

## *Collective Efficacy and Crime in Los Angeles Neighborhoods: Implications for the Latino Paradox\**

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**Keri B. Burchfield**, *Northern Illinois University*

**Eric Silver**, *Pennsylvania State University*

We use data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Study (LAFANS) to examine the degree to which social ties and collective efficacy influence neighborhood levels of crime, net of neighborhood structural characteristics. Results indicate that residential instability and collective efficacy were each associated with lower log odds of robbery victimization, while social ties had a positive effect on robbery victimization. Further, collective efficacy mediated 77 percent of the association between concentrated disadvantage and robbery victimization, while social ties had no mediating effect. The mediation effect for concentrated disadvantage, however, was substantially weaker in the Latino neighborhoods (where it was 52%) than in the non-Latino neighborhoods (where it was 82%), suggesting that a “Latino paradox” may be present in which crime rates in Latino neighborhoods appear to have less to do with local levels of collective efficacy than in non-Latino neighborhoods. Implications for future research bearing on both the Latino paradox and the systemic model of social control are discussed.

For the past century, sociologists have sought to understand why some neighborhoods have high rates of crime and delinquency while others do not. Recent theory and research have coalesced around the notion that social capital and the social control it engenders are dominant causes of neighborhood-level variation in crime (for a review, see Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). This has led researchers to begin searching for local structural and organizational characteristics that give rise to these protective features of neighborhood life (Burchfield 2009; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Silver and Miller 2004; Warner 2003). And while these studies have increased our understanding by pointing to the effects of structural disadvantage (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997), neighborhood attachment (Burchfield 2009), satisfaction with local policing (Silver and Miller 2004), and the strength of local conventional values (Warner 2003), on collective efficacy to prevent crime and delinquency, compelling questions remain. In particular, research in this area is ambiguous regarding the role that social ties play in enhancing collective efficacy, fostering local social control, and controlling crime (Bellair 1997; Browning, Feinberg, and Dietz 2004; Pattillo

1998; Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Wilson 1996), and little is currently understood about the degree to which the structural and organizational sources of social control and crime reduction vary across ethnic contexts.

To fill this gap, this study examines a range of neighborhood-level predictors of robbery victimization and does so in Los Angeles, a city with a large Latino population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). From 2000 to 2009, the Latino population in the United States has grown by 29 percent, the largest increase of any major demographic group. In the same 9-year time period, Los Angeles experienced a correspondingly large increase in its Latino population, which now stands at 48 percent of the county's total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010).

In this study, we examine the degree to which local social ties and collective efficacy affect robbery victimization in Los Angeles neighborhoods, as well as mediate the relationship between neighborhood structural conditions (e.g., disadvantage, instability, and immigrant concentration) and crime. Moreover, because little is currently known about the structural antecedents of collective efficacy and crime in Latino neighborhoods, we are particularly interested in examining the role of collective efficacy in Los Angeles' largely Latino neighborhoods compared with their non-Latino counterparts.

## **Background**

### ***Social Disorganization and the Systemic Model of Social Control***

One of the most consistent findings to emerge from criminological research is that crime and other social problems tend to be spatially concentrated in certain neighborhoods in a city. The leading explanation of this finding is social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942). Although Shaw and McKay's work emphasized informal social control—the willingness and ability of local residents to control and prevent crime—as a key mediating mechanism between neighborhood structure and crime, the protective influences of informal social control were assumed, not measured. Subsequently, with the introduction of the systemic model (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974), the role of local social ties in explaining neighborhood levels of informal social control and corresponding rates of crime and disorder gained theoretical prominence. According to the systemic model, neighborhoods consist of a “complex system of friendship and kinship networks and formal and informal associational ties rooted in family life and on-going socialization processes” (Kasarda and Janowitz 1974:329). Kasarda and Janowitz's work suggested that neighborhood stability fosters local friendships and kinships that are essential for the cultivation and maintenance of informal social control. Bursik and Grasmick's (1993) social control model integrated social disorganization the-

ory with Kasarda and Janowitz's systemic model by proposing a relationship between neighborhood structure, social ties, and social control (see also Bursik 1988; Hunter 1985; Sampson 1987).<sup>1</sup> This elaborated model featured social ties as the key intervening variable explaining the relationship between neighborhood structural characteristics and crime.

### *Moving Beyond Social Ties*

Attempts to understand how and under what conditions local social ties work to encourage informal social control have yielded mixed results. In one of the first empirical assessments of the differential effects of social ties, Warner and Wilcox Rountree (1997) examined the role of social ties in mediating the effects of traditional measures of social disorganization and reducing crime rates in Seattle neighborhoods characterized as white, minority, or mixed ethnicity/race. Their findings revealed a protective effect of social ties on assault rates in white neighborhoods only; in predominantly minority and heterogeneous neighborhoods, social ties did not decrease crime (Warner and Wilcox Rountree 1997). These results suggest that the effect of social ties on informal social control and crime varies depending on the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood. Numerous other studies support the idea that the mere presence of social ties in a neighborhood is not sufficient to produce informal social control and that in some neighborhood contexts, social ties may actually inhibit informal social control (Bellair 1997; Browning, Feinberg, and Dietz 2004; Kubrin and Weitzer 2003; Pattillo 1998; Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Rankin and Quane 2000; Wilson 1996).

