; emphasis added).

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Cultural explanations for variable marriage rates are also challenged when examined among immigrant groups. For instance, although the importance of and reliance on extended family for support is strong in many ethnic and immigrant families, the marital bond is also very strong (Oropesa and Landale 2004). The concept of familism, or familismo, is central in many ethnic and immigrant cultures and refers to the emphasis "on family cohesiveness, interdependence, loyalty, and responsibility to care for one another" (Behnke, MacDermid, Coltrane, Parke, Duffy et al. 2008:1046). Although most often associated with Latin American cultures—and with Mexican culture in particular—the heightened presence of "felt collectivistic obligations to the family" has been observed across diverse ethnic groups, including Indochinese, Haitians, Jamaicans, and West Indians (Rumbaut 1997b:35). Values and belief systems promoting traditional gender roles with a strong orientation toward motherhood are especially strong among those of Mexican ancestry (Oropesa et al. 1994). As (Oropesa 1996:59-60) argues, "marriage is often portrayed as an affirmation of womanhood for Mexican American girls. These girls were traditionally socialized to believe that marriage 'is part of God's plan' and should be their 'major life objective'".

Notably, this greater sense of obligation to the family—both immediate and extended—is often juxtaposed with "the pull of individualistic values in the American milieu," making it a focal point of the discourse on variation in marriage rates across race-ethnicity and immigrant status (Rumbaut 1997b:35). In an effort to explain generational differences in outcomes, scholars have turned to theories of assimilation and acculturation suggesting that as immigrants become increasingly enmeshed in the norms and values of the host country, they will shed the distinctive traits of their home countries and adopt those of the receiving country's middle class (Gordon 1964). According to this perspective, adherence to pronuptial normative beliefs may shift over

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generations, as immigrants become increasingly assimilated into American culture. Thus far, the handful of studies examining generational differences in marriage and pronuptiality lend credence to the assimilation argument. For example, while Oropesa observed high support for marriage among Mexican Americans (compared to non-Latino whites and Puerto-Ricans), net of socioeconomic factors, family background, demographic behavior, or attitudes, she also observed a significant interaction between nativity and ethnicity—foreign born Mexican Americans were most likely to adhere to the marriage ideal (i.e., higher marriage rates) compared to U.S.-born Mexican Americans (Oropesa 1996: 60). This waning adherence to pronuptialism across immigrant generations has been found in other studies as well (see e.g., Landale et al. 2006; Oropesa and Landale 2004). In light of this finding, the authors warn that there may be a declining significance of or retreat from marriage among the children of immigrants resulting from exposure to the cultural and economic environment of the United States. That is, immigrant groups may import certain cultural attributes from their home countries that are more or less proscriptive of marriage and family formation, but these proscriptions are likely to change as immigrants grow increasingly distanced from the cultural orientations of their home countries and further entrenched in the American mainstream.

Overall, research suggests that the prevailing explanations for different marriage rates across racial groups do not fully explain ethnic and/or immigrant differences in marriage. Marital patterns among immigrants in particular seem to be driven by unique structural and cultural factors that do not map well onto observed racial differences. Whereas an explicit test of the cultural and structural forces that shape rates of marriage across groups is beyond the scope of the present study, implicit in these variable marriage rates is the possibility that marriage itself may hold a different meaning for immigrant groups. Consequently, the factors that give rise to

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different propensities to marry among immigrants may also influence the relationship between marriage and criminal behavior. We turn next to prior research that has found such contingencies in the marriage effect.

CONTINGENCIES IN THE EFFECT OF MARRIAGE ON OFFENDING

Whereas a growing research literature reveals important group differences in the incidence and prevalence of marriage, an unanswered question is whether these differences may give rise to contingencies in the effect of marriage on offending. In other words, does the *relationship* between marriage and offending differ across groups?

To date, few empirical studies have considered the conditioning effects of demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity or immigrant status) on the marriage-crime nexus. However, variation in the incidence and meaning of marriage across race, ethnicity and nativity status suggests that the benefits of marriage may not be consistent for the entire population. We summarize the extant literature on variable benefits of marriage across subgroups before turning to our analysis.

Race-Ethnicity and the Marriage Effect

To date, research on the relationship between marriage and crime by race-ethnicity offers mixed findings. Despite a lower likelihood of being married, black men have still been found to benefit from marriage (Doherty and Ensminger 2013; Horney et al. 1995; Piquero et al. 2002). However, research also shows that blacks may reap significantly fewer benefits from marriage than whites. For example, in their longitudinal study of more than 500 parolees over seven years, Piquero, MacDonald, and Parker (2002) found that while marriage was associated with a reduced rate of nonviolent offending for both black and white parolees, marriage was only related to a reduction in violent offending among white parolees. Speculating on the possible reasons for the

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crime-specific nature of the marriage effect observed among black parolees, they argue that race might be better understood as a "social construct," which may "serve as a proxy for social events or negative 'turning points'" over the life course (Piquero et al. 2002:666). Because blacks are more likely to reside in areas of concentrated disadvantage, the social capital received from social events like marriage may hold less salience. That is, the benefits of marriage may be unable overcome the detriments of deleterious environments. More recently, using data from AddHealth Harris, Lee and DeLeone (2010) found that, with respect to high-risk behaviors (e.g., drinking and drug use) and general health outcomes (e.g., physical activity and body mass index) early marriage had a more potent protective effect for whites than blacks. For example, whereas marriage was associated with significantly lower marijuana use among white men, no such effect was found for African American men. Although, at present, the extent to which this pattern holds among ethnic groups is unknown, these studies suggest that race conditions the relationship between marriage and offending in important ways.

Immigrant Status and the Marriage Effect

At present, no studies of which we are aware have investigated differences in the influence of marriage on criminal desistance by immigration status. The research conducted on racial differences in the "good marriage effect" suggests that residence in areas of concentrated disadvantage may explain why marriage is less salient for non-whites, yet this finding yields no clear path to understanding how the marriage effect may influence offending among immigrants, especially in light of the paradoxical findings regarding the protective effect of immigrant status in disadvantaged environments (Harris 1999; Morenoff and Astor 2006). Despite living in resource deprived, criminogenic neighborhoods, immigrants remaining relatively crime free compared to their similarly situated peers.

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Absent explicit tests of this variation we turn to the broader literature on generational differences in offending to inform our expectation that both nativity status and immigrant generation will condition the marriage-crime nexus. Although, much of this literature has been conducted with samples of adolescents, this research suggests that protective and risk factors may operate differently for individuals born in the U.S. and abroad. For example, in their examination of the assimilation-crime nexus, Morenoff and Astor found using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHCDN), that the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and violence was conditioned by immigrant status, such that more assimilated youth experienced more detrimental effects. Using the same data DiPietro and McGloin (2012), found that first generation immigrants were more vulnerable to deviant peer influence than their native born counterparts, a finding they attribute to immigrants more pressing need to "fit in" with their American peers. It is possible that, by contrast, conventionalizing institutions such as marriage may similarly exert different effects on the criminal behavior of foreign-born individuals.

Gender and the Marriage Effect

Although not the main focus of this research, gender marks another characteristic that shapes the relationship between marriage and offending. It is well known that both criminal behavior and selection into marriage are highly gendered processes (Giordano et al. 2002; King et al. 2007). Because men exhibit significantly greater criminal tendencies women are much more likely to "marry down" or marry a criminal spouse (Laub and Sampson 2003). Insofar as marriage may serve as a source of informal social control, it is possible that it may be more salient for men than women. The limited empirical research examining gender differences in the marriage effect provide mixed evidence. While much of the research finds that marriage

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promotes desistance from crime for men and women, the effects appear to be weaker for women and often dependent upon crime type (Bersani et al. 2009; Doherty and Ensminger 2013; Giordano et al. 2002; Uggen and Kruttschnitt 1998). In their thoughtful study, King et al. (2007) used a propensity score matching approach to examine gender contingencies in the so-called marriage effect and found that, controlling for individual's likelihood of marrying, men enjoy relatively greater benefits from marriage than women. The authors liken this finding to the fact that men are "apt to marry partners with less-deviant histories, thus increasing the conventionalizing influence of marriage" (King et al. 2007:55). Yet, research by Leverentz (2006) reveals that regardless of whether or not women marry up or down, marriage (and cohabitation) can be beneficial and promote processes of desistance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Whereas a growing body of research generally supports the importance of marriage in shaping criminal trajectories, gaps in the literature preclude a comprehensive understanding of the particular contexts or groups for which this so-called "good marriage effect" may be more or less relevant. First, with some important exceptions, much of the contemporary work on the effect of marriage has relied on data gathered several decades ago. Sampson and Laub's (1993; Laub and Sampson 2003) research using data collected by the Glueck's in the 1930s, for example, forms the foundation for much of the insights on the linkages among marriage, offending and desistance. While Laub and Sampson (2003) suggest that their findings are not bound in time, as King and colleagues (2007:36), recently noted, the period in the 1950s and 1960s, during which study respondents came of age and got married "preceded the 'divorce revolution' of the 1970s that reshaped the nature of marriage, perhaps increasing the importance of selection and decreasing the significance of postmarital socialization" (see also, Giordano et

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al. 2002). As a result, the positive effects of getting married may not hold among those maturing in contemporary times. Importantly however, research conducted on samples of Dutch offenders finds that marriage plays an even greater role among individuals in contemporary marriages, decreasing crime more strongly today than it did early in the 20th century (Beijers, Bijleveld, and van Poppel 2012; Bersani et al. 2009). The extent to which this finding replicates in the U.S. is still unknown.

Second, overwhelmingly, research on marriage effects has been both ethnocentric and androcentric, imposing white male experiences with marriage on women and minorities. As a result, research rarely addresses questions concerning whether and how the influence of marriage on criminal behavior might vary across gender or race-ethnicity (some notable exceptions include: Bersani et al. 2009; King et al. 2007). People marry for different reasons and the meaning of marriage likely differs across cultures. This inattention to group variation in the effects of marriage on criminal behavior limits the generalizabiltity of prior studies, and calls into question the viability of claims that marriage is necessarily "good" for everyone.

Finally, the finding that the foreign-born, across diverse racial-ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, have lower criminal propensities than native born Americans has been so well founded that it has been deemed an "emerging scholarly consensus" (Lee and Martinez 2009), yet scholars are only beginning to understand the mechanisms linking immigrant status and criminality. To date, no studies of which we are aware have considered whether marriage plays a role in patterns of offending among immigrants. Whereas the importance of family structure (e.g., two parent households) in explaining the immigration-crime nexus has been born out in aggregate level studies (see for example, Ousey and Kubrin 2009), research has yet to examine whether the protective benefits of marriage extend to immigrants at the individual-level. Given

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the extant body of research documenting differential opportunities for and benefits of marriage across racial/ethnic/immigrant groups (Cherlin 1992; Glick et al. 2006; King et al. 2007; Oropesa 1996), we cannot assume a beneficial marriage effect across all individuals.

