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***CONTEXT OF RECEPTION AND THE INCIDENCE OF POVERTY
AMONG CHILDREN OF RECENT IMMIGRANTS***

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CONTEXT OF RECEPTION AND THE INCIDENCE OF POVERTY AMONG CHILDREN OF RECENT IMMIGRANTS

The present focus on the immigrant second generation is well placed in that more than a fifth of children under the age of six in the United States have one or more immigrant parents (Capps et al. 2004). Further, since the full enactment of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1968, migration flows have continued to intensify, and, resultingly, the proportion of children with immigrant parents is bound to grow. The short- and long-run prospects of these children, of course, depend on the ability of their parents to improve their human capital and translate it into earnings. The apparent inability of some immigrants to do this has led to high rates of poverty among them and their American-born children (Capps et al. 2004) and to criticism of U.S. immigration and welfare policy (Borjas 1998, 1999).

High rates of poverty among immigrants and their children can be viewed through two lenses: the supply-side lens focuses on human capital shortcomings of immigrants to account for their high rates of poverty while the demand-side lens brings into focus the structural constraints faced by immigrants (Kalmijn 1996). The avoidance of poverty (and the ultimate socioeconomic assimilation of immigrant groups) involves accommodations on the parts of both the immigrant and the “host” (Gordon 1964). The immigrant must obtain the necessary educational credentials and/or occupational skills, and the host must honor them. To the extent that this happens, poverty among immigrants may be reduced to a level similar to that of “old-stock” Americans in the space of two or three generations.

This paper takes a decidedly demand-side approach to the question of poverty among the children of immigrants by attempting to assess the impact of “contexts of reception” on poverty rates among immigrant groups (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). At the same time, the effects of parental education are taken into consideration in order to measure, in some part, the role that

human capital shortcomings have in understanding poverty among second generation children. Unlike prior studies, this one focuses of the children of immigrants who arrived in the 1980's and is carried out with the national origins group as the unit of analysis.¹ All of this is done in order that we may assess the relative importance of government-, community- and societal-reception on the prevalence of poverty among the children of immigrants. Rather than answering the question what kinds of children are most likely to experience poverty, I seek to answer the question, “what kinds of groups are likely to be characterized by high levels of child poverty?”

Context of Reception and Immigrant Experience

Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (2001) explain that the experiences and opportunities of immigrants are shaped by “the social environment that receives them, including the policies of the host government, the attitudes of the native population, and the presence and size of a co-ethnic community” (p.46). Each of these types of reception is addressed in the paragraphs to follow.

Government receptivity. There are any number of ways that the U.S. government may demonstrate its receptivity to prospective immigrants. Prior to the World War II, government sanctioned preferences were transparent. The wholesale exclusion of Chinese and Japanese immigrants evidenced a complete lack of receptivity on the part of the U.S. government. Immigration from North and Western European has been practically unrestricted throughout most the history of the United States, and such immigrants have been benefitted from generous government-sanctioned resettlement programs such as the Homestead Act of 1862 which

¹ National origins, nationality and ancestry are used interchangeably in this paper. Ancestry is used since one of the groups in this study—the Hmong—are comprised of a single ethnic group hailing from more than one country.

provided extraordinary opportunities for (mainly European) immigrants for 50 years after its passage. In the Post-Civil Rights Era there are few legal means for the government to explicitly encourage some nationality groups over others. Family-sponsored or employer-sponsored immigrants can be favored, but English immigrants, for example, cannot be favored on the basis of their English origins.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that refugee resettlement programs reflect a high level of governmental receptivity for those to whom they are made available. In the case of refugees, the U.S. government not only allows for their entrance into the country, but also has programs in place to aid in their resettlement (Haines 1995; Downing 1984)—assistance not typically afforded to non-refugee immigrants. While such assistance cannot be offered solely on the basis of national origins, in practice it has been reserved for refugees fleeing a hand full of communist countries perceived as threats to the West (Portes and Rumbaut 1996)—Cuba and Vietnam being the most notable.

In 1980 President Jimmy Carter signed the Refugee Act into law bringing criteria for entrance into the U.S. with refugee status in line with the United Nations definition of refugee. However, that legislation dictated that each year the “President, after consultation with the Congress, sets worldwide [and regional] refugee admissions ceilings” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2004:40). U.S. Presidents through the 1980’s and 1990’s authorized very small numbers of refugee admissions from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America and large numbers from the Europe despite considerable political and religious persecution in the former areas. On these grounds it may be argued that European immigrants groups have, on average, experienced more favorable patterns of governmental reception than African and

Caribbean/Latin American groups. Southeast Asian and Cuban immigrants fleeing communism shared in the good fortune of European refugees, but how good is it?

Unlike the Homestead Act, whose benefits lasted a life time for its beneficiaries and were even transmitted across generations, the Refugee Act provided for assistance that lasted for only three years (Downing 1984). Favorable patterns of government receptivity may have only fleeting effects in the lives of immigrants in the Post-Civil Rights Era. Resettlement programs may avert poverty in the years immediately following arrival but may have little or no effect on the lives and life chances of refugees and their children in the long-run.