Thus, a growing body of evidence questions the role of social ties in the formation of informal social control and suggests that research should shift away from measuring the *extensiveness* of social ties in an area to examining the *quality* of those ties. In response, sociologists have begun to extend the systemic model by distinguishing social ties from measures that capture broader categories of social capital within neighborhoods (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998). Accordingly, social capital is conceptualized as a local resource distinguishable from social ties, but nonetheless derived from and facilitated by them (Coleman 1988). Social capital emphasizes local civic engagement and interpersonal trust; it includes the transmission of information and resources through local interactions, such as those among neighborhood residents, through socializing with neighbors and supervising local children, participating in local voluntary organizations, and possessing feelings of attachment to and pride in one's local area (Putnam 2000). In these ways, social capital is thought to facilitate a willingness to be involved in neighborhood life, including keeping one's neighborhood safe from crime (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). Sampson and colleagues' seminal work examining *collective efficacy* in

Chicago neighborhoods provided empirical support for the social capital model of social control (Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001; Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). These authors found that collective efficacy, conceptualized as the linkage of social capital and social control and defined as informal social control and mutual trust and cohesion among neighbors, mediated a substantial amount of the relationship between social ties and violent crime (Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001). Their work also suggested that collective neighborhood action may occur even in the absence of strong social ties, raising important questions regarding the relevance of social ties for crime control. In summary, current urban sociological research is attempting to clarify the various ways in which neighborhood structural conditions inhibit or enhance the ability of local social ties to translate into meaningful social action with the goal of reducing neighborhood crime rates. Accordingly, a major focus of this study is to compare the effects of local social ties and collective efficacy on neighborhood crime.

### *Immigration and Social Disorganization Theory*

A second major focus of this study is to examine the structural antecedents of collective efficacy and crime in Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods. Two opposing perspectives have been used to frame studies of the relationships between social capital and crime among Latino immigrant groups. The first is based on traditional social disorganization theory, a theory that emerged in response to the waves of immigrants entering Chicago at the turn of the century. Social disorganization theory proposes that large concentrations of immigrant groups, reflecting ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, disrupt the ability of neighborhood residents to cultivate and maintain social ties, and communicate and realize common norms and values, ultimately undermining the neighborhood's capacity for informal social control. In research examining this proposition, immigrant concentration is generally treated as an exogenous source of social disorganization, along with poverty and residential instability. Recent findings suggest that immigrant concentration disrupts collective efficacy, leading to higher rates of community violence (Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). The positive relationship between immigrant concentration and crime may also be due to the lack of formal social control in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations. There is some evidence that immigrants exhibit lower levels of "legal consciousness" and are thus less likely to rely on the police and court system to deal with crime and other social problems (Menjívar and Bejarano 2004; Merry 1990).

The second perspective asserts that a "Latino paradox" has emerged whereby Latinos tend to do better across a range of outcomes, including

violent crime, than other groups living in similarly disadvantaged neighborhoods (Martinez 2002; Nielsen, Lee, and Martinez 2005; Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush 2005). These studies have led to speculation that sociologists have been too quick to blame immigration as a direct cause of social disorganization and may have overlooked the degree of social *organization* that immigrant populations are capable of manifesting. In a study of Chicago neighborhoods, Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush (2005) found support for the Latino paradox, namely, significantly lower rates of violent crime among Mexican Americans compared with blacks or whites. Further, neighborhood context mattered, such that immigrant concentration was associated with less violence, even after taking into account the immigrant status of individuals. The authors concluded that both immigrant status and immigrant concentration are “protective” against violence (Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush 2005). Recent research examining the rates of adolescent violence report similar findings, such that immigrant concentration is associated with lower rates of adolescent violence (Desmond and Kubrin 2009). These results are compelling, given that almost half of Latino immigrants in the United States (48%) live in majority-Latino neighborhoods (Suro and Tafoya 2004).

In perhaps the most thorough criminological analysis of the Latino paradox, Martinez (2002) utilized data from San Diego, El Paso, Houston, Chicago, and Miami to empirically demonstrate its two paradoxical tenets: (i) the sociological similarities between Latino and African American living contexts, especially in terms of economic conditions; and (ii) the lower rates of homicide for Latinos in each of the five cities. In explaining these findings, Martinez suggested that “Latinos have lower homicide rates than African Americans because they exhibit higher levels of social integration, especially as measured by labor market involvement” (2002:137). Thus, social integration, especially that linking recent immigrants to employment opportunities, may inhibit Latinos from criminal involvement.

Moreover, in an intriguing ethnographic account of the Chicago heat wave of 1995, Klinenberg (2002) draws on the Latino paradox to more fully illustrate the complex nature of Latino social ties and social control. During the heat wave, South Lawndale, a predominantly Latino structurally disadvantaged neighborhood, experienced many fewer heat-related deaths than North Lawndale, a predominantly black neighborhood of similar structural disadvantage. Klinenberg is quick to reject explanations relying solely on the protective role of family ties in Latino communities, based on the observation that African American families also tend to exhibit strong family networks. Further, he finds surprisingly lower reported rates of neighborhood collective efficacy—defined as social cohesion and shared trust combined with a willingness to intervene in social problems—among residents of South Lawndale, as

compared to North Lawndale. The difference between the two communities, according to Klinenberg, was the vitality of public space and public services in South Lawndale, including bustling city streets, local markets, and centralized churches, which encouraged social interaction. This interaction, in turn, facilitated local surveillance and cooperation in protecting the neighborhood's most vulnerable residents from heat-related death. Although a later quantitative investigation of Klinenberg's ethnography did not yield evidence of a Latino advantage in terms of avoiding heat-related death, the authors did find that neighborhoods with substantial levels of commercial decline experienced more mortality during the heat wave, consistent with Klinenberg's observations that local public services perhaps played a role in reducing neighborhood mortality rates (Browning, Wallace, Feinberg, and Cagney, 2006)