The primary goal of this research is to contribute to the growing body of literature on the "marriage effect" by conducting a longitudinal study of patterns of both continuity and change in offending over the life course. More specifically, we aim to shed light on the questions of whether and to what extent group heterogeneity exists in the *effects* of marriage on criminal offending. We hope to expand on the extant literature even further by affording special attention to multiple sources of heterogeneity across immigrant groups. Specifically, we disaggregate the immigrant population by generational status to determine whether and to what extent these characteristics condition the trajectories of offending across the life course. To this end, we merge two important domains of criminological inquiry: the life course perspective and the immigration-crime nexus. We use an advanced statistical methodology—Hierarchical Linear Modeling—which can accommodate the nested structure inherent to data containing repeated observations of the same person over time. We turn now to the present study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Although immigration has reached the forefront of scholarly attention in recent years, criminological research is still lagging behind the need to understand the individual-level mechanisms linking immigrant status to offending behavior. Contemporary immigration research has focused more often on the community, an emphasis that Dinovitzer, Hagan and Levi (2009) attribute to the longstanding legacy of the Chicago School. The driving force behind the current research is to address this notable gap in the empirical literature by uniting two important bodies

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of research: life course of offending and the immigration-crime nexus. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the influence of marriage on immigrant offending trajectories from adolescence to young adulthood. We attempt to advance this line of inquiry by 1) focusing on the patterns of behavior (i.e., marriage and offending) among immigrants from adolescence into adulthood; and 2) affording special attention to the influence of marriage on persistence and desistance from crime among the foreign-born (first generation immigrants) and the children of the foreign-born (second generation immigrants). Specifically, we ask:

> *RQ 1*: *Are second generation immigrants entering into marriage at a slower pace than*
>   *their first generation immigrant peers?*
>
> *RQ 2: What role does marriage play in understanding immigrant offending?*
>
> *RQ 3*: *Is the relationship between marriage and offending affected by immigrant*
>   *generation or country/region of birth (i.e., nativity)?*

DATA, MEASURES AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

DATA

We utilize 13 waves of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 survey (NLSY97), a representative sample of people living in the U.S. who were 12 to 16 years of age during the initial survey round in 1997 (Center for Human Resource Research 2005; CHRR). Youth are interviewed on an annual basis beginning in 1997 and complete a self-administered survey that collects information on sensitive topics, including antisocial behavior, crime/delinquency and arrest. This dataset also includes a wealth of information on family dynamics, structural factors, and individual characteristics.

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The initial sample size of the NLSY97 was 8,984 boys and girls. The largest portion of respondents (n = 6,748) comprised the general sample, which was designed to be representative of the general U.S. population born between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1984. The remaining portion of the sample (n = 2,236) was an over-sample of Hispanic and African American youth living in the United States during the initial survey, who were born during the same period as the general sample (CHRR 2005). Overall, the NLSY97 has a high retention rate; 84.2% of the total sample completed the most recent survey round in 2009. The retention rate was slightly higher among the supplemental over-sample (87.0%) compared to the general sample (83.2%). The retention of respondents is attributable to the fact that respondents never completely "drop out" of the survey. Those who miss a survey wave are continually contacted each subsequent survey year (see the NLSY97 user guide at NLSinfo.org for more information regarding sampling, survey strategy, and retention).

Previous research aimed at understanding individual level predictors of criminal involvement among immigrants is limited, in part, because of the lack of available longitudinal data with which to study patterns of immigrant offending. The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), for example, includes a wealth of immigration information but lacks detailed information on offending. At the same time, many data sources that are rich in crime data lack information on immigration status. The NLSY97 data are particularly well suited for examining the relationship between marriage and offending among immigrants for a number of reasons: First, a key feature of this dataset is its prospective, longitudinal nature, which tracks yearly measures of arrest and relationship transitions. Moreover, these data cover the period of the life course spanning the transition from adolescence through young adulthood, and as a result, capture both the peak years of involvement in crime and the period in which most people

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transition to marriage. Second, though the NLSY97 is a general population sample, respondents report a significant amount of crime, collectively amassing more than 10,000 arrests over the duration of the study. Additionally, many respondents have made relationship transitions in the study period, with more than a third of the respondents married by the most recent wave of data collection. Finally, these data contain a sizeable proportion of first and second generation immigrants, allowing for a comparison of the marriage effect across immigrant generations.

Variable Definitions

Immigration Status. Immigration status was calculated using information on youths' place of birth as well as the place of birth of his/her biological parents and grandparents.[i] Based on this information, youth were classified as one of the following: native-born (youth and both biological parents were born in the U.S.); first generation immigrant (youth and at least one biological parent were born outside the U.S.); and second generation immigrant (youth was born in the U.S. and at least one biological parent was born outside the U.S.). Of the 8,984 youth surveyed in the first wave, immigrant status could be calculated for 8,586 youth (96% of the full sample) of which there were 6,998 native-born youth (n = 4,007 non-Hispanic whites; n = 2,101 non-Hispanic blacks; n = 827 Hispanics; n = 63 non-Hispanic other race), 590 first generation immigrants, and 998 second generation immigrants.[ii]

A series of means tests were conducted to compare the 462 youth whose immigration status could not be determined with those remaining in the sample. On average, youth who were dropped from the analysis appear to comprise a selectively more advantaged groups as they were significantly older, less likely to have both parents without at least a high school degree equivalent, more likely to grow up in an intact family, came from households with fewer family members, and were less likely to reside in disadvantaged households.

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Dependent Variables. Information pertaining to contact with the criminal justice system was gathered in each survey round. Respondents were asked about their history of arrest for offenses other than minor traffic violations. If arrested, they were also asked to report the number of times they had been arrested since the date of the last interview. Over the thirteen waves, more than 10,000 arrests were reported, with 2,890 respondents reporting at least one arrest. More than half of those with an arrest history reported multiple arrest experiences (n = 1,670). When broken down by native-born and immigrant subgroups, 1,280 (32%) whites reported ever being arrested (n = 719, 56% of offenders reporting multiple arrests); 842 (40%) blacks reported ever being arrested (n = 521, 62% of offenders reporting multiple arrests); 321 (39%) Hispanics reported ever being arrested (n = 191, 60% of offenders reporting multiple arrests); 135 (23%) first generation immigrants reported ever being arrested (n = 75, 56% of offenders with multiple arrests); and 312 (31%) second generation immigrants reported ever being arrested (n = 164, 53% of offenders reporting multiple arrests).

Marriage. Relationship status is available for all respondents beginning at 15 years of age. Each year, respondents reported whether they were 1) never married and not cohabiting; 2) never married but cohabiting; 3) married; 4) divorced; 5) legally separated; or 6) widowed. Marriage is time-varying, capturing relationship transitions in each wave; when an individual is married, they are coded 1 (0 otherwise) that survey year and in subsequent years. Consistent with general population trends, just over a third (38.3%) of the sample had ever been married by 2009, when respondents were between 25 and 29 years of age.

Independent Variables and Controls. Family background factors play an important role in understanding both marriage and offending. We include four structural characteristics measured during the first wave of data collection: family structure, family size, parental education, and

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household disadvantage. Family structure is coded as 1 = intact, living with both biological parents; 0 = otherwise. Just under half of the youth lived in an intact family at wave 1 (48.7%). Family size captures the number of individuals living in the household who are 18 years of age or younger ($\bar{x} = 2.47$). Parental education is coded into 3 mutually exclusive categories and captures the highest level of education received by either parent: neither parent graduated from high school (17.3%), at least one parent graduated from high school (29.2%), and at least one parent attained some post-secondary education (46.6%). Finally we tap into household disadvantage by combining responses to five questions including: household income below $7,500.00, living below poverty threshold, living in a dilapidated neighborhood (interviewer coded), experienced a lack of basic electricity/heat needs, and a history of living through hard times (i.e., in a homeless shelter). Because of a significant amount of missing data on one or more of these items, we code youth as having a history of living in disadvantage if they experienced any one of these items. A total of 1,446 youth meet this criterion (17.7% of the sample).

Because socioeconomic structural position is strongly linked to marital opportunities (Wilson 1987), we include a measure of respondent's net-worth at 20 years of age. This variable was constructed by researchers at the Center for Human Resource Research by compiling information across various survey rounds when individual respondents were aged 20 (see NLSinfo.org for more detailed information regarding the construction of this measure). Respondents can have a negative net-worth if their liabilities are greater than their assets ($\bar{x} = $ 14,657; range -197,500 to 600,000).

We control for a number of individual characteristics including gender, age, and criminal propensity. The sample is equally split across gender with 51.1% male (coded 1 = male, 0 =

female). Average age of the youth in 1997 is 14 years of age (range 12 to 16 years). We include a measure of criminal propensity ('at risk') to account for the fact that some individuals may be selectively more likely to be involved in crime and less likely to marry. Youth who reported the onset of at least two of the following behaviors at 13 years of age or younger were coded 1 = at-risk: sexual intercourse, drug use, arrest. Four-percent of the sample (n = 305) met this criterion.

First Generation Immigrant Controls. Finally, we control for a number of variables important when assessing patterns of behavior among first generation immigrants, including age at migration, language acculturation, and place of birth. The age at which immigrants first migrate to the U.S. varies dramatically, ranging from infancy to 17 years of age ($\bar{x}$ = 7.0 years). Following Perlmann (1997), we identify the 1.5 generation by coding respondents as 1 = migrated in infancy to 5 years of age; 0 = migrated at 6 years of age or older. Just under half of the first generation immigrants (n = 208; 42%) migrated at 5 years of age or younger. Respondents were given the option to take the survey in English or Spanish. Youth who opted to take the interview in Spanish were coded 1 on the Spanish interview variable (0 = English; $\bar{x}$ = .1).

We also include a control for country of birth.[iii] Ideally, an analysis of immigrant differences by birth place would include a detailed account of the specific country of origin; however, small sample sizes in these data preclude such a comparison of immigrant subgroups. However, because a substantial portion of the first generation immigrant sample migrated from Mexico, we include a control for Mexican origin (n = 208; 35%). A sizeable group of first generation immigrants were born in: Asia (n = 67; 11.5%); the Caribbean (n = 116; 19.4%); and Central America (n = 64; 11%). The four largest groups represented here correspond to the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States (Gerstle and Mollenkopf 2001).