Societal Receptivity. If history is any indication the actions of the government do not always reflect the will of the people. Looking back again to the nineteenth century, the Homestead Act can be looked on as an enticement for immigrants during a period in which the American populous was gripped with fear of a foreign scourge (Daniels 2005; Reimers 1999). Because the U.S. government has been welcoming to Cuban, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Russian immigrants recently does not mean that the U.S. citizenry has been enthusiastic about their arrivals. This paradox was dramatized by the racially motivated murder of Ming Hai Loo in 1989. Loo was a Chinese-American who was mistaken for Vietnamese (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1992).

As prevalent as anti-Asian and anti-Hispanic sentiments have been in the U.S., it is not altogether clear that they will persist in the way anti-Black affect has. More precisely, it is not clear that the hostility born by many Asian and Hispanic Americans is based on ideological racism and not a more general xenophobia (Yancey 2003). Recent examinations of interracial marriage patterns among immigrant and native populations have pointed to dramatic reductions

in social distance between Asians, Hispanics and Whites in the U.S (Lee and Bean 2004). Alba and Nee (2003) point to the particularly high rates of outmarriage among Japanese-Americans as evidence that assimilation is a possibility for non-European groups in American society. However, a substantial racial divide persists between Blacks and Whites (Lee and Bean 2004; Bean and Stevens 2003). This divide may translate into extraordinary difficulties in securing employment (Pager and Western 2005), equal wages (Dodoo and Takyi 2002), and quality housing (Waters 1999) for immigrant groups identified as Black. They may be subject to prejudices and discriminations that have nothing to do with their nativity and everything to do with deep-seated American beliefs regarding the character and potentialities of African peoples (Bashi and McDaniel 1997).

It should also be noted here that societal receptivity may have great deal to do with group size—the larger an immigrant grows the more backlash is liable to encounter (Blalock 1981; Quillian 1996). However, any conflict that may spark in areas experiencing an influx of Asian and/or Hispanic immigrants may be a temporary stage in the “race relations cycle” (Park 1950) that will ultimately lead to their assimilation. Only time will tell. Regardless, this is an eventuality that is less likely for Blacks who must confront the oldest, most divisive, and most stubborn of American racist beliefs (Feagin 2001). On these grounds we may expect to find immigrant groups identifying disproportionately as Black being particularly susceptible to poverty.

Often lost in discussion of the new second generation are European and other “White” immigrants. However, it is reasonable to expect that they have an unambiguous advantage over other immigrants due to their phenotypic and (presumed) cultural similarities to members of the American majority. Such an advantage may manifest itself in lower than average poverty rates.

In the absence of such an advantage, immigrants may be inclined to exploit the only resources available to them on arrival—those that lie in their receiving coethnic communities.

Community Receptivity. Historically, immigrant communities and/or ethnic enclaves have sheltered newcomers from the ill-effects that nativist activities may have had on their lives otherwise. In the context of legal employment discrimination, early twentieth century immigrants often found themselves shutout of the most lucrative types of wage-labor. So many of them relied on the tight-knit social networks present in their communities to locate and secure work in industries in which their coethnic predecessors had gained a foothold (Model 1984), in economic niches that were non-threatening to members of the majority (Boyd 2001), or in businesses owned and operated by their ethnic brethren (Logan, Alba and McNulty 1994). Often the ethnic allegiances and unfortunate circumstances of immigrants were exploited to the benefit of coethnic business owners (Bonacich 1973) but the new arrivals were nonetheless employed. Things were much more difficult for the pioneers. Immigrants who were among the first of their ethnic group to arrive in a particular city did not have such social networks to assist in their adaptation.

In the modern context, ethnic communities may serve these purposes and more. As Portes and Rumbaut (2001) point out, immigrants of the Post-Civil Rights Era have often arrived with substantial educational credentials and occupations skills. However, it has not been a foregone conclusion that these forms of human capital would benefit their beholders in a commensurate fashion. For highly educated professionals arriving the United States in recent decades, landing in a coethnic community may not have been good enough; rather, they needed to land in coethnic communities with significant numbers of coethnic professionals to act as facilitators and guides.

In any case, social networks often present in ethnic communities have provided access to jobs where none may have otherwise been obvious; such networks have been essential conduits in the advancement of recent immigrants into the American labor force (Waldinger 2003).

The benefits of ethnic communities may not end there. They may, additionally, provide the necessary financial capital and markets for the start-up and maintenance of immigrant-owned businesses (Quillian and Redd 2006) and shelter their resident children from the deleterious effects of American youth cultures (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Bankston 1998). Both of these benefits may avert poverty in the among second generation children in the short- and long-runs.