Klinenberg (2002) and Browning et al. (2006) ultimately make a structural argument in explaining the causes of heat-related mortality, stating that community disinvestment, poverty, segregation, and crime are at the root of the high levels of mortality seen in some Chicago neighborhoods, including North Lawndale. However, both studies also implicitly suggest the role that social ties and social capital played in these neighborhoods. Despite the levels of structural poverty comparable to North Lawndale, residents of South Lawndale were able to maintain purposive social interactions to protect their neighbors. Thus, perhaps, social ties and social control may be bifurcated in Latino communities such that Latinos are able to engage in social control at the neighborhood level without the prerequisite of strong local social ties or collective efficacy. This is consistent with other research that describes Latino immigrant social ties as "fragmented," to the extent that their existence, particularly at the private level, does not readily translate into resources of social capital at the parochial level (Almeida et al. 2009; Menjívar 2000). These findings are supportive of the need to question the putative correlation between social capital and social control by examining the *kinds* of social capital that promote collective efficacy in Latino communities.

Thus, the Latino paradox, informed by the systemic model of social control, suggests that the role of social ties and social capital in Latino communities is more nuanced than previously thought and that Latinos utilize social ties and resources of social capital in unique ways to secure their relatively advantaged position compared to similarly disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups.

### *The Current Study*

Recent neighborhood theory and research examining local sources of urban crime rates have identified collective efficacy as a key protective factor in preventing and controlling crime. Studies in this tradition originally relied

on models that gave theoretical importance to the role of local social ties in promoting social control. However, more recent inquiries in this vein have examined broader categories of social capital in promoting crime control. More specifically, the role of local social ties is now downplayed, as they are viewed as necessary only to the extent that they promote the collective civic engagement and trust which underpin social capital. Thus, what is needed to explain a neighborhood's collective efficacy with respect to crime and delinquency is not just the *number* of social ties in a community but how residents *use* them. That is, how do residents convert social ties into meaningful collective actions—social capital—that may ultimately control and prevent crime?

This study examines structural and social sources of crime in Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods. Specifically, we assess the direct effects of neighborhood structural conditions on crime, as well as the direct and mediating effects of social ties and collective efficacy. We also examine how social ties and collective efficacy are associated with crime in Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods. The study thus contributes to our understanding of the Latino paradox by examining the degree to which social disorganization theory and the systemic model apply to Latino neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

Our specific research questions are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between neighborhood structural conditions—including concentrated disadvantage, residential instability, and immigrant concentration—and robbery victimization?
2. To what extent do social ties and collective efficacy predict neighborhood levels of robbery victimization?
3. Do social ties and collective efficacy mediate the relationship between neighborhood structural conditions and robbery victimization?
4. Are these effects the same or different for Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods?

### ***Data and Measures***

The primary source of data for this research comes from the first wave of the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (LAFANS), completed in 2002. Los Angeles is well situated to provide a theoretically and empirically relevant sociological context for this study because of its unique pattern of immigration and settlement, particularly for Latinos, and the resulting ethnic diversity it contains. Los Angeles County has the largest Latino population of any U.S. county. Approximately 45 percent of the county's residents are Latino and 33 percent are foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).



The LAFANS was created to examine variation across neighborhoods in a range of outcomes including adults' health and well-being and children's social and educational development. It utilizes a longitudinal design based on a stratified random sample of 65 neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, with an oversample in poor neighborhoods and households with children. These neighborhoods were operationalized from U.S. Census tracts. The use of census tracts to approximate neighborhoods is common practice in studies of neighborhood effects (for a review, see Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002) and, in LAFANS, census tracts were utilized because of their size, compactness, social ecology, and the flexibility that they provide in examining a range of neighborhood- and school-based effects (Sastry et al. 2003).

In Wave 1, an average of 41 households were randomly selected and interviewed within each neighborhood. Within each household, both adults and children were randomly selected and interviewed. Respondents were administered several questionnaires asking about their household economic status, education, employment and migration/immigration history, as well as questions about their neighborhood, social ties and support. Our analyses utilize the adult questionnaire, given to one randomly selected adult in each household, resulting in 2593 respondents nested within 65 neighborhoods. Additional data come from the 2000 Census of Population and Housing to describe neighborhood structural characteristics, such as neighborhood disadvantage, residential instability, and ethnic composition.

***Robbery Victimization.*** The dependent variable in this research, robbery victimization, is a dichotomous measure representing whether the respondent has been robbed in his/her current neighborhood.

***Neighborhood Social Ties.*** *Social Ties* was calculated as the neighborhood-level mean of two items asking the number of friends and relatives that residents reported living in the neighborhood.