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Our analysis proceeds in two steps. First we examine trends in marriage across immigrant and native-born groups to assess whether, on average, second generation immigrants are marrying at different rates compared to their first generation immigrant peers. To do so, we plot the percentage of youth in each immigrant and native-born subsample married in each wave over the course of the study. If there were a retreat from marriage among second generation immigrants, we would expect to see lower rates of marriage for these youth compared to their foreign-born counterparts.

Second, in line with previous research examining the relationship between marriage and offending (see e.g., Bersani et al. 2009; Horney et al. 1995; Laub and Sampson 2003; Piquero et al. 2002) we use a longitudinal regression modeling strategy (Generalized Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) version 6.08) to assess changes in the prevalence and frequency of arrest as individuals make relationship transitions (i.e., get married). Because annual observations of arrest and relationship status are 'nested' or clustered within individuals (each respondents can have up to 13 different observation points), we use a multilevel modeling strategy rather than the traditional, static ordinary least squares regression approach. Clustered data negatively influence statistical models by resulting in incorrect estimates of the standard errors, and increasing the likelihood of concluding that a statistically significant relationship exists when it does not (e.g., a type 1 error or a false positive). This occurs because individuals are more similar to themselves than they are to other individuals, and because observations closer in time are more similar than those that occur further apart (Osgood 2009). Additionally, because some respondents are missing data in certain waves (i.e., variation in the number of observations) and there is variation

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in the time intervals between observations for individuals (i.e., variation in the spacing of observations) the data are not balanced. HLM is flexible and can accommodate these characteristics (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Snijders and Bosker 1999).

These models provide an additional benefit for examining change longitudinally. When examining the effect of relationship transitions, such as single to married status, one must address the likelihood that some individuals are simply more prone to marry than others. This differential tendency to marry (e.g., selection effect) can be traced to a host of sociodemographic background influences (parental marriage stability, socioeconomic status, parental education). As a result, research that finds a marriage effect when comparing the offending rates of married individuals to non-married individuals may simply be picking up on inherent individual differences across persons rather than a true marriage effect (King et al. 2007). Thus, for this research, we use an analytic strategy that focuses on within-individual change. In these models, individuals act as their own statistical control, eliminating the possibility that stable individual characteristics (i.e., the tendency to marry) account for the observed relationship between marriage and arrest (see Osgood 2009). In our case, average offending levels for a respondent when married are compared to average offending levels for that same respondent when single.

We run a series of separate models for immigrant and native-born subsamples to examine the relationship between marriage and offending within each demographic group and then compare the effect sizes of marriage across groups. With these analyses we investigate whether and to what extent we observe a "good marriage effect" among immigrant (and minority) samples. To do so, we examine offending behavior over time using a two level hierarchical model. Raudenbush and Bryk (2002:183; see also Horney et al. 1995) suggest that an effective method of modeling change over time is to decompose the time-varying covariates into two

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parts. First, the difference from the individual specific mean in each time period (group-mean centering) models the *within-individual* change. By group-mean centering time-varying covariates, we control for the correlation between these variables and the mean level of offending (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Second, we control for individual differences in the overall proportion of time married by including an aggregate measure of married in our equation. This procedure allows us to model the *between-individual* differences in the overall level of these characteristics on offending. By including these aggregates at level 2, we reduce the possibility of obtaining biased estimates arising from the likelihood that individuals vary by their average length of marriage (Osgood 2009; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

Our dependent variables take two forms: the prevalence of an arrest (ever / never arrested in each year) and the frequency of arrest (count of the number of arrests in each year). To account for the non-normal distribution of our dependent variables we use the Bernoulli (prevalence of arrest) and Poisson (frequency of arrest) extensions of HLM which allow for the inclusion of an overdispersion parameter. The addition of the overdispersion parameter has been shown to result in more accurate significance tests compared to standard models (Osgood 2000). Change or growth in offending is measured at level 1 and includes repeated measures of offending for individuals in years (age). We present the equations for the Poisson models (Bernoulli model equations available upon request). The level 1, within-individual equation is:

$$\eta_{it} = \log(\lambda_{ij})$$
$$\eta_{it} = \pi_{0i} + \pi_{1i}(age)_{it} + \pi_{2i}(age^2)_{it} + \pi_{3i}(marriage)_{it}$$

where η_{it} is the log of the offense rate for individual i at age t. To capture the nonlinear nature of the age-crime relationship the equation includes a quadratic function of age (age_{it}, age_{it}^2).

Substantively, the linear age term represents the instantaneous rate of growth for each individual,

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while the quadratic age term represents the curvature or acceleration in each individual's growth trajectory (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Singer and Willett 2003). The level 1 within-individual marriage measure captures the time-varying effect of marriage on offending (the transition from non-married to married). The subscript i attached to variables at level 1 indicates that these variables can take on different values for each individual.

Individual level characteristics are entered into the equation at level 2. Coefficient effects at this level indicate how much variation in the intercept (i.e., initial offending level) is explained by between-individual characteristics. The level 2, between-individual equations are:

$$\pi_{0i} = \beta_{00} + \beta_{01}(controls)_i + \beta_{02}(\overline{marriage})_i + r_{0i}$$

$$\pi_{1i} = \beta_{00} + r_{1i}$$

$$\pi_{2i} = \beta_{00}$$

where variation in the log-odds of an offense at the age coded as zero (π_{0i}) is explained by an array of sociodemographic background and individual controls and the aggregate measure of marriage. The error term r_{0i} indicates that the probability of an offense (π_{0i}) is allowed to vary between individuals.

RESULTS

The contexts in which individuals develop play an important role in understanding behavioral trajectories over the life course. We begin by comparing group mean values on a variety of individual and family background measures captured at baseline (1997) across immigrant and native-born subgroups. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

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With respect to demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender) no significant group differences emerge across subgroups. We do find significant group differences in the prevalence of "at-risk" youth. Specifically, in these data the prevalence of at-risk individuals is higher among more assimilated generations, with the smallest proportion found among first generation immigrants ($\bar{x} = .01$ at-risk) and a greater proportion found among second generation immigrants ($\bar{x} = .03$ at-risk), although this difference is not statistically significant. Among native-born youth, black ($\bar{x} = .05$ at-risk) and Hispanic ($\bar{x} = .06$ at-risk) youth have the highest proportion of at-risk individuals across the five subgroups; the differences between these groups and the immigrant subsamples are statistically significant.

In these data, first generation immigrants reside in households with educational and economic deficits; compared to their second generation immigrant and non-immigrant peers, first generation immigrants are significantly more likely to have parents with less than 12 years of education (equivalent to no high school degree), and significantly less likely to have parents with 12 years of schooling (the high school degree equivalent). Notably, the parental educational attainment pattern documented in these data comports with evidence indicating that immigrants are characterized by great socioeconomic diversity. While first generation immigrants cluster in the lowest levels of parental education, they also cluster in the highest level of parental education (those with parents who attained some post-secondary education). Notably, second generation immigrants' parents have the second highest rates of post-secondary education, followed by whites. First generation, second generation, and Hispanics have comparable rates of disadvantage. On average, whites are least likely to live in disadvantaged contexts, while blacks are most likely.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics at Baseline (1997) across Immigrant and Native-born Subsamples

	First Generation (n=590)		Second Generation (n=998)		White, Non-Hispanic (n=4,007)		Black, Non-Hispanic (n=2,101)		Hispanic (n=827)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Background Characteristics										
Age	14.04	1.41	13.93	1.40	13.95	1.39	14.02	1.40	13.95	1.40
Male Subject	.48	--	.51	--	.52	--	.50	--	.54	--
Parent Education (<12th grade)	.40	--	.31	--	.08	--	.18	--	.29	--
Parent Education (12th grade)	.14	--	.21	--	.29	--	.38	--	.28	--
Parent Education (>12th grade)	.34	--	.42	--	.60	--	.31	--	.35	--
Intact family	.54	--	.63	--	.58	--	.25	--	.45	--
Household size	2.79	1.45	2.58	1.29	2.26	1.11	2.67	1.50	2.55	1.27
Early Onset Risky Behavior	.01	--	.03	--	.03	--	.05	--	.06	--
Disadvantage any item	.21	--	.19	--	.09	--	.31	--	.21	--
Income at Age 20	10578.27	24571.91	19148.31	54905.69	15943.57	45372.25	10852.12	32116.60	15677.06	48358.58
Age at Migration	6.97	4.31	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spanish Interview (subject)	.11	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Spanish Interview (parent)	.39	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dissonant Acculturation	.27	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Looking at the composition of families (e.g., family structure and mean family size) we find that the first generation, second generation and whites are significantly more likely than their peers to live with both biological parents. Comparatively fewer blacks and Hispanics live in intact homes. In addition, whites are significantly more likely to grow-up in smaller households with an average of 2.3 individuals 18 years of age or younger, while first generation immigrants reside in the largest households, with an average of 2.8 individuals 18 years of age or younger. Across successive immigrant generations, the average size of households declines.

MARRIAGE TRENDS

We plot the yearly prevalence of ever married and currently married for the five immigrant and native-born subgroups in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. Consistent with previous research, blacks have the lowest rates of marriage, a pattern that persists across time (statistically significant differences from 1998 through 2009). Overall, rates of marriage are indistinguishable among the remaining immigrant and native-born groups until the final years of the survey when white marriage rates rise above their first and second generation immigrant peers (statistically significant differences beginning in the 2006 wave). By the final wave of data in 2009, when respondents were 25 to 29 years of age, just over 46% of whites, 40% of second generation immigrants and Hispanics, 37% of first generation immigrants, and 22% of blacks had ever been married. Notice that the current marriage estimates in Figure 2 differ slightly from the ever married estimates in Figure 1, indicating some degree of marital dissolution (i.e., divorce, separation, widowhood) in the sample. Differences between currently married and ever married are similar across all groups except for blacks who, despite lower marriage rates, have a lower risk of dissolution up to 2009.