On the basis of the arguments above it is reasonable to predict that the national origins groups least susceptible to poverty will be distinct in three ways. First, they will be those who experienced a high degree of government receptivity on their arrival--manifest in government funded programs to aid in their resettlement. Second, they will be those who are comprised disproportionately of White and/or non-Black persons. While societal reception has been an issue for all immigrants on the basis of their foreign origins and the often nativist/xenophobic impulses of the "old-stock" U.S. population, the effects of race (phenotype) on the life chances of immigrants is not entirely clear except in the case of Black and White immigrants. They step into a social context in which Black disadvantage and White advantage are unambiguous. This is evidenced in recent studies of the Milwaukee and New York City entry level job markets which both found White testers with criminal records slightly more likely to advance in hiring processes than similarly qualified Black testers who had no criminal records (Pager 2003; Pager and Western 2005). Such a pattern may have significant impacts on employment and, thereby,

poverty and child poverty. Third, successful groups will be those who reside more often in coethnic communities with substantial connections to the labor force and particularly to the professional labor force. In the absence of favorable patterns of government and societal reception it may be particularly important to settle an area criss-crossed densely with (coethnic) network ties that provide information and assistance in securing housing and work. Absent coethnic community or government support, immigrants may be exposed to the unbuffered effects of nativist/xenophobic and/or anti-Black discrimination, left to fend for themselves with relatively little capital of any kind—financial, human, cultural, or social. The children in such groups are more likely to experience poverty than other young members of the new second generation.

Shifting Sands: The Changing Contexts of Immigrant Reception

Studies of the second generation have often neglected to take account of the period in which their immigrant parents arrived—apart, that is, from distinguishing between Pre-Depression Era and Post-Civil Rights Era immigrants. There are a number of reasons to expect that finer distinctions regarding time of arrival matter. First, the extent and quality of government receptivity may change over time. The changing definition of “refugee” (by virtue of the 1980 Refugee Act), for example, may be associated with different outcomes for the more recent additions to the new second generation ranks. This change may, combined with other factors, lead to less select migrations.

The Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 helped to revitalize older streams of immigration and encouraged altogether new streams largely from the developing world. However, immigration law still rested on selection criteria that limited immigration from some parts of the world and

encouraged immigration from other parts. Specifically, the majority of visas were allocated on the basis of “family reunification,” which favored groups who experienced relatively open access to the United States in the years prior to 1965. Other groups were forced to more often vie for “employment-based” visas which lead to highly skilled waves of immigration from the developing world. As an example, more than half of all Egyptian-, Iranian- and Nigerian-American adults were college educated in 1990. College education is a very high standard in that only a fifth of all American adults had achieved it by that time (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). It is unlikely that these levels will be maintained for long since the succeeding waves of immigration from these countries will be increasingly based on “family reunification” rather than human capital. In this sense the early post-Civil Rights Era immigrants may be exceptional.

A third and final reason that examining finer distinctions with regards to “time of arrival” is that two major demand-side trends may have been set into motion by the pioneering waves of post-1965 immigration: 1) the establishment of immigrant communities complete with social and economic networks and 2) the nativist response to recent immigrant successes. Immigrants who arrived in the 1960’s and 70’s entered a U.S. society whose most pressing issue was not immigration but the civic integration of minority groups whose national origins seemed to be irrelevant. By the 1980’s immigration had become an issue again, and by the 1990’s commentators and politicians were talking of an “immigration invasion” (Lutton and Tanton 1994; Brimelow 1995). This increased sense of group threat may have adversely impacted the societal reception and adaptation of later immigrants. On the other hand, later immigrants were beneficiaries of the community-building activities of those who came before. The places many of them arrived were not completely foreign; new ethnic communities were in place to ease their transitions—communities that had not existed when their predecessors arrived. These

countervailing forces may differentiate the experiences of earlier and later waves of Post-Civil Rights Era immigrants.

DATA, MEASURES AND METHODS

Since the question asked here is “what kinds of *groups* fair better than others?” the analyses to follow are all conducted with nationality groups as the unit of analysis, and since the outcome of focus is childhood poverty, only nationality groups with substantial numbers of second generation children are included. For the purposes of this paper, the second generation is defined as the cohort of American-born children residing with immigrant parents who immigrated to the United States in the 1980’s. In this way the possibly exceptional character of the earlier “pioneers” will not unduly skew our perceptions of the new second generation. In order to capture a large number of groups that meet these criteria, the 2000 U.S. Census 5% Public Use Sample (Ruggles and Sobek 2006) is employed. 38 nationalities represented in 1980’s immigrant flow contribute 1,000 or more second generation children to the 5% sample; they are the groups examined here.

Measures

The Dependent Variable. The Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples (IPUMS) include a measure of poverty derived by dividing the recorded family income by the federally established poverty threshold value based on family size and composition (POVERTY). All individuals have a value on this measure despite the fact that it is measured at the level of the family. A score of 100 on this variable means that its beholder is a member of a family whose total income is equal to the poverty threshold. A score of 270 means that the individual’s family income in

2.7 times as great as the poverty threshold value. In this study the poverty variable is dichotomized; those whose families are at or below the poverty threshold ($POVERTY \leq 100$) are considered poor ($POOR = 1$). This is a common strategy in studies of poverty though in some studies “low income” populations are defined as those whose incomes are less than twice the poverty threshold. In others, individuals, families, or households with incomes equal to or less than 1.25 times the poverty threshold value are deemed poor. Here the poverty thresholds themselves are used to define poverty. Doing so yields conservative estimates of the prevalence of poverty and identifies individuals that have been exposed to abject poverty as opposed to just “low income.”