***Collective Efficacy with Respect to Crime and Delinquency.*** Collective efficacy is conceptualized as a combination of neighborhood cohesion and trust, along with informal social control. Neighborhood cohesion/trust is measured by 8 items using a 5-point Likert scale. Residents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with the following statements: (i) this is a close-knit neighborhood; (ii) here are adults in this neighborhood that children can look up to; (iii) people around here are willing to help their neighbors; (iv) you can count on adults in this neighborhood to watch out that children are safe and do not get into trouble; (v) people in this neighborhood can be



trusted; (vi) parents in this neighborhood know their children's friends; (vii) adults in this neighborhood know who the local children are; and (viii) parents in this neighborhood generally know each other. Alpha for this scale was .83. Informal social control is measured by 3 items also on a 5-point Likert scale. Residents were asked about the likelihood that their neighbors would do something about (i) children skipping school and hanging out on a street corner; (ii) children spray painting graffiti on a local building; and (iii) children showing disrespect to an adult.<sup>2</sup> Alpha for this scale was .71.

Responses to these items were aggregated to the neighborhood level. At the neighborhood level, cohesion/trust and informal social control were correlated at .86, and thus combined to create *collective efficacy*. At the neighborhood level, collective efficacy represents an average of residents' perceptions of collective efficacy in their neighborhoods.

***Neighborhood Structural Characteristics.*** We included three variables to represent neighborhood structural characteristics; the scales were constructed from the average of standardized items drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census. *Concentrated disadvantage* is a scale comprised of percentage of families in poverty, percentage of families receiving public assistance, percentage of unemployed individuals, percentage of female-headed families with children, and percentage of residents who are black. Alpha for this scale was .87. *Immigrant concentration* includes the percentage of Latino and foreign-born residents; these two items were correlated at .87. *Residential instability* is defined as the percentage of residents 5 years or older who did not live in the same house 5 years earlier, and the percentage of homes that are renter-occupied; these two items were correlated at .78.

***Individual-level Control Variables.*** Although this study is concerned with neighborhood-level processes, it is important to control for compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of people they contain. This allows us to separate the effects of neighborhood characteristics from the effects of characteristics of people within those neighborhoods. Thus, several individual-level control variables were included: dummy variables for *Male*, *Latino (non-Latino is the reference category)*, *Black (white is the reference category)*, *Primary Caregiver*, *Born in the United States*, as well as a variable representing *Age* (in years).<sup>3</sup>

### ***Statistical Methods***

The multilevel design of the LAFANS allows us to analyze the effects of the neighborhood-level variables while taking into account compositional differences between neighborhoods. We estimated random intercept, fixed slope

hierarchical models because our research interests are at the neighborhood level. Further, because our outcome variable is a dichotomous measure, we used a Bernoulli sampling model with logit link to predict the expected log odds of robbery victimization across neighborhoods. Individual-level variables are included to reduce spuriousness in the model because of compositional effects.

In the first part of the analysis, we examined three multilevel models predicting neighborhood robbery victimization. Model A includes the structural characteristics (concentrated disadvantage, immigrant concentration, residential instability).<sup>4</sup> Model B adds social ties. Model C includes collective efficacy. We examined social ties separate from collective efficacy to be consistent with prior research (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997).

In the second part of the analysis, we divided the sample into “Latino neighborhoods” (greater than 70% Latino population) and “non-Latino neighborhoods” (70% or less Latino population).<sup>5</sup> Although there is no consensus about how best to operationalize a “Latino” neighborhood, we chose 70 percent as a cutoff as it corresponds to .5 standard deviations above the mean of Latino composition for the sample (55%) and also allows for sufficient and relatively similar sample sizes between the Latino and non-Latino subgroups (see also Krivo, Peterson, and Kuhl 2009).

## Results

### *Descriptive Results*

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the neighborhood- and individual-level variables for the full sample, as well as for Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods. (Correlations for all explanatory variables are presented in the Appendix.)<sup>6</sup> These data indicate substantial variation across the neighborhoods in levels of robbery victimization, concentrated disadvantage, and residential instability, with Latino neighborhoods exhibiting relatively greater levels of both. There is also variation in social ties and collective efficacy. Latino neighborhoods are characterized by significantly less collective efficacy. Interestingly, however, Latino neighborhoods had significantly more social ties.

Regarding the individual-level variables, for the whole sample, 41 percent of the respondents were men, 57 percent were Latino, 10 percent were black, the average age was 40 years, 40 percent were primary caregivers, and 45 percent were born in the United States.<sup>7</sup> When comparing Latino to non-Latino neighborhoods, notable differences emerge in Latino ethnicity, race, age, and nativity. Not surprisingly, 84 percent of residents are Latino in Latino neighborhoods, compared with only 36 percent in non-Latino neighborhoods. Non-Latino neighborhoods have more black residents, and also, residents are

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics for Analytical Variables

	Full sample		Latino neighborhoods		Non-Latino neighborhoods	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Neighborhood level</b>						
Robbery victimization	.43	.11	.46	.10	.40*	.10
Concentrated disadvantage	.00	.82	.28	.53	-.20**	.75
Immigrant concentration	.00	.95	–	–	–	–
Residential instability	.00	.90	.27	.75	-.22*	.88
Social ties	1.70	.13	1.75	.11	1.67**	0.14
Collective efficacy	.00	.26	-.14	.19	.12***	.25
<i>N</i>	65		28		37	
<b>Individual level</b>						
Male	.41	.49	.41	.49	.41	.49
Latino	.57	.50	.84	.36	.36***	.48
Black	.10	.30	.07	.26	.12***	.32
Age	39.68	14.47	38.15	14.66	40.84***	14.22
Primary caregiver	.40	.49	.40	.49	.41	.49
U.S. born	.45	.50	.29	.45	.57***	.49
<i>N</i>	2593		1115		1478	

\*Significantly different from Latino coefficient at  $p < .05$ .