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Figure 1. Prevalence of Marriage across Immigrant and Native-born Subsamples (1997 – 2009).
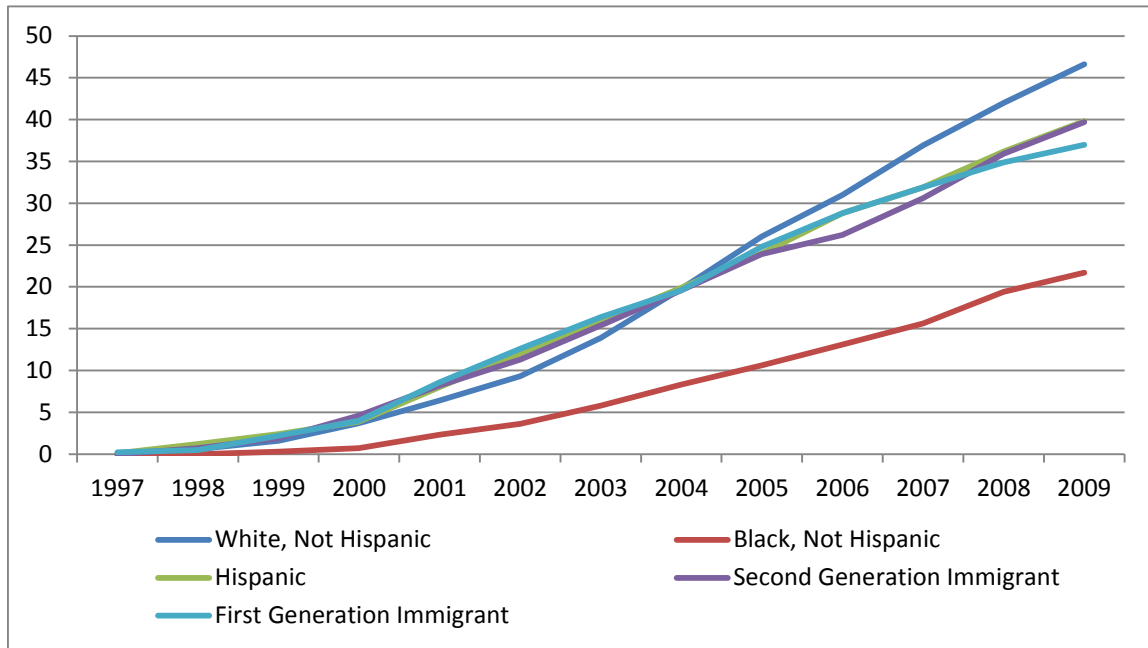
Figure 2. Current Marital Status across Immigrant and Native-born Subsamples (1997 – 2009).
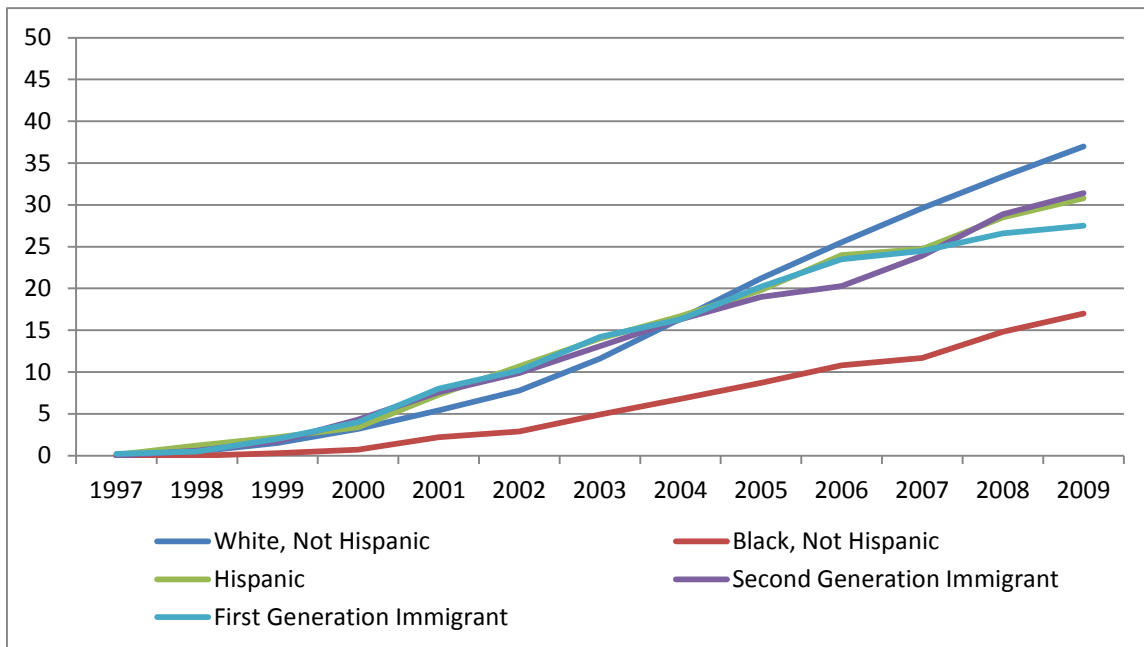
Patterns of arrest are plotted from 1997 to 2009 in Figures 3 and 4. Prevalence estimates capture the percentage of youth arrested since the date of the last interview in each survey year. In nearly every year, first generation immigrants report the lowest incidence of arrest when compared to other groups (see Figure 3), which aligns with previous research (Bersani 2012; Morenoff and Astor 2006; Powell, Perreira, and Harris 2010; Sampson and Laub 2005). Turning next to differences in the average number of arrests among those ever arrested within each subsample, we find no significant differences across racial/ethnic/immigrant subsamples (presented in Figure 4). In other words, while we observe group differences in the proportion of individuals who have ever been arrested, the frequency of arrest appears to be relatively consistent. This pattern is comparable to criminal career research finding few differences in offending frequency active offenders (Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein 2007).

Figure 3. Prevalence of Arrest across Immigrant and Native-born Subsamples (1997 – 2009).

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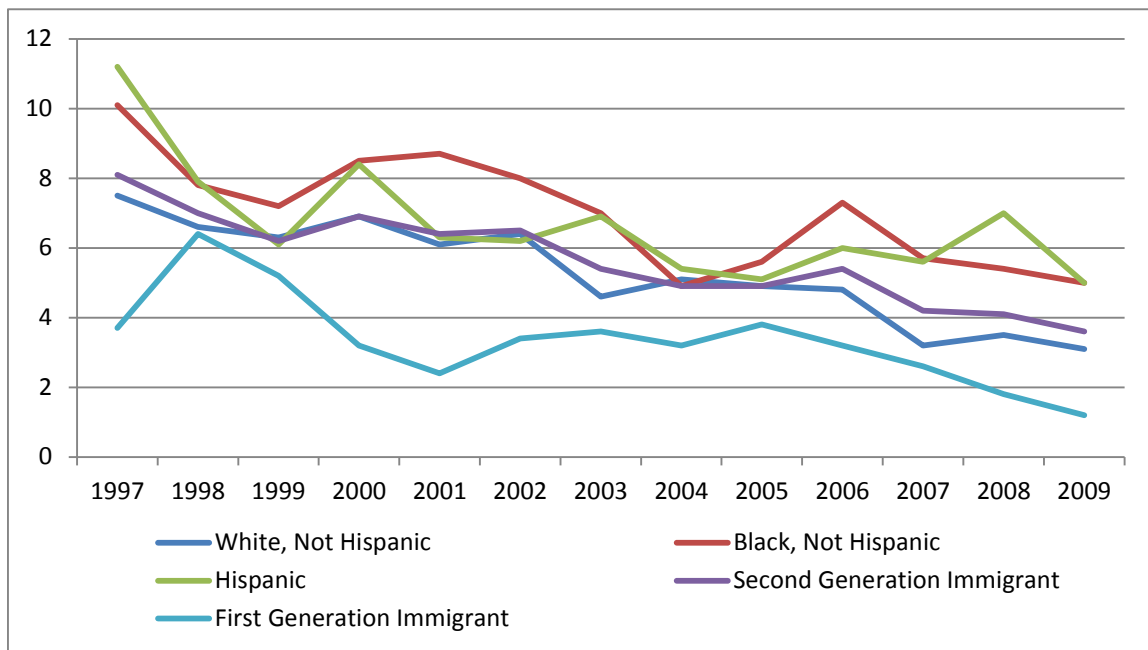
Figure 4. Frequency of Arrests for Arrestees across Immigrant and Native-born Subsamples (1997 – 2009).
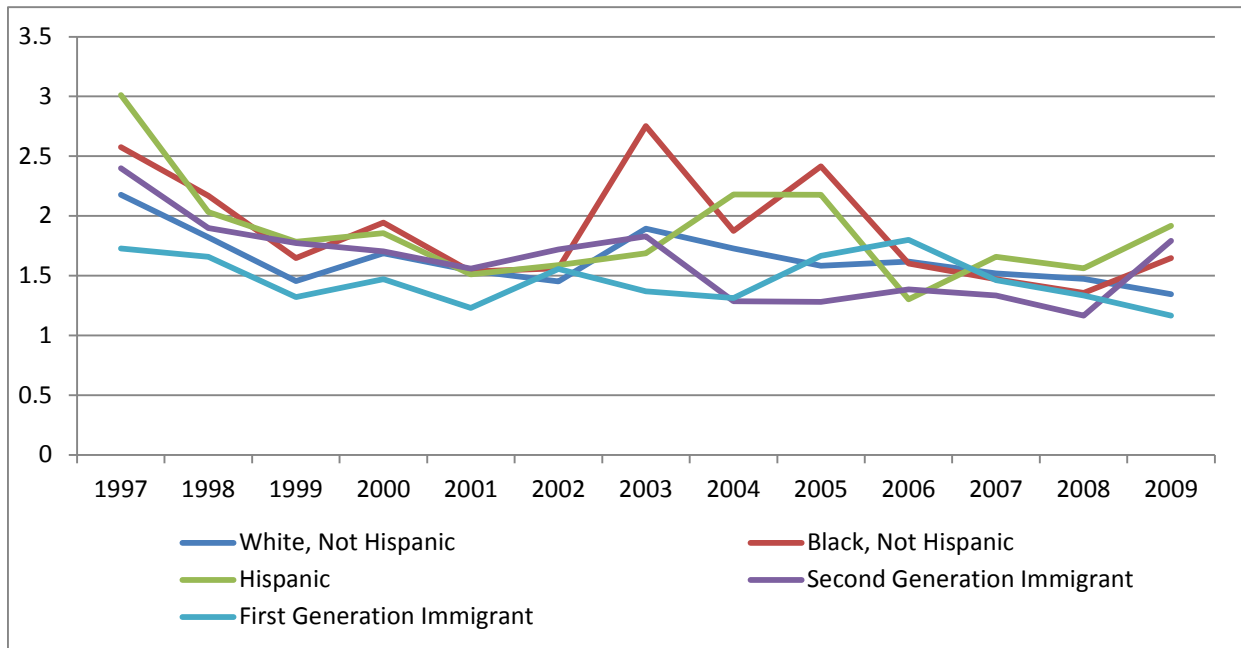
Before we delve into the findings regarding the relationship between marriage and offending, we summarize the general pattern of effects for our control variables and offending (Tables 2 and 3, between-individual results). Regardless of racial, ethnic, or immigrant status, males display consistently higher rates of arrest. Additionally, the benefits of growing up in two-parent household and a larger household (when significant) are observed for most groups. A notable exception to this trend was found among blacks; for this group a larger household size was related to a significant *increase* in arrest. Finally, being at-risk is predictive of arrest for all groups, with the odds of arrest being higher among those deemed at-risk as youth. We also find that parental education is beneficial for all groups, in that more education is associated with a lower risk of arrest. This finding accords with the body of theoretical work indicating a protective effect of parental capital on children's developmental trajectories (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