Parental Employment. We may think of parental unemployment as proximate determinant of childhood poverty. While parental employment is not always *sufficient* to lift families above the poverty it is, except in extremely rare cases, *necessary* to lift families out of poverty. In this sense all of the variables described below may impact rates of child poverty only insofar as they impact patterns of parental employment. Preliminary analysis revealed that it takes only one employed parent to avert poverty. Therefore, a variable is included here to indicate the proportion of children in each group who have at least one employed parent.

The Human Capital Variable. Educational credentials and occupational skills may be the most universal/transferable forms of human capital from one context to the next. Occupational skills are a bit more difficult to ascertain since respondents to the Census respond to occupation questions on the basis of their present occupation. For example, a petrochemical engineer from Nigeria who is working as a security guard in the U.S. may show up as a highly educated security guard—and nothing more—in the Census data. On these grounds years of education

completed by the most highly educated parent is taken as the sole indicator of human capital in this study.

The Governmental Reception Variable. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2004) provides estimates of “refugees and asylees granted lawful permanent resident status by region and selected country of birth” for the years 1981 through 1990. The 1990 Census data is used to estimate immigration from each of the 38 countries in Table 1 in the 1980’s. The number of refugees and asylees is divided by the number of immigrants to come to a rate of refugee/asylee admittance (RRAA) that can be interpreted as the number of refugees and asylees granted residency per every 1,000 immigrants who entered during the 1980’s. This variable is not available for 15 of the 38 groups examined here due to missing refugee/asylee data. Among the remaining 23 groups, the RRAA ranges from 0 to 1,324 refugee/asylee admissions per 1,000 immigrants. For four of these 23, the number of refugee/asylee admissions is greater than the number of entrances. This is probably due to a backlog of 1970’s refugees who were not granted lawful permanent residence until the 1980’s. In any case, such groups are treated here as having experienced high levels of governmental receptivity which should translate into low rates of poverty.

The Societal Reception Variables. The matter of societal receptivity is not straight forward. Every group in this study is an immigrant group variably subject to nativist and xenophobic attitudes and behaviors present in the late twentieth century. Such sentiments and discriminations may vary in frequency and intensity from region to region. The most consistent form of intergroup discrimination may be that focused on Black people in the United States and it may be impervious to nativity. Conversely, there may be a persistent and pervasive pattern of White (non-Hispanic) favoritism that neutralizes immigrant disadvantage for some groups. For

these reasons, the percentage of the group identifying as Black and the percentage identifying as White non-Hispanic are treated here as group-level indicators (proxies) of societal reception. White groups might be expected experience less poverty than other groups and Black groups to experience more.

The Community Reception Variables. In the absence of favorable patterns of governmental and societal reception, immigrant success may depend on the existence of coethnic communities. However, not just any coethnic community may do. Those with high levels of employment, generally, and professional employment, more particularly, may be best suited to facilitate socioeconomic mobility for newcomers and their families. On these grounds, three community characteristics are considered here: the percent of residents who are coethnic; the percent of coethnic residents who are employed; and the percent of coethnic residents who are professionals. All of these variables are based on the public use microdata area (PUMA) in which respondents reside. PUMA's are comprised of ten to twenty Census tracts and are used here instead on tracts since coethnic social networks often span urban spaces much larger than a single tract (see Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002). In any case, it is reasonable to expect that the presence of such networks would avert child poverty by way of high employment rates among coethnic immigrants—especially when those networks include significant numbers of people in relatively “high places.”

Much has been made of the fact that dramatic patterns of deindustrialization have left many gateway cities devoid of entry-level unskilled wage-labor which had been a crucial to the adaptation of earlier immigrants and the emergence of urban Black communities. The exodus of these jobs, it is argued, has been disastrous for central city areas leading to crippling social isolation and disorganization (Wilson 1987, 1996). The extent to which children of the second

generation find themselves in these high unemployment areas they may fall victim to the associated maladies. Therefore, one additional PUMA characteristic is included in the analyses to follow—the percent of all residents employed.

Table 1 about here

Table 1. displays unweighted counts of second generation children in all 38 groups examined in this study and summary measures for all variables described above by nationality. Since all analyses to follow are conducted at the level of the group, Table 1 constitutes the data set in its entirety. Each nationality represents a single case with values for each of the ten variables labeled at the top of the columns. It is immediately clear that children of the second generation have highly variable rates of poverty based on the origins of their parents—from a low of 3.5% among Irish second generation children to a high of 48% among Hmong² children of the second generation. It is important to note here that we are talking about the children of immigrants who had by the year 2000 been in the U.S. for ten to twenty years. Therefore, high poverty rates cannot be attributed to recent dates of arrival.

Immigrant groups are similarly variable on the employment and education measures. Not surprisingly, the groups with the highest prevalence of childhood poverty, the Hmong and Cambodian, are also the groups whose parents have the lowest mean levels of educational attainment at 7.6 and 9.0 years of schooling respectively. They also have the lowest levels of parental employment; more than a third of all second generation Hmong and Cambodian children reside with no employed parents. At the other end of the spectrum we find Nigerian

² “Hmong” is actually an ethnicity and not a nationality. Most of them are from Laos, but their experience both in the United States and in Southeast Asia is distinct (see Hein 2006) enough to warrant a separate category here.

parents with the highest observed level of education at 15.5 years of schooling³ and a correspondingly high level of employment.