\*\*Significantly different from Latino coefficient at  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*Significantly different from Latino coefficient at  $p < .001$ .

slightly older in non-Latino neighborhoods. Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly, the percent born in the United States is substantially lower in Latino neighborhoods than in non-Latino neighborhoods.

### *Multivariate Results*

Because this research involves multilevel analyses, we first assessed the amount of variance in the outcome measure—robbery victimization—that exists between and within the 65 neighborhoods. For the unconditional model, with no covariates included, the between-neighborhood variance component was .090 (chi-square = 119.710,  $df = 64$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating significant variation in log odds of robbery victimization between neighborhoods. Next, individual-level controls were added to the unconditional model to determine how much of the between-neighborhood variation was attributed to compositional differences between neighborhoods in the kinds of people they contain. The between-neighborhood variance component was relatively unchanged at .109 (chi-square = 128.991,  $df = 64$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Comparing the variance components for the unconditional model to the individual-level model indicates that individual-level variables account for about 21 percent of the variance in robbery victimization within neighborhoods ( $.21 = .090-.109/.090$ ). Thus, a large amount of the between-neighborhood variation in robbery victimization may be attributable to aggregate-level social processes, independent of the individual characteristics of residents.

Table 2 presents the results of the HLM analyses estimating expected log odds of robbery victimization. The neighborhood-level coefficients produced by each model reflect the changes in the mean log odds of robbery victimization across neighborhoods. Although our main theoretical focus is on the neighborhood-level variables (the upper portion of the table), each model also includes individual-level controls.

As shown in Model A, two of the three neighborhood structural characteristics were significantly and positively related to robbery victimization. Neighborhoods characterized by greater socioeconomic disadvantage and immigrant concentration exhibited higher log odds of robbery victimization. These results are consistent with those reported in previous research on Chicago (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997) and support the traditional social disorganization theory assertions that large concentrations of poverty and of immigrant groups undermine local social control and exacerbate crime and delinquency. Specifically, a one-unit increase in disadvantage corresponds to a 37 percent increase in the odds of robbery victimization. At the individual level, blacks (relative to whites) had significantly lower log odds of being robbed, while respondents born in the United States face a higher risk.

**Table 2**  
 Logistic Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Robbery Victimization  
 (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model A	Model B	Model C
<b>Neighborhood-level variables</b>			
Intercept	-.309 (.052)	-1.522 (.717)	-1.749 (.673)
Concentrated disadvantage	.317** (.096)	.312** (.095)	.073 (.117)
Immigrant concentration	.189* (.078)	.142 (.082)	.024 (.086)
Residential instability	-.106 (.075)	-.097 (.074)	-.151* (.072)
Social ties		.713 (.421)	.846* (.395)
Collective efficacy			-1.178** (.380)
<b>Individual-level controls<sup>a</sup></b>			
Male	.122 (.108)	.122 (.108)	.119 (.108)
Latino	.037 (.118)	.049 (.119)	.036 (.119)
Black	-.418** (.167)	-.403* (.168)	-.394* (.167)
Age	.002 (.002)	.002 (.002)	.002 (.003)
Primary caregiver	.069 (.111)	.065 (.111)	.064 (.111)
U.S. born	.593*** (.101)	.593*** (.101)	.589*** (.101)
Variance component	.07	.06	.04
Model chi-square	99.76**	94.79**	81.45*

<sup>a</sup>All individual-level variables grand-mean centered.

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

The remainder of Table 2 (models B and C) examines the effects of local social ties and collective efficacy, and the degree to which these measures mediate the effects of concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration on robbery victimization. We examine social ties separately from collective efficacy because, following prior research, we are interested in the degree to which the systemic model of social disorganization holds in these Los Angeles neighborhoods (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). As shown in Model B, the social ties indicator was not significantly related to neighborhood robbery victimization. Further, there was little evidence of mediation when comparing the coefficients for the structural variables before and after adding the social ties variable. At the individual level, black race and born in the United States remained significantly related to robbery victimization.

Model C adds collective efficacy. In this model, residential instability becomes slightly inversely related to the log odds of robbery victimization, suggesting that neighborhoods with less turnover experience more robbery. Further, social ties is positively related to robbery victimization, calling into question the protective benefits of the mere presence of local friends and family. In contrast, collective efficacy was significantly and inversely related to the neighborhood-level log odds of robbery victimization. Specifically, a one-unit increase in the collective efficacy scale results in a 69 percent reduction in the odds of robbery victimization. In this model, we also see evidence of mediation; the effect of concentrated disadvantage was reduced by 77 percent ( $[-.317-.073]/.317$ ), and the effect of immigrant concentration was reduced by 87 percent ( $[-.189-.024]/.189$ ). Once again, these results are consistent with those reported in previous research on Chicago (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). These results indicate that low levels of collective efficacy are a key factor contributing to high log odds of robbery victimization in neighborhoods characterized by concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration. Relationships at the individual level remained unchanged.