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Table 2. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Prevalence of Arrest Trajectories across Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-2.234	.05	***	-2.529	.04	***	-2.490	.05	***	-2.425	.07	***	-2.656	.04	***
Male	.504	.03	***	.583	.06	***	.652	.05	***	.628	.06	***	.862	.04	***
Parent HS Education	-.153	.05	**	-.124	.06	*	-.019	.06		-.134	.08		-.148	.05	**
Parent College Education	-.325	.05	***	-.185	.06	***	-.098	.05		-.403	.08	***	-.124	.05	*
Intact Family	-.316	.03	***	-.057	.06		-.347	.05	***	-.318	.06	***	-.303	.05	***
Household Size	.009	.01		-.011	.02		-.018	.02		-.009	.02		.034	.01	**
Disadvantaged	.084	.05		.018	.08		.058	.06		.129	.09		.165	.05	***
At-Risk	1.286	.09	***	.986	.26	***	.769	.15	***	1.325	.16	***	1.142	.10	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	
B/W Marriage	-.475	.06	***	-.600	.08	***	-.367	.11	***	-.862	.13	***	-.541	.12	***
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.244	.04	***	-.144	.07	*	-.387	.07	***	-.495	.09	***	-.233	.07	***
Age	-.009	.00	***	.024	.01	***	.003	.00		.012	.01	*	-.002	.00	
Age squared	.006	.00	***	.010	.00	***	.010	.00	***	.012	.00	***	.007	.00	***

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001

Table 3. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Frequency of Arrest Trajectories across Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-2.221	.09	***	-3.002	.06	***	-2.757	.10	***	-2.531	.12	***	-2.844	.06	***
Male	.967	.06	***	1.799	.06	***	1.433	.10	***	1.219	.12	***	1.491	.07	***
Parent HS Education	-.313	.10	**	-.415	.08	***	-.083	.09		-.221	.15		-.170	.08	*
Parent College Education	-.708	.08	***	-.612	.06	***	-.101	.12		-.695	.13	***	-.103	.08	
Intact Family	-.708	.05	***	-.229	.06	***	-.679	.09	***	-.626	.12	***	-.511	.09	***
Household Size	.025	.02		-.067	.02	***	-.036	.03		-.038	.036		.075	.02	**
Disadvantaged	.237	.11	*	.082	.10		.250	.17		.379	.18	*	.347	.07	***
At-Risk	1.885	.08	***	1.482	.11	***	1.038	.08	***	2.009	.16	***	1.592	.08	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	
B/W Marriage	-.925	.15	***	-2.269	.12	***	-.938	.219	***	-1.489	.299	***	-.518	.39	
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.503	.09	***	-.451	.09	***	-1.082	.12	***	-.991	.14	***	-.780	.10	***
Age	-.050	.00	***	.074	.01	***	.014	.01	*	.044	.01	***	.003	.01	
Age squared	.006	.00	***	.065	.00	***	.032	.00	***	.033	.00	***	.018	.00	***

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

We turn next to our core research focus, which is on the impact of marriage on criminal behavior. While we are most interested in this relationship among first and second generation immigrants, to situate our research within the larger empirical literature addressing the marriage effect, we also examine the extent to which marriage influences offending for native-born individuals. Our focus is on 'within-individual' changes in marital status (i.e., when an individual shifts from non-married to married) and the effects of this transition on offending. Our results reveal a consistently beneficial effect of marriage. Across all immigrant and native-born subsamples, marriage is negatively related to the prevalence (see Table 2) and frequency (see Table 3) of offending, net of individual and family characteristics. Stated simply, in these data, regardless of immigrant or native-born status individuals are less likely to be arrested and have fewer arrests when they are married.

We translate the coefficient values into more practical terms by calculating the percent change in the odds of offending by exponentiating the coefficient values for the within-individual marriage effects. The percent change in the odds of offending are visually plotted in Figure 5. Clearly, the strength of the effect of transitioning to married on offending varies across groups and across dependent variables. Looking first at the prevalence of arrest, the marriage effect is greatest among Hispanics. Specifically, being married decreases the odds of arrest by 39% for this group; second generation immigrants also experience a large reduction in the odds of arrest (32%), followed by whites (22%), and blacks (21%). Although marriage exerts protective benefits for first generation immigrants as well, the observed reduction in the odds of arrest is smaller (13%) compared to their peers.

Figure 5. Percent Change in Arrest with Marriage by Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Group.
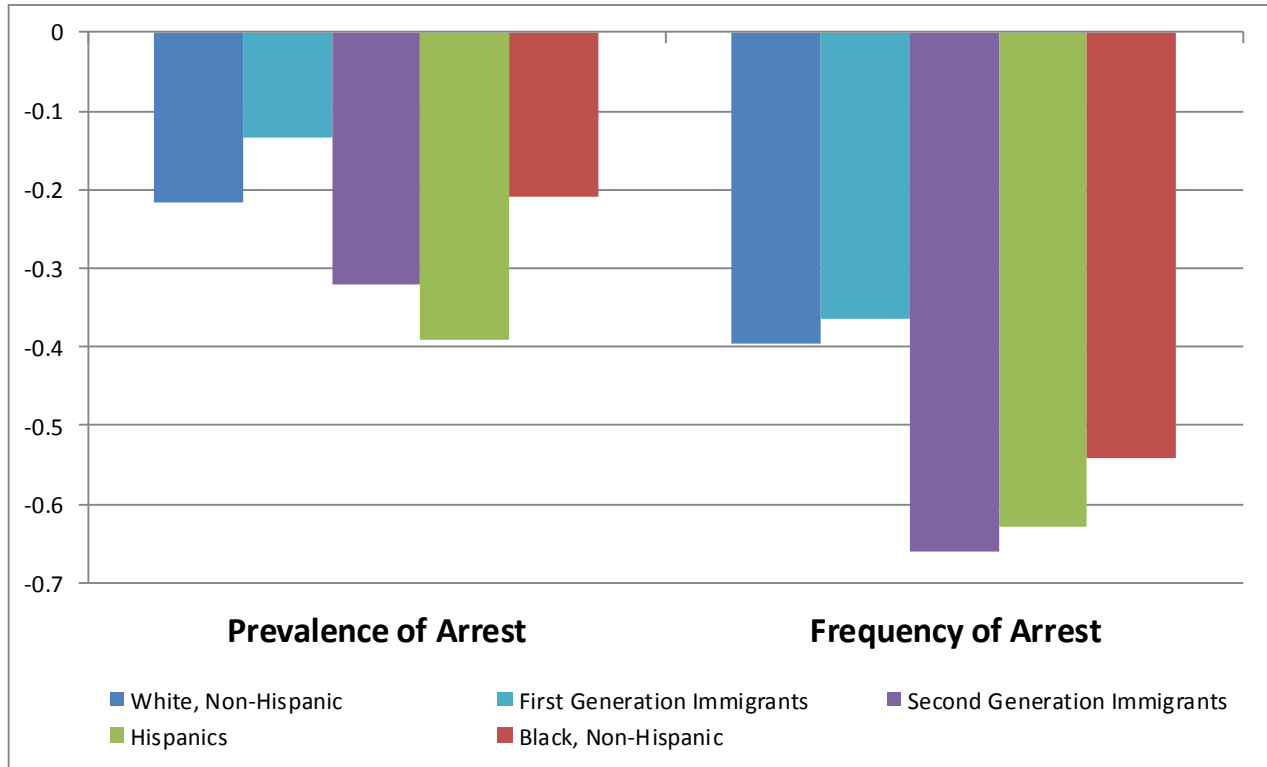
The strength of the marriage effect is even more pronounced when looking at the percent change in the expected rate of offending (i.e., frequency of arrest). In this instance, the marriage effect is greatest among second generation immigrants, decreasing the rate of arrest by 66%. Hispanics reap substantial benefits as well (63% decrease in the rate of arrest), followed by blacks (54% decrease in the rate of arrest). Marriage reduces the frequency of offending among whites and first generation immigrants similarly; specifically, marriage is associated with a 40% and 36% decreased expected rate for each group, respectively.

We find further evidence of the benefits of marriage looking at the 'between-individual' marriage coefficient results. This variable differs from the within-individual marriage variable in that it captures the average time spent in marital states. Marital duration has been used as a proxy indicator of marital quality in previous research (see e.g., Bersani et al. 2009). Again,

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across all groups the between-individual marriage variable is negatively related to both the prevalence and frequency of arrest. All other between-individual control variables are associated with offending in expected directions; being male, at risk in youth, and having greater socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with a significantly higher risk of arrest, while having more parental capital and living in an intact household is associated with a lower risk of offending.

Overall, the findings suggest that the good marriage effect extends to all immigrant and native-born subsamples; however, the analyses conducted thus far cannot assess whether the effect of marriage is of greater or lesser magnitude for a particular group. That is, is marriage more important for immigrants compared to their native-born peers? To address this question we conduct an equality of regression coefficients test (see Paternoster, Brame, Mazerolle, and Piquero 1998) and report the significant findings in Table 4. When looking at the relationship between marriage and the prevalence of arrest (see the top portion of Table 4), results indicate that second generation immigrants reap significantly greater benefits from marriage than their first generation immigrant peers. The effect of marriage on the prevalence of arrest is strongest for Hispanics; this effect is significantly stronger compared to all subgroups, except second generation immigrants.

A similar, though more pronounced, trend is observed when comparing the strength of the marriage effect on the frequency of arrest (see the lower portion of Table 4). The effect of marriage on the frequency of arrest is comparable for first generation immigrants and whites. Notably, the strength of the marriage effect is greatest for second generation immigrants, Hispanics, and blacks; effects for these groups are significantly stronger than for first generation immigrants and whites.