Variation may be more pronounced on the governmental receptivity measure than on any other. Fifteen groups have no recorded score due to a lack of data.⁴ Of the 23 countries for which we do have information the range is .4 to 1,324 refugee admittances for every 1,000 immigrants (from that country) in the 1980's. As is noted above, it is possible that the number of refugees granted lawful permanent residence in the 1980's was greater than the number of immigrants who arrived in the 1980's since some number among the former group actually immigrated in the late 1970's but did not gain legal residence until later.

With few exceptions, groups are either Black, White, or something else. There are 12 groups that are 65% or more White non-Hispanic. Of the remaining groups none is more than 1.2% White non-Hispanic. Patterns of Black identity are similar; Jamaicans, Haitians, and Nigerians are between 98 and 99% Black while most of the remaining groups are less than 5% Black. The exceptions are the Guyanese (53%), Dominican (12%) and Honduran (8%) groups. The polar character of these distributions may pose challenges to assessing the effects of "Blackness" and "Whiteness" on the incidence of child poverty.

There is considerably less variation on the PUMA-level measures of coethnic presence. This makes sense in that residential units of 100,000 or more individuals can only vary so much. Children of immigrants of the 38 nationalities in Table 1 reside in PUMA's that are between .3% and 25% coethnic. The remaining three PUMA-level measures reveal relatively little variation from group to group and thus no obvious relationships with child poverty. One exception,

³ Interestingly, of the six groups with mean levels of education equal to or exceeding 15 years, none are European.

⁴ There are a number of political reasons that information on refugee admittances from Russia and Central America during the 1980's might have been treated as sensitive information and/or poorly documented. Whatever the reasons, these areas probably sent non-trivial numbers of refugees who aren't counted here.

however, is the residence of Hispanic groups in areas with few coethnic professionals. Conversely, European groups tend to reside in areas with relatively numerous coethnic professionals. We should keep in mind that European coethnic professionals are likely to be of the immigrant third+ generations and may feel relatively little ethnic allegiance to new immigrants even if they share an ancestry. That is their ethnic attachments may be more symbolic than instrumental (Alba 1990; Waters 1990).

Methods

A main objective of this paper is to identify the key correlates of child poverty at the group-level. This being true simple bivariate correlations will be calculated to assess the strength of association between “% poor” and the possible covariates described above. We can reasonably expect to find that the association between:

- % with at least one employed parent and poverty is negative and strong.
- parental years of education and poverty is negative and strong.
- the rate of refugee/asylee admission and poverty is negative.
- % of the group identifying as Black and poverty is positive.
- % of the group identifying as White and poverty is negative.
- average % of PUMA residents who are coethnic and poverty is negative.
- average % of coethnic residents in PUMA who are employed and poverty is negative.
- average % of coethnic residents in PUMA who are professional and poverty is negative.
- average % of PUMA residents who are employed and poverty is negative.

Since Pearson correlations may disguise nonlinearities in the data, a series of simple scatterplots will be drawn to ensure that the statistics employed adequately capture the bivariate relationships

being examined. This may be especially important in the case of “% Coethnic in PUMA” since it would be reasonable to expect groups that are too widely dispersed to create and support coethnic communities would do less well than those residing in PUMA’s with a “critical mass” of coethnics to aid newcomers in their adaptation to American life. However, at some point, greater numbers of coethnics may have the negative effects associated with “ghettoization.” To the extent that this is true, a linear correlation coefficient might understate the relationship between coethnic community density and poverty. We shall see.

Multivariate analysis is complicated by the factor that there are only 38 cases in the data set being examined here rendering traditional tests of significance ineffective. However, some multivariate analysis is necessary. As was mentioned earlier, poverty is largely a function of unemployment. So whatever associations we find between the covariates discussed above and poverty are probably indirect. It would be quite remarkable, in fact, to identify associations that were not mediated by parental employment. I attempt to do so by estimating ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations assessing the impact of each of the covariates described above and poverty net of parental employment. To the extent that poverty is a function of unemployment, none of the covariates included here should have significant effects on child poverty net of parental employment rates.

RESULTS

Table 2 about here

Table 2 display correlations coefficients and goodness of fit statistics for nine variables meant to predict rates of poverty. Starting from the top of the table, as we would expect there is very strong correlation between parental employment and poverty (-.92). This measure alone accounts for 85% of the intergroup variation with respect to child poverty. Parental education is similarly influential, but this may reflect a close relationship between education and employment. The remainder of Table 2 is far from predictable.

Figure 1 about here

To the extent that the “rate of refugee/asylee admittance” (RRAA) is reflective of governmental receptivity, high values on this measure should theoretically be associated with lower values on the poverty measure. Refugee resettlement programs may be the only factor considered in this study whose effects (on poverty) are direct. That is, by virtue of recent refugee legislation, federally subsidized local programs have been in place to see that refugees avoid poverty during their abrupt transitions into American life. Cash assistance as well as in-kind payments were provided to often unemployed refugees. The relatively high level of governmental receptivity garnered by some groups should have allowed them to more effectively avoid poverty. This seems not to be the case in the long run. The correlation between RRAA and child poverty is positive (.70) and statistically significant—higher the proportions of refugees are associated with higher numbers of poor children.