### *Latino and non-Latino Neighborhoods*

The Latino paradox thesis would suggest that in majority-Latino neighborhoods traditional predictors of low collective efficacy and high crime are weaker than in non-Latino neighborhoods. This is because there is something protective about a high concentration of Latino residents, which gives rise to collective efficacy independent of the structural context in which Latino residents find themselves (Martinez 2002). Therefore, our next set of analyses address the question: Are the results reported above the same for Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods? To explore this question, we examined the effects of neighborhood structural conditions, social ties, and collective efficacy on robbery victimization in neighborhoods characterized as Latino and non-Latino.<sup>8</sup> We thus replicated the models shown in Table 2 for each neighborhood type and tested for differences between regression coefficients (see Paternoster et al. 1998). Table 3 presents the results of these analyses. In Model A, concentrated disadvantage was positively related to the log odds of robbery victimization in both Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods; however, the effect was only significant in non-Latino neighborhoods. At the individual level, in Latino neighborhoods, being born in the United States was significantly and positively related to the log odds of robbery victimization. In non-Latino neighborhoods, being born in the United States was significantly and positively related robbery victimization; being black was inversely related robbery victimization.

**Table 3**  
 Logistic Hierarchical Linear Models Predicting Robbery Victimization in Latino and Non-Latino Neighborhoods (Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	Model A		Model B		Model C	
	Latino	Non-Latino	Latino	Non-Latino	Latino	Non-Latino
<b>Neighborhood-level variables</b>						
Intercept	-.17 (.087)	-.33 (.074)	-2.16 (1.230)	-1.09 (.888)	-2.32 (1.264)	-.89 (.729)
Concentrated disadvantage	.12 (.164)	.45** (.119)	.16 (.161)	.43** (.120)	.06 (.215)	.08 (.130)
Residential instability	-.10 (.118)	-.03 (.092)	-.12 (.116)	-.03 (.092)	-.13 (.117)	-.20* (.086)
Social ties			1.13 (.698)	.45 (.530)	1.21 (.713)	.38 (.434)
Collective efficacy					-.43 (.600)	-1.79*** (.438)
<b>Individual-level controls<sup>a</sup></b>						
Male	.16 (.164)	.11 (.145)	.16 (.164)	.11 (.145)	.16 (.164)	.13 (.146)
Latino	.15 (.235)	-.01 (.137)	.14 (.237)	-.01 (.138)	.14 (.237)	-.11 (.140)
Black	-.40 (.319)	-.44* (.202)	-.40 (.319)	-.43* (.202)	-.40 (.320)	-.48* (.202)
Age	.00 (.004)	.00 (.004)	.00 (.004)	.00 (.004)	.00 (.004)	.00 (.004)
Primary caregiver	-.01 (.168)	.15 (.150)	-.02 (.168)	.15 (.150)	-.02 (.168)	.18 (.150)
U.S. born	.72*** (.162)	.49*** (.128)	.70*** (.163)	.50*** (.128)	.70*** (.163)	.53*** (.128)
Variance component	.06	.08	.05	.07	.05	.01
Model chi-square	38.32*	57.35**	34.60	55.72**	33.92*	37.11*

<sup>a</sup>All individual-level variables grand-mean centered.

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



Model B includes the variable social ties, which, as shown, was not significantly related to robbery victimization in Latino or non-Latino neighborhoods. This is also consistent with results from the full sample. Neighborhood disadvantage remained significantly and positively related to robbery victimization in non-Latino neighborhoods. Results at the individual level are consistent with those from Model A.

Model C adds the collective efficacy scale. In Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods, collective efficacy was inversely related to the log odds of robbery victimization; the negative effect of collective efficacy on robbery victimization was significantly stronger in non-Latino neighborhoods. Further, in both types of neighborhoods, collective efficacy appears to mediate the effects of concentrated disadvantage on robbery victimization. However, in non-Latino neighborhoods, collective efficacy exhibits much more mediation than in Latino neighborhoods; this mediation effect was significantly different between Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> In Latino neighborhoods, the concentrated disadvantage coefficient was reduced by 52 percent  $(.118-.057)/.118$ . In non-Latino neighborhoods, the coefficient for concentrated disadvantage was reduced by 82 percent  $(.445-.078)/.078$  and rendered non-significant. Results at the individual level remain unchanged.

To further assess the differential effects of collective efficacy in Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods, we performed supplemental analyses examining the effects of concentrated disadvantage, residential instability, and social ties on collective efficacy (results not shown). Interestingly, the negative association between concentrated disadvantage and collective efficacy is virtually the same in Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods; however, the relationship between social ties and collective efficacy, while non-significant in both types of neighborhoods, is positive in Latino neighborhoods but negative in non-Latino neighborhoods. Perhaps, residents in Latino neighborhoods are better able to compensate for structural disadvantage by drawing on networks of social ties for the cultivation of collective efficacy, thereby weakening the association that might otherwise exist between concentrated disadvantage and collective efficacy, consistent with the Latino paradox hypothesis.