Table 4. Equality of Regression Coefficient Test of the Effect of Marriage on Arrest Trajectories across Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	Prevalence of Arrest				
	1	2	3	4	5
White, Non-Hispanic	--	-1.240	1.774	2.549 *	-0.136
First Generation Immigrants		--	2.455 *	3.078 **	0.899
Second Generation Immigrants			--	0.947	-1.556
Hispanics				--	-2.298 *
Black, Non-Hispanic					--

	Frequency of Arrest				
	1	2	3	4	5
White, Non-Hispanic	--	-0.409	3.860 ***	2.932 **	2.059 *
First Generation Immigrants		--	4.207 ***	3.245 **	2.445 *
Second Generation Immigrants			--	-0.494	-1.933
Hispanics				--	-1.226
Black, Non-Hispanic					--

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Marriage Effect: Gender Analysis

The gendered nature of both marriage and offending virtually necessitates that research examining the relationship between marriage and offending consider gender differences. The observation that men commit more crime than women is, as Lauritsen, Heimer, and Lynch (2009, p. 362) recently noted, "one of the few undisputed 'facts' in criminology." Explanations for gender differences in the marriage effect often hinge on this fact, suggesting that men's greater involvement in crime means that they will most likely "marry up" (e.g., marry a non-criminal spouse); by this logic, there is also a greater likelihood that women will "marry down" (e.g., marry a criminal spouse) (see Sampson et al. 2006). Moreover, given the cultural significance of marriage for women among certain immigrant groups, testing for gender effects becomes even more consequential in the current research. To examine whether and to what extent gender influences the effect of marriage on offending trajectories, we conduct a series of

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models that parallel those described above separately for the male and female respondents in the data. By doing so, we are able to determine whether the effect of marriage observed in the previous analyses holds for both men and women.

We begin by looking at the pattern of results in the male models (Tables 5 and 6), which reveal an interesting finding. Whereas the transition to marriage (the within-individual marriage effect) is significantly related to a decreased odds of offending (Table 5) for all native-born groups and second generation immigrants, no significant effect is found among our male first generation immigrants. This same pattern is observed when we look at the frequency of arrest dependent variable (Table 6). Despite statistically strong negative effects of marriage on offending for native-born males and second generation immigrant males, marriage appears to have neither a beneficial nor detrimental impact on the offending behavior of first generation immigrant males.

When we focus our analysis on the females in the sample (Tables 7 and 8) three notable patterns emerge. First, consistent with the male models, marriage consistently decreases offending for white and Hispanic females. Second, counter to the findings presented above for first generation immigrant males, we find that marriage *is* significantly associated with a decreased odds of arrest (Table 7) and a decreased expected rate of arrest (Table 8) for our first generation immigrant females. Finally, we find inconsistent effects of marriage across dependent variables for second generation immigrant females and black females. When examining the effect of marriage on the odds of arrest (Table 7) we find no significant, within-individual effect of marriage for these two groups. However, when we examine the effect of marriage on the frequency of arrest outcome (Table 8) marriage has a significantly strong negative effect on offending for second generation immigrant females and black females.

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Table 5. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Prevalence of Arrest Trajectories across Male Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-1.729	0	***	-1.984	.09	***	-1.838	.09	***	-1.791	.10	***	-1.766	.07	***
Parent HS Education	-.287	.08	***	-.100	.13		-.031	.10		-.109	.12		-.267	.08	**
Parent College Education	-.417	.07	***	-.314	.11	**	-.113	.09		-.564	.11	***	-.243	.08	**
Intact Family	-.326	.04	***	-.122	.11		-.553	.08	***	-.335	.10	***	-.442	.07	***
Household Size	.019	.02		-.007	.04		-.002	.03		.037	.03		.049	.02	*
Disadvantaged	.095	.07		.065	.15		-.034	.10		-.007	.11		.179	.07	*
At-Risk	1.370	.13	***	1.132	.30	***	.591	.17	***	1.155	.18	***	1.116	.11	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00		-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	
B/W Marriage	-.708	.11	***	-1.324	.19	***	-.580	.21	**	-.945	.22	***	-.886	.26	***
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.242	.07	***	-.084	.16		-.783	.15	***	-.344	.14	*	-.347	.11	**
Age	-.026	.00	***	.021	.01	*	-.024	.01	***	-.004	.01		-.007	.01	
Age squared	.001	.00		.005	.00	**	.004	.00	*	.008	.00	***	.001	.00	

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Table 6. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Frequency of Arrest Trajectories across Male Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-1.271	.10	***	-1.630	.10	***	-1.512	.13	***	-1.359	.13	***	-1.396	.08	***
Parent HS Education	-.480	.12	***	-.150	.15		-.169	.14		-.151	.17		-.291	.11	**
Parent College Education	-.754	.11	***	-.770	.14	***	-.038	.19		-.835	.17	***	-.172	.11	
Intact Family	-.586	.07	***	-.280	.14	*	-.727	.14	***	-.493	.15	***	-.596	.11	***
Household Size	.037	.03		-.022	.04		.049	.06		.035	.05		.063	.03	*
Disadvantaged	.206	.10	*	.114	.18		.039	.20		.027	.17		.370	.11	***
At-Risk	1.787	.09	***	1.600	.20	***	.737	.13	***	1.646	.29	***	1.287	.09	***
Income 20 years	.000	.00		-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	
B/W Marriage	-1.141	.24	***	-3.244	.37	***	-.885	.53		-1.001	.45	*	-.730	.63	
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.655	.12	***	-.323	.24		-1.504	.27	***	-.559	.23	*	-.897	.14	***
Age	-.048	.01	***	.080	.01	***	-.041	.01	**	-.016	.01		-.014	.01	*
Age squared	.001	.00		.023	.00	***	.010	.00	***	.023	.00	***	.005	.00	***

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Table 7. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Prevalence of Arrest Trajectories across Female Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

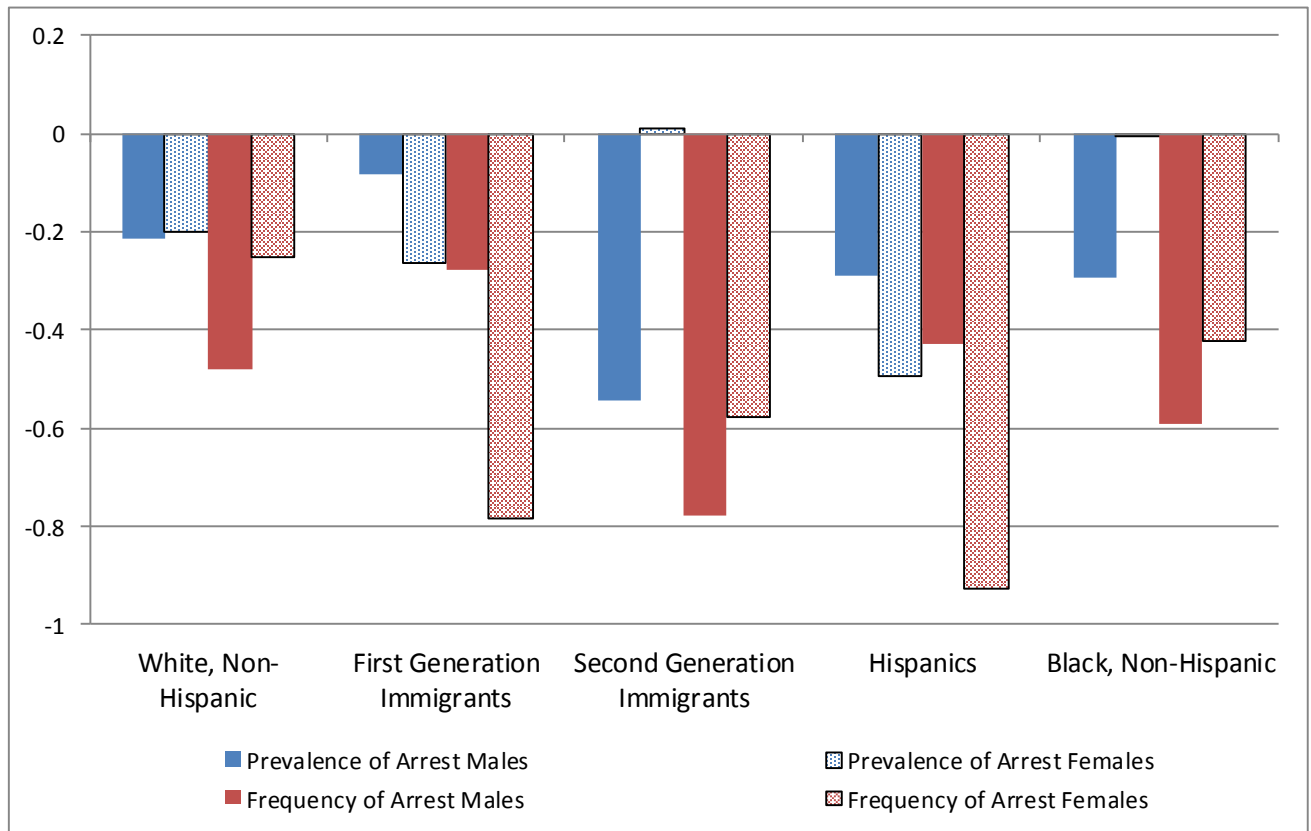|	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-2.167	.05	***	-2.958	.05	***	-2.640	.05	***	-2.275	.09	***	-2.397	.03	***
Parent HS Education	.002	.06		-.320	.07	***	-.026	.08		-.170	.10		-.034	.04	
Parent College Education	-.198	.05	***	.062	.07		-.096	.07		-.205	.09	*	-.006	.05	
Intact Family	-.283	.03	***	-.021	.06		-.129	.06	*	-.300	.07	***	-.115	.04	**
Household Size	.001	.01		-.01	.03		-.039	.02	*	-.086	.03	***	.009	.01	
Disadvantaged	.054	.05		-.166	.05	**	.183	.07	*	.171	.13		.143	.04	***
At-Risk	1.112	.12	***	1.008	.58		1.394	.24	***	1.489	.24	***	1.265	.23	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00	*	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***
B/W Marriage	-.272	.06	***	-.243	.10	*	-.147	.14		-.740	.14	***	-.078	.10	
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.221	.04	***	-.302	.08	***	.011	.08		-.682	.08	***	-.001	.06	
Age	.011	.00	***	-.002	.01		.009	.01		.035	.01	***	.022	.00	***
Age squared	.012	.00	***							.014	.00	***	.011	.00	***

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Table 8. Hierarchical Models of the Effect of Marriage on Frequency of Arrest Trajectories across Female Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Groups.