On inspection of Figure 1 which is a scatter plot of RRAA and child poverty for the 23 groups for which data on refugee/asylee admittances are available, a linear relationship is evident though a curve might better capture it. If anything, the R and R² statistics understate the

relationship. This strong counterintuitive pattern is driven largely by three Indochinese groups whose entrances to the U.S. were facilitated almost entirely by refugee/asylee legislation. Were we to remove these cases we would be left with flatter line, but it would not be downward sloping as theory would lead us to predict. This is an important finding that will be taken up in the discussion section of this paper.

Continuing downward in Table 2, there is no observable Black disadvantage when “Blackness” and poverty are measured at the group level. There is, however, a significant White non-Hispanic advantage. Glancing again at Table 1, we can see that the “Black effect” is driven by the experiences of Nigerians, Jamaicans and Haitians whose child poverty rates, ranging from 9% to 20% are not uniform and certainly not uniformly high. White non-Hispanic groups are primarily European ancestry groups with child poverty rates well below 10%.

Figure 2 about here

The next surprise in Table 2 is reflected in the very modest correlation coefficient for “Mean % Coethnic in PUMA” suggesting that children in residentially diffuse immigrant groups are no more likely than residentially concentrated groups to experience poverty. That is, the “protective effects” of ethnic communities are not evidenced here. (It is important to note also that there no “destructive effects” evidenced either). Figure 2 includes a best-fitting line which illustrates more than anything else that there is little discernable patterning to these data at all. At the level of the group, it appears coethnic PUMA composition matters little in shaping patterns of second generation child poverty.

What does seem to matter is the presence of employed persons. All three of the PUMA-level measures of the presence of employed persons (employed coethnics, professional coethnics, and employed others) have negative and statistically significant coefficients. The more working people there are around, the less prevalent is poverty among children. This makes sense, but it is hard to know whether these advantages operate independently of the advantage associated with having one or more employed parents since these variables are interdependent. The number of employed parents immigrant children have may depend heavily on whether or not there are other immigrant parents around to get them jobs; conversely, whether or not there are immigrant parents around to get other immigrant parents jobs depends on the number of employed parents immigrant children have! In short, the three PUMA-level measures of the presence of coethnic workers are strongly correlated to the parental employment because the parents themselves contribute to the presence of coethnic workers in the PUMA. This complicates matters both logically and statistically.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 displays results from simple OLS regression estimations predicting group-level child poverty. The first model serves as a baseline, testing the effects of “% with one or more working parents.” The eight models that follow test the effects of each of the other covariates described above net of parental employment. This allows us to see whether human capital, governmental receptivity, societal receptivity, or community receptivity influence patterns of child poverty directly or indirectly.

The first model tells us nothing new—there is a very strong negative relationship between parental employment and child poverty which was evident in Table 2. However, the valence and magnitude (-1.02) of the slope coefficient dramatizes the relationship—there is a nearly one-to-one correspondence between the two rates. For every percentage point increase in parental employment, there is a 1.02 point decrease in child poverty. Parental employment explains 85% of the group-level variation in child poverty.

As is expected, net of parental employment little else bears on child poverty. Model 2 demonstrates that despite the very strong bivariate correlation between parental education and child poverty, the former does not have statistically significant impact on the latter when parental employment is controlled. There is no obvious reason to expect that other covariates would matter more than parental education controlling for parental employment. Since poverty tends to be a direct reflection of unemployment or underemployment it would be a surprise to other covariates exerting significant influence on child poverty rates independent of parental employment effects.

One such surprise is evident in Table 3. Model 7 predicts child poverty on the basis of parental employment and the presence of employed coethnics in the average PUMA for each group. This is the only one of eight trivariate models in Table 3 in which both independent variables are statistically significant. In all others, the explanatory power of the second covariate is muted by the presence of parental employment in the model. Those additional covariates explain very little if any additional variance. However, the introduction of “% of Coethnics in PUMA employed” into the baseline (bivariate) model improves the model fit significantly—pushing the explained variance from 85% to 90%. While living in the presence of coethnics is

not by itself important in averting poverty, living in the presence of *employed* coethnics may help significantly and not just because those employed coethnics help newcomers secure jobs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of good reasons to concern ourselves with poverty among children of the new second generation. The effects of childhood poverty are manifest in adult life in the form of chronic health problems and lower “lifetime worker output” (Sherman 1994: 101). Understanding the causes of child poverty, then, is important because of the sometimes dramatic consequences that it may have for individuals who experience it and the society in which they live. It has been argued that recent immigrants are of relatively low quality in terms of human capital and therefore can be expected to be drains on rather than contributors to U.S. society and economy (Borjas 1999). The extent to which this is true may depend on a great many things, of which national origins is one. The study is meant to identify characteristics that would equip *groups* to effectively avoid poverty in the U.S. in answering the question, which nationalities have most effectively avoided poverty and how?