Overall, these results suggest that neighborhood social ties are not associated with robbery victimization in either Latino or non-Latino neighborhoods (see also, Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001). However, other forms of social capital, specifically collective efficacy, do appear to influence the log odds of robbery victimization in both neighborhood contexts. Moreover, in both Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods, collective efficacy appears to mediate the effects of disadvantage on robbery victimization, although the mediation effect is much stronger in non-Latino neighborhoods.

## Discussion

In this study, we set out to examine the role of collective efficacy in reducing crime in Los Angeles neighborhoods, with a special focus on comparing Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods, and on comparing the magnitude of the effects of social ties and collective efficacy. Findings from the full sample call in to question traditional social disorganization theory, as well as the systemic model of social control. Concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration are not associated with higher log odds of neighborhood robbery victimization. Residential instability and social ties work in the opposite direction of past theory and research. Perhaps, most importantly, the findings indicate that collective efficacy exerts a strong negative effect on neighborhood robbery victimization and significantly mediates the effects of concentrated disadvantage on robbery victimization. Thus, concentrated disadvantage is associated with higher log odds of robbery victimization because it inhibits collective efficacy. The mediation effect for concentrated disadvantage, however, was substantially weaker in the Latino neighborhoods (52%) than in the non-Latino neighborhoods (82%). This is because, while collective efficacy negatively effects robbery victimization in both Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods, it is less linked to concentrated disadvantage in Latino neighborhoods and therefore plays less of a role there in the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and crime.

Why is collective efficacy less strongly associated with concentrated disadvantage in Latino neighborhoods? Although our data do not allow us to answer this question definitively, we offer the following conjectures. Drawing on the Latino paradox thesis, we suggest that social capital among Latinos, which has been found to be substantially linked to their relatively high levels of labor market involvement (Martinez 2002), may be less susceptible to the adverse effects of concentrated disadvantage, thus weakening the association between social capital and concentrated disadvantage compared to what is found in non-Latino neighborhoods. Alternatively, drawing on prior work by Klinenberg (2002), it may be that Latino neighborhoods tend to exhibit a greater amount of vitality in public spaces, which encourage social interaction and surveillance among residents even in the presence of relatively high degrees of concentrated disadvantage. In line with the Latino paradox thesis, our findings point to resilience in some Latino neighborhoods and raise compelling questions about the ability of these neighborhoods to cultivate and maintain forms of social capital that contribute to the exercise of collective efficacy and control of crime.

This research advances our theoretical understanding of neighborhood sources of collective efficacy and crime in two important ways. First, it is consistent with a growing body of research indicating that social ties are not

sufficient for social control and that the systemic model of social control must be broadened to focus on the neighborhood processes that *engage* and *activate* social ties, like collective efficacy. In a second important theoretical contribution, this research suggests a need to rethink the role that “immigrant concentration” plays in the systemic model of social control. Traditional explanations of neighborhood crime relying on this model stress the “disorganizing” influence of waves of immigrant populations on community social ties (Shaw and McKay 1942). Indeed, the unique cultural composition of these immigrant groups has been largely overlooked; what has been thought to matter is the process by which neighborhood ethnic heterogeneity creates linguistic and cultural barriers to residents’ ability to communicate and interact with one another (Bursik, 2006; Cancino, Varano, Schafer, and Enriquez 2007). However, our findings indicate that immigrant concentration is associated with higher levels of robbery victimization, not because it undermines local social ties, but rather because it is associated with lower levels of collective efficacy (Desmond and Kubrin 2009; Nyden et al. 1998; Portes and Stepick 1993). This finding further underscores the need for researchers to continue their efforts to uncover social capital factors that promote collective efficacy in the absence of strong social ties.

Given the growing Latino presence in American neighborhoods and the unique way in which collective efficacy appears to mediate the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and crime in Latino neighborhoods, the results of this research suggest several policy implications. For example, if Latino populations in urban neighborhoods are able to draw on social capital for crime prevention and control despite high levels of concentrated disadvantage, then perhaps traditional (and often limited) policy efforts to reduce economic disadvantage in urban neighborhoods should be expanded to include other approaches. Perhaps, long-range neighborhood revitalization efforts should focus directly on supporting local engagement and attachment among Latino residents, thereby generating collective efficacy and ultimately reducing local crime rates. However, the link between informal and formal social control should not be ignored, especially because many Latinos report contentious or non-existent relationships with the police (Skogan and Hartnett 1997; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone 2000). Recent situational policing research by Nolan, Conti, and McDevitt (2004) has generated a typology of neighborhoods with implications for police–citizen engagement. Latino neighborhoods, characterized by relatively higher levels of crime and lower levels of collective efficacy, would be characterized as “anomic” according to this typology. However, in Latino neighborhoods, the presence of social ties and collective efficacy even in the face of structural disadvantage suggests that policing strategies there should negotiate a compromise between more traditional reactive responses and those that draw on the social capital available at the neighborhood

level (see Martinez 2007). Conceivably, such efforts may also be successful in disadvantaged non-Latino neighborhoods (see Sampson 2008), although here the links to concentrated disadvantage are stronger, which may make such efforts more difficult to enact successfully.

Several limitations to this research should be noted. Although the second wave of LAFANS is currently being compiled, all of the survey items in these analyses are measured at the same point in time, thus complicating the assessment of causality. While we believe that the empirical relationships revealed in this study outweigh this limitation, further research is needed to clarify their causal direction. For example, although collective efficacy affects crime, it is also possible that crime might, in turn, feedback on collective efficacy. Moreover, as research continues to examine the effect of immigration on collective efficacy and crime, data are needed that provide more information about the *process* of immigration, including how waves of immigrants into local communities affect mechanisms of social control over time.

We were also unable to examine the effects of collective efficacy on crime for specific Latino populations based on their country of origin or their length of time in the United States. Further research should examine the role that “ethnic enclaves” play in overcoming local disadvantage and sustaining social networks and social capital, as well as cross-level relationships between individual ethnicity and neighborhood ethnic composition and their implications for the cultivation and maintenance of social ties, social capital, and collective efficacy (see Almeida et al. 2009).

Finally, although Los Angeles is an important sociological context in which to examine the local consequences of a growing Latino presence, additional research in other metropolitan areas is needed to assess the generalizability of the phenomena described here. Specifically, we suggest the need to examine these social processes in cities where the Latino presence is relatively new and not so entrenched; settlement patterns and the use of local social capital in such cities might offer important insights regarding the Latino paradox.

The sociological significance of the neighborhood has been “lost” and “found” in recent years. City dwellers can work, play, and shop beyond the boundaries of their local neighborhood, traveling to the suburbs, or even the Internet, for economic and other personal needs, and they generally rely on close friends and family for psychological support. But what the contemporary local neighborhood *does* provide is a site for the development and maintenance of local norms affirming civility and mutual trust, public safety, local volunteerism, and collective responsibility for neighborhood children (Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999). Although neighborhood residents may turn to agents of formal social control outside of the locality for resources like law enforcement and political representation, they rely on each other for informal social

control and collective action. And, as this and other research indicates, even as social ties diversify and disperse beyond the urban metropolis, the cultivation of collective efficacy and the control and prevention of local crime and deviance are possible if efforts are made to encourage in the cultivation of social capital within the neighborhood.

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup>The authors used Hunter's (1985) concepts of private, parochial, and public levels of social control to explain how neighborhood social ties and participation in local institutions help to enforce social control and control crime. At the informal level, private and parochial social control are grounded in intimate familial relationships, friendships networks, and local institutions, such as schools, churches, and voluntary organizations. Public, or formal, social control refers to the ability of the neighborhood to solicit resources from agencies outside of the community, such as funding for local social services and law enforcement. This work suggests that informal social control is the basis for accessing a wide array of social resources including those aimed at crime control.

<sup>2</sup>It is important to note that informal social control, as described in this data set, is particularly focused on child-centered activities. A relationship between local youth misbehavior and neighborhood disorder is predicted by prior theory and research (Osgood and Anderson 2004; Osgood, Wilson, Bachman, O'Malley, and Johnston 1996; Sampson and Groves 1989). Minor disturbances involving neighborhood children, such as loitering and vandalism, often lead to more serious delinquency and crime, and thus, it is suggested that the supervision and socialization of local youth have important implications for preventing and controlling neighborhood crime and deviance (Bursik 1988).

<sup>3</sup>Additional theoretically relevant level 1 covariates were examined, including marital status and level of education; their coefficients were not significant, so they were excluded from the models.

<sup>4</sup>All models were also analyzed with a concentrated disadvantage measure excluding the percent black item. Results were similar and are available from the authors upon request.

<sup>5</sup>Owing to the small numbers of Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods ( $n = 28$  and  $n = 37$ , respectively), we elected to partition the sample rather than analyze the data using multiplicative interaction terms.

<sup>6</sup>Standard errors, variance inflation factors, and tolerance statistics do not indicate a problem with multicollinearity. Further, all level 1 variables were grand-mean centered to help reduce multicollinearity in the models.

<sup>7</sup>Using U.S. Census data to compare these demographic characteristics with that of Los Angeles County as a whole revealed similar patterns. However, the LAFANS sample contained a higher percentage of Latinos (57% in the sample, compared with 47% in the census), and fewer born in the United States (45% in the sample, compared with 65% in the census), and a lower average income (\$34,619 in the sample, compared with \$55,192 in the census).

<sup>8</sup>Immigrant concentration is not included in these analyses because it contains percent Latino in its computation.

<sup>9</sup>Using a Sobel test of indirect effects to assess how much collective efficacy mediates the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and robbery victimization, and then comparing the indirect

effects for Latino and non-Latino neighborhoods using a test of differences of regression coefficients, the indirect effects are significantly different at  $p = .05$ . Results are available upon request.

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### Appendix

#### Correlations for Explanatory Variables

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Neighborhood level		1	2	3	4	5	
Concentrated disadvantage	1	–					
Immigrant concentration	2	.51*	–				
Residential instability	3	.52*	.49*	–			
Social ties	4	.19	.38*	.14	–		
Collective efficacy	5	–.80*	–.69*	–.60*	–.20	–	
Individual-level		1	2	3	4	5	6
Male	1	–					
Latino	2	.00	–				
Black	3	–.06*	–.36*	–			
Age	4	.00	–.23*	.04	–		
Primary caregiver	5	–.63*	.03	.07*	–.20*	–	
U.S. born	6	–.02	–.50*	.31*	.10*	–.04	–

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\* $p < .05$ .