	White, Non-Hispanic			First Generation Immigrant			Second Generation Immigrant			Hispanic			Black, Non-Hispanic		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual															
Intercept	-2.198	.12	***	-3.939	.23	***	1.330	.02	***	-2.099	.12	***	-2.078	.03	***
Parent HS Education	-.113	.14		-.744	.58		.080	.02	***	-.507	.23	*	-.055	.05	
Parent College Education	-.652	.12	***	.244	.20		-.087	.02	***	-.621	.13	***	.012	.06	
Intact Family	-.856	.08	***	-.309	.25		-.053	.01	***	-.918	.11	***	-.437	.05	***
Household Size	.012	.04		-.025	.07		-.189	.00	***	-.232	.04	***	.039	.02	
Disadvantaged	.213	.17		-.440	.29		.249	.01	***	.511	.21	*	.359	.05	***
At-Risk	1.992	.14	***	2.860	.63	***	1.911	.01	***	2.775	.093	***	2.333	.08	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00	*	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00	***	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	
B/W Marriage	-.682	.21	***	-1.121	.59		-.767	.04	***	-2.417	.31	***	-.100	.16	
Within Individual															
Marriage	-.288	.13	*	-1.523	.51	**	-.859	.00	***	-2.598	.05	***	-.547	.03	***
Age	-.052	.01	***	-.073	.02	**	.743	.00	***	.235	.01	***	.257	.00	***
Age squared	.014	.00	***				.288	.00	***	.067	.00	***	.084	.00	***

*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

For ease of interpretation, we plot the percent change in the odds of arrest and the expected rate of arrest in Figure 6 for men and women. The effect of marriage on the prevalence of arrest is similar for white men and women; however, we see a stronger effect of marriage for white men when we examine the frequency of arrest. Similar gender differences are found when looking at the results for black men and women, and second generation immigrant men and women. That is, the effect of marriage is much more pronounced for black males and second generation immigrant males compared to their female counterparts. These findings are consistent with previous research examining gender differences in the marriage-desistance relationship (see e.g., Bersani et al. 2009; King et al. 2007).

Figure 6. Percent Change in Arrest with Marriage by Male Racial/Ethnic/Immigrant Group.

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The pattern of results for the remaining two groups (first generation immigrants and Hispanics) is less consistent and somewhat contradictory to the findings of previous research. For both first generation immigrants and Hispanics, women appear to benefit more than men from marriage in regards to desistance from crime.

DISENTANGLING THE FIRST GENERATION IMMIGRANT STORY

First generation immigrants are comprised of an eclectic group of individuals, many of whom resemble their U.S. born second generation peers more than their foreign-born peers. That is, they vary greatly in terms of their age at migration, language use/proficiency, country of origin and reason for migration. With this analysis, we delve further into the first generation immigrant story to examine whether unique first generation immigrant confounders impact the effect of marriage on offending trajectories noted in the previous sections. The findings from these analyses are presented in Table 9. Notably, the inclusion of the first generation immigrant specific variables does little to alter the substantive story noted in the preceding sections. Marriage is beneficial for first generation immigrants in terms of their prevalence and frequency of arrest. While first generation Mexican and Central American immigrants have a higher frequency of arrest compared to their foreign-born peers, both the within-individual and between individual marriage effect coefficients are negative and strongly significant, indicating a decline in the rate of arrest with marriage net of these other factors.

We also investigate the extent to which marriage may have a more or less potent effect for first generation immigrants depending upon their age at migration, language proficiency, and nativity status. To model these effects, we independently add each variable to the within-individual marriage equation. Model 1 in Table 10 assesses whether the marriage effect is different for those who migrated at young ages compared to those who migrated at older ages.

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Table 9. Hierarchical Model of the Effect of Marriage on the Prevalence and Frequency of Arrest Trajectories for First Generation Immigrants Controlling for Age of Migration, Linguistic Acculturation, and Country / Region of Origin.

	Prevalence of Arrest			Frequency of Arrest		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Between Individual						
Intercept	-2.558	.08	***	-3.320	.07	***
Male	.579	.06	***	1.849	.07	***
Parent HS Education	-.076	.06	**	-.252	.07	***
Parent College Education	-.230	.07	**	-.689	.06	***
Intact Family	.021	.05		.042	.07	
Household Size	-.027	.02		-.141	.03	***
Disadvantaged	-.042	.10		-.021	.15	
At-Risk	1.132	.20	***	1.562	.18	***
Income 20 years	-.000	.00		-.000	.00	***
One and a half Generation	.079	.07		.279	.08	***
Spanish Interview	.049	.10		.420	.13	***
Mexico	.029	.08		.234	.08	**
Asia	-.173	.08	*	-.293	.156	
Caribbean	-.300	.06	***	-.972	.05	***
Central America	.204	.13		.499	.07	***
B/W Marriage	-.544	.09	***	-2.165	.12	***
Within Individual						
Marriage	-.155	.07	*	-.436	.08	***
Age	.034	.01	***	.133	.01	***
Age squared	.011	.00	***	.074	.00	***

$*p \leq .05; **p \leq .01; ***p \leq .001.$

The significant negative effect of one and a half generation means that the negative effect of marriage is stronger (more negative: -.250 + -.540) among first generation immigrants who migrated to the U.S. at 5 years of age or younger. The findings comparing first generation immigrants categorized as having lower linguistic proficiency (opting to take the interview in

Table 10. Hierarchical Model of the Effect of Marriage by Age at Migration, Linguistic Proficiency, and Country / Region of Origin.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
Within Individual																		
Marriage	-.250	.12	*	-1.744	.08	***	-1.845	.08	***	-.440	.08	***	-.378	.09	***	-.240	.07	***
One-half Generation	-.540	.15	***															
Spanish Interview				4.038	.54	***												
Mexico							1.751	.16	***									
Asia										.171	.22							
Caribbean													-3.234	.12	***			
Central America																-2.203	.08	***

NOTE: The models shown here include all the control variables reported in previous tables. Because our focus is on the specific within-individual marriage effects by first generation immigrant specific variables and for space considerations we do not report the values for the control and age parameters.
*p ≤ .05; **p ≤ .01; ***p ≤ .001.

Spanish) shown in Model 2 indicate that the effect of marriage is weaker among those who took the interview in Spanish. Combined, these results support the earlier findings demonstrating a stronger effect of marriage among more assimilated immigrants (comparing the pattern of effects in the first generation immigrant models with those in the second generation immigrant models). Apparently, greater absorption into the American mainstream not only results in a higher rate of offending, but also a stronger effect of marriage on desistance from crime.

Next, we turn to the findings presented in Models 3 through 6, Table 10, where we assess the effect of marriage for the four most prevalent country / regions of origin represented in these data: Mexico, Asia, Caribbean, and Central America. In these models, we compare the effect of marriage for the specific nativity group listed with that of their foreign-born peers. In general, we find a beneficial effect of marriage for all groups. Among first generation immigrants from Mexico, the marriage effect is weaker (less negative) compared to their peers (Model 3). No difference is found in the effect of marriage for immigrants from Asia compared to their peers (Model 4). Finally, the effect of marriage was found to be significantly stronger (more negative) for immigrants from the Caribbean (Model 5) and Central America (Model 6).

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research is to shed light on three related questions: First, are more assimilated (i.e., second generation) immigrants marrying at lower rates than their less assimilated (i.e., first generation) counterparts? Second, does the "good marriage effect" observed among whites and, to a lesser extent, racial minorities extend to immigrant groups? Third, to what extent does immigrant generation or country/region of birth (i.e., nativity) condition the relationship between marriage and offending? More than food for scholarly thought, these research findings have important policy implications, particularly in the current

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political climate, which is increasingly punitive toward immigrants (Kubrin, Zatz, and Martínez Jr. 2012). A fuller understanding of the relationship between marriage and immigrant offending may illuminate the long term consequences of exclusionary policies, such as deportation, for family formation and the vitality of marriage markets in immigrant communities.

This study draws from extant literature on the different patterns of marriage and family formation across gender, racial/ethnic and immigrant groups to shape our expectations that both the likelihood of marriage and its crime-reducing benefits will vary across groups. Recall that to date the vast majority of research examining the relationship between marriage and offending has relied upon predominantly white, male samples (see e.g., Capaldi, Kim, and Owen 2008; Farrington and West 1995; Laub and Sampson 2003; Sampson and Laub 1993). Though a nascent body of research has investigated the generalizability of the "good marriage effect" by looking at female offending and, to a limited extent, minority offending (Doherty and Ensminger 2013; Horney et al. 1995; Piquero et al. 2002; Visher, Knight, Chalfin, and Roman 2009), thus far, research has neglected to examine how marriage impacts the offending trajectories of immigrants. Further, much of the research conducted on immigrant offending has relied on samples of adolescents, neglecting to examine sources of informal social control (e.g., marriage) in adulthood. This gap in the literature is notable given the tremendous growth in the number of immigrant families in recent years; today, immigrants comprise over 13% of the U.S. population, and nearly 1 in 4 children has at least one foreign parent (Fortuny and Chaudry 2011). Simply stated, immigration has altered and continues to alter the demographic landscape of the U.S. in a profound way. As such, the need to understand longterm patterns of offending among immigrants—and particulalry among their offpring—has never been greater. Our research

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findings lend support to the notion that both the tendency towards marriage, and its implications for criminal behavior differ across groups.

RQ 1: Are second generation immigrants entering into marriage at a slower pace than their first generation immigrant peers?

With respect to our first research question, we found that rates of marriage differed across race/ethnicity, but not immigrant generation. In line with previous research (Bennett et al. 1989; Oropesa 1996) blacks reported the lowest rates of marriage in the sample. By the final wave of data in 2009, when respondents were ages 25 to 29, only 22% of blacks had ever been married, compared with 47% of whites, 40% of second generation immigrants and Hispanics, and 37% of first generation immigrants. Counter to previous work (Landale et al. 2006), however, rates of marriage across immigrant generations were similar. While we cannot measure the extent to which immigrants of different generations hold varying attitudes toward marriage, our behavioral indicators of actual marital status do not support assertions of a marriage retreat among second generation immigrants.

RQ 2: What role does marriage play in understanding immigrant offending?

With respect to our second research question, our findings suggest that marriage is beneficial to some degree for all subgroups, including immigrants. Being in a state of marriage is associated with significant reductions in both the prevalence and frequency of arrest for immigrant and native-born individuals alike. This finding aligns well with theoretical claims that marriage serves as a powerful mechanism of informal social control, knifing off past from present, and limiting time spent with deviant peers (Laub and Sampson 2003). Although we

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found some variability depending on the criminal outcomes being examined (e.g., frequency versus prevalence of arrest), marriage proved to be a potent deterrent to criminal behavior.

RQ 3: Is the relationship between marriage and offending affected by immigrant generation or country/region of birth (i.e., nativity)?