On the basis of the segmented assimilation theory articulated by Portes and Rumbaut (2001), it reasonable to expect groups characterized by high human capital, governmental receptivity, societal receptivity, and community receptivity to fair better than other groups. All four of these terms may be measured in myriad of ways. I have for the purposes of this study translated their expectation this way: groups of children 1) whose parents are highly educated, 2) whose ancestry groups have gained entrance to the U.S. disproportionately as refugees, 3) who are disproportionately White and non-Hispanic, and 4) whose ancestry groups reside

disproportionately in areas of high coethnic concentration should fair better than others. As we have seen this is not entirely true.

However, before addressing the findings it important to point out that the analysis here is particularly susceptible to the “ecological fallacy.” That is, relationships between group level characteristics may not translate to the level of individuals in those groups. For instance, it is clear in the analyses above that parental education is negatively correlated with child poverty. What we *know* from this is that groups with highly educated parents tend to be groups with fewer poor child; we *think* this means that highly educated parents are less likely to be poor and therefore less likely to have poor children. This is probably true, but it is not necessarily true. It is possible, though not at all likely, that in some groups there are lots of highly educated parents and relatively few poor children but poor children all have highly educated parents. In short, the determinants of group-level poverty may not be the same as determinants of poverty at the level of the individual.

Parental human capital, as captured in the education level of each child’s most highly educated parent, has the expected effects in this study. Second generation children in groups with high mean levels of parental education are less likely to experience poverty. These effects are channeled through parental employment and are not conditioned on residence in coethnic communities as theory suggests. Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 1996) hold that the ability of immigrants to translate human capital into gainful employment may depend on social networks present in already established coethnic communities. However, the strong bivariate correlation suggests that while coethnic community ties may heighten the effects of immigrant parental education on employment and thereby child poverty, highly educated groups don’t have to be located in coethnic communities to avoid poverty.

One of the more novel findings in this paper is the counterintuitive relationship between *governmental receptivity and child poverty*. It would seem that the higher the proportion of a national origins group gaining admittance into the U.S. as refugees or asylees, the higher is their rate of child poverty. This is surprising since refugees are eligible to receive resettlement assistance designed to help them avoid poverty—assistance not offered to the vast majority of immigrants. However, it is important to point out that direct forms of (federally funded) resettlement assistance were offered for a period of three years after arrival. Since this study examines patterns of poverty among children ten or more years after the arrival of their parents, refugee resettlement programs don't bear directly on the lives of children in this study. Still we might have expected that such programs would have eased the transition and facilitated a “fast start” that would translate into relative affluence in the long run. They have not.

There are three explanations for this anomalous finding—two methodological and one theoretical. First, it may be that the positive effects of resettlement assistance are not enough to overpower the effects of very low levels of parental education evident among three of the four southeast Asian groups disproportionately admitted as refugees. However, compared to other low parental education groups, child poverty is more pronounced in refugee groups. Second, the downward sloping line in Figure 1 may flatten out were data available for Russians who probably have a high rate of admission as refugees (Daniels 2004) but a low observed prevalence of child poverty. It is unlikely, however, that the direction of the line would change.

The second explanation has to do with the definition and social psychology around the voluntary - involuntary immigrant distinction (see Ogbu 1991). While involuntary immigration to the U.S. is largely a thing of the past, it may be useful to frame the discussions of refugees in these terms. Can fleeing ones country for fear of losing ones life be understood as a voluntary

migration? Whatever the answer is, the threat of death has been more pronounced in some sending countries than in others, and this may impact the adaptation of immigrants and their children whether or not they receive resettlement assistance.

“Societal receptivity” is meant to capture prevailing patterns of prejudice and discrimination which may impact immigrants’ ability secure housing, employment, and other essentials. Ideally this would be gauged specifically for each nationality group. However, for many recent groups there are no distinct prejudices. Without a long history of (sizable) settlement in the U.S., the mainstream may not have had time to come to consensus on what is right and what is wrong with the Hmong, for instance. In such cases, members of the “host” may be forced to fall back on the only set of prejudices that seem to make sense—those they apply to “Asians.” On these grounds, it may be argued that the societal reception really depends on traditional American racial categorizations. The most pronounced purely racial distinction in American culture and society continues to be that between Black and White—unlike other distinctions it is largely impervious to nativity and region. Results here indicate that there is a White non-Hispanic advantage (lower rates of childhood poverty) that is essentially an employment advantage not explained by their higher than average levels of parental education (see Table 4). Interestingly, there is no measureable Black disadvantage among these immigrant groups.⁵

Finally, there is the matter of community reception. Bivariate analysis suggests that there is no relationship between rates of child poverty and residence in coethnic communities. All of the other measures of PUMA composition are significant in the bivariate case. That is, the prevalence of coethnic workers, coethnic professionals, and employed persons, more generally, in communities where immigrant children reside seems to reduce the prevalence of child poverty. However, this is largely attributable to the fact that child poverty is a function of

⁵ This does not eliminate the possibility of a Black disadvantage observable only at the level of the individual.

parental employment which shares much of the variance explained by these PUMA-level measures. A series of trivariate regression estimations reveals that only one of the PUMA-level measures significantly reduces child poverty when the effects of parental employment are netted out, and that is the mean percentage of coethnics in communities who are employed. While simply living in the presence of one coethnic has no effect on rates of child poverty, living in areas where one's coethnics exhibit high rates of employment diminishes child poverty significantly. Remarkably, this effect is not mediated through parental employment. While parental employment by itself explains 85% of the variance in child poverty rates, the addition of “% of coethnics in PUMA employed” drives the explained variance to 90%. This extra 5% does not reflect higher levels of parental employment by virtue of living in communities with high proportions of employed coethnics. Rather, it may reflect the “protective effects” of coethnic communities which may manifest in the form of multiple-earner multiple-family households in which wage income is shared across nuclear family lines as well as formal and informal types of mutual assistance across households within coethnic communities.

The findings here represent work that is largely descriptive and exploratory and thus beg lots of additional questions. However, some important conclusions can be drawn along with some important directions for further inquiry. The groups in this study who are best able to steer their children clear of poverty are those who are highly educated, non-refugee, White non-Hispanics who reside in communities with high proportions of employed coethnics. The first of these characteristics is not surprising. The second is, but must not be taken to mean the refugee resettlement programs did not work. After all, we do not know what child poverty rates would look like in their absence. It may instead reflect the fleeting nature of resettlement assistance and

the enduring trauma of being chased out of one's country. The third characteristic—White non-Hispanic—suggests that demand-side and largely ascriptive forces remain salient in immigrant adaptation. The last can be taken to mean that immigrant success may not lay in the dissolution of coethnic communities but in the improvement of employment prospects therein.

All of this leaves me feeling that there is one particularly important area for further research and that is in the area of *refugee adaptation*. After 1980 a much larger share of the immigrant flow to the U.S. was facilitated by refugee legislation—namely the Refugee Act of 1980. More than one million refugees arrived in each of the last two decades of the twentieth century (Daniels 2004). Studies of the second generation will increasingly be influenced by this fact whether it is acknowledged or not. The trauma of their parents' exile combine with the challenges faced by non-Whites and immigrants in contemporary American society, combined, may set up a high stakes race against time in which the object is to become mainstreamed and affluent before they come to see themselves and be seen by others as just another American minority (see Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 280-86).

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FIGURES

Figure 1. Scatterplot: Child Poverty by Rate of Refugee/Asylee Admission for 23 Ancestries

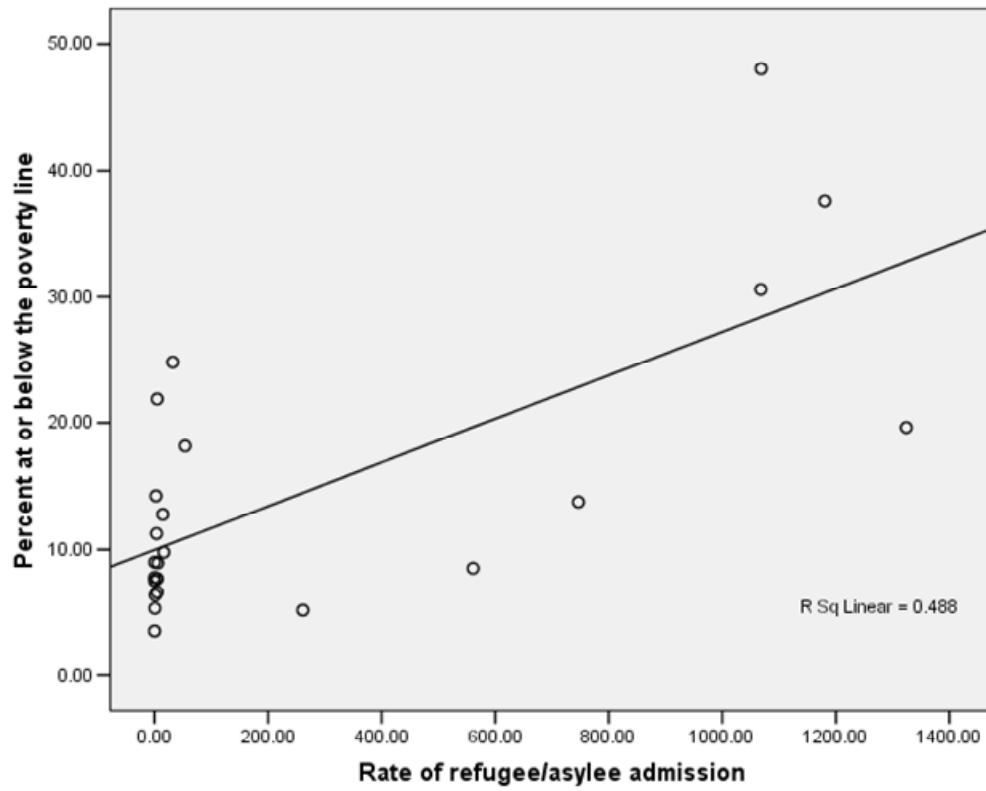


Figure 2. Scatterplot: Child Poverty by Proportion of PUMA Residents Coethnic