With respect to the main focus of this research, which asked whether the effect of marriage is consistent across subgroups, equality of coefficients tests reveal that the benefits of marriage are in fact more potent for some groups than others. The variation across immigrant generations is particularly noteworthy. Specifically, with respect the frequency of arrest measure, second generation immigrants reap the greatest benefits of marriage. Why the more potent effect among the second generation? Absent data with which to examine the explicit causal mechanisms linking marriage and crime among these groups, we can only speculate on the reasons why marriage may be more influential for this group. However, one possibility is that for second generation immigrants who are, as Zavala-Martinez (1994) has argued, "entremundos" or "between worlds", the transition to marriage may mark a more substantial commitment to conventional norms and cultural traditions. That is, compared to their first generation counterparts, who may be more strongly tied to the customs and values of their native countries, and to the third generation, who have assimilated more fully to the mainstream values of the American middle class, the second generation may be in a state of flux—not fully at home in either place (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). This state of flux may mean that normative institutions, such as marriage, mark a more salient entrée into conventional, non-criminal roles for this group.

Another noteworthy finding regards the variable influence of marriage across gender. In these data, the strength and salience of the marriage effect was dependent upon the subgroup

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being examined. For whites, marriage was no stronger in magnitude for men than women; this finding challenges research that has shown men to benefit more than women from being in a state of marriage (Bersani et al. 2009; King et al. 2007). However, we observe very different patterns across immigrant generations. Somewhat surprisingly, among first generation immigrants, the magnitude of the marriage effect was greatest for females. In examining the frequency of arrest, for example, the strength of the marriage effect for first generation females was more than double that experienced by first generation males.

This seemingly anomalous finding underscores the need to consider how individual characteristics (e.g., race, gender, immigrant status) condition the link between marriage and criminal behavior. To date, the prevailing sentiment has been that "men marry up, while women marry down" (Laub and Sampson 2003), which explains the relatively greater magnitude of the marriage effect on men's criminality. Put differently, previous research suggests that marriage does not have as potent a conventionalizing effect on women because they tend to marry partners that have greater criminal propensities, and thus, do not reap the benefits of a non-deviant partner. Importantly, though, our findings suggest an opposite pattern among first generation immigrants; in these analyses, first generation females reap significantly greater benefits from being in a state of marriage that their male counterparts. In trying to make sense of this finding, one must consider the pool of men from which first generation immigrant women likely choose their spouses. It is possible that marriage may be more beneficial for first generation immigrant women because first generation men are, on average, less crime prone than subsequent generations. That is, because immigrants self-select into their immigrant roles, oftentimes for the laudable goals of socioeconomic improvement and upward mobility (Tonry 1997), they are, on the whole, selectively less deviant, and tend to be attached to the labor force. Even immigrants

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who do not self-select—because they migrated to the U.S. as children—have substantially lower criminal propensities than their native born peers (Harris 1999; Sampson et al. 2005; Morenoff and Astor 2006). Thus, assuming immigrant women choose spouses from this pool, they are likely to be selecting partners who are firmly rooted in conventional institutions.

Additional possibilities include the salience of marriage as a rite of passage to family formation, affirmation of womanhood, and major life objective among immigrant females (Oropesa 1996). Compared with their native born and second generation counterparts, marriage may be a stronger indicator of family formation among first generation immigrants, which has additional crime inhibiting effects. While we are limited in directly measuring cultural differences in the meaning of marriage between and within subsamples, the models presented control for the potential impact of socioeconomic structure and opportunities. Despite this, gender still plays and important role in understanding the influence of marriage on offending for first generation immigrants. Future research is needed to tease out these possibilities.

Alternately, we find that marriage is of limited consequence for second generation females, affecting their frequency of offending but not prevalence of offending. This pattern of findings in unclear, but once again, it is important to consider the pool of men from which second generation females are selecting their partners. Assuming a degree of homogeneity in partner selection (e.g., second-generation females choose from predominately second-generation males), it may be the case that marriage provides diminishing returns with respect to crime reducing benefits. Future research that considers the generational status of marital partners may shed light on these findings.

In sum, while the evidence presented here provides support for the beneficial effect of involvement in pro-social roles such as marriage on offending trajectories, which generalizes

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beyond historically bound, native-born, white males, we also note important contingencies in this effect. We echo previous calls for more research examining contingencies in the marriage effect. Overall, our findings highlight the consequential influence of immigrant status and gender in understanding the marriage effect. Counter to previous research and theoretical expectations, some women may actually benefit more from marriage than their male peers. Moreover, while never detrimental, marriage does not always provide a path to decreases in offending. Future research must pay closer attention to the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity/immigrant status when assessing the "good" marriage effect.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is not without limitations. First, though this research is consistent with the vast majority of empirical tests of the marriage effect (which examine the *state* of being married), Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that marital quality is a key distinguishing feature leading to the growth of social bonds and subsequently, desistance from crime. Indeed, while research finds that quality relationships are significantly predictive of desistance from crime (Massoglia and Uggen 2007), little is known about how this relationship varies along cultural lines (Bradbury, Fincham, and Beach 2000). Thus, future research should incorporate measures of marital quality to better assess the relationship between marriage and crime across racial/ethnic and immigrant groups while attending to potential cultural differences in the definition of quality. A related issue pertains to the age of the respondents in these data. By 2009, the final wave of data assessed in this research, respondents were 24 to 28 years of age and therefore just beginning to embark on what are normative or average ages at which individuals in the U.S. marry. As a result, our findings may not generalize to individuals who marry at later ages.

Second, while the individuals in this sample report substantial involvement in crime across the thirteen waves of data, in the end, this sample is relatively limited in their level of criminality. The extent to which the patterns uncovered in this study replicate among a sample of at-risk immigrants awaits future research using an alternative data source and alternative measure of offending.

Third, whereas data limitations precluded consideration of additional sources of informal social control (e.g., pro-social friendships, children, cohabiting relationships outside of marriage, close ties to parents and other family members), future research would benefit from considering similar and/or additive effects of these social bonds in adulthood. Further, future studies should examine the role of pregnancy/childbirth as a potential contributing factor in the decision to marry and perhaps a contributing factor to the marriage effect for women.

Finally, while we afford particular attention to the complexities inherent to the first generation, specifically the potential for differences across immigrants from different countries of origin, small samples sizes from most countries preclude a detailed analysis at the country level. Longitudinal data capturing not only criminal involvements and relationship transitions, but also distinguishes among racial, ethnic, and immigrants groups is needed (see DiPietro and Bursik 2012). Thus, future research should seek to replicate these findings using a data set with a larger population of immigrants to determine whether the observed patterns hold true for all immigrant groups or only particular ones.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Tremendous growth in the immigrant population in the past few decades has made immigration policy and control defining issues in the U.S. (Kubrin et al. 2012). To illustrate, Kubrin and colleagues (2012) document the exponential growth in the number of proposed

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immigration bills since 9/11, which numbered more than 2,900 in 2009 and 2010, up from only

300 in 2005. Not all punitive in nature, policy initiatives outlining pathways to citizenship,

attrition enforcement, social cleansing through deportation, and most recently, repealing

birthright citizenship and the institution of the DREAM act characterize the diversity of

responses to structuring immigration policy and controlling the number and composition of

individuals entering and living in the U.S.

Given that the children of immigrants (e.g., the second generation) make up such a large

proportion of the U.S. population, the finding that they reap the greatest crime reducing benefits

from marriage across subgroups has important implications. Second generation immigrants—

across a diverse range of demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds—have typically been

found to have higher rates of criminality than their foreign-born counterparts (Bersani 2012;

Morenoff and Astor 2006; Sampson and Laub 2005). Although much of this research to date has

focused on adolescents (Bui 2009; Portes and Rumbaut 2001) the analyses presented here

suggest that adult social bonds (namely, marriage) may serve as important triggers in reversing

this trend. From this standpoint, policies aimed at promoting and strengthening marriage among

the second generation may be particularly beneficial to reducing crime in this population. For

example, as Visher et al. (2009) recently found in their study of 650 ex-prisoners, prison-based

programs aimed at strengthening partner relationships during periods of incarceration are

effective at increasing pro-social behavior and reducing recidivism and substance use after

release. Our findings suggest that such programming would be beneficial to immigrants in non-

justice settings as well. Classes dedicated to relationship skills, or marriage seminars, for

example, might be incorporated into the agendas of non-profit organizations working with

immigrant communities. Importantly, though, our research findings suggest that such programs

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should be tailored to unique groups, and that more proximate factors (e.g., local marriage markets) should be taken into consideration.

Our findings also suggest that measures resulting in deportation and the dissolution of immigrant families may actually hinder efforts to enhance public safety, in part because the removal of individuals from immigrant communities may diminish the pool of available marriage partners. The dire consequences of targeted criminal justice enforcement and the subsequent removal of men from disadvantaged communities are perhaps best illustrated by Wilson's (1987) research on African American inner city communities. Heeding the lessons gleaned from his work, this research suggests that maintaining the pool of men in immigrant communities and promoting their status as "marriageable" through pathways to citizenship, educational and work opportunities, may be the single most important way to ensuring the viability of immigrant communities.

CONCLUSION

Without question, the institution of the family plays a consequential role in individual's lives regardless of whether they are U.S. or foreign-born, male or female, or a racial/ethnic minority. Marriage in particular, as a conventionalizing institution, has received an increasing amount of attention in criminology for its potential role in promoting reductions in offending. The findings from this research add to the growing chorus trumpeting the benefits of marriage; however, important questions remain as to why marriage matters. Especially important for the first and second generation immigrants in this sample, marriage may provide a link to important cultural traditions helping youth navigate obstacles inherent to experiences with assimilation and acculturation. Notably, the findings presented here demonstrate much similarity across

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immigrant and native-born groups when viewed broadly, in that the benefits of marriage are felt

across all demographic groups. Despite dramatic changes in the incidence, reasons for, and

meaning of marriage over time, marriage and its emergent qualities continue to be of

consequence in understanding desistance from crime.

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[i] Biological grandparent place of birth information was used to code immigration status for those youth who were missing place of birth information for their biological parents or refused to indicate whether they were born inside or outside the U.S. If all four maternal and paternal biological grandparents *and* the youth were born in the U.S., we coded the youth as native-born. If all four maternal and paternal biological grandparents *and* the youth were born outside the U.S., we coded the youth as first generation immigrant. An additional 937 youth were retained in the analysis using grandparent place of birth data.

[ii] Because of the small sample size, we exclude non-Hispanic "other" race from the analyses. For ease of discussion throughout the text we refer to native-born, non-Hispanic whites as 'whites', native-born, non-Hispanic blacks as 'blacks', and native-born Hispanics as 'Hispanics'.

[iii] Place of birth questions asked respondents whether they were born in the United States or its surrounding territories including Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, other U.S. Pacific Islands. Only those born in the 50 U.S. states were classified as born in the United States. Although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens by birth, previous research excludes Puerto Ricans from the native-born U.S. sample as they often experience many of the obstacles to incorporation that other immigrant groups face (see e.g., Hirschman 2001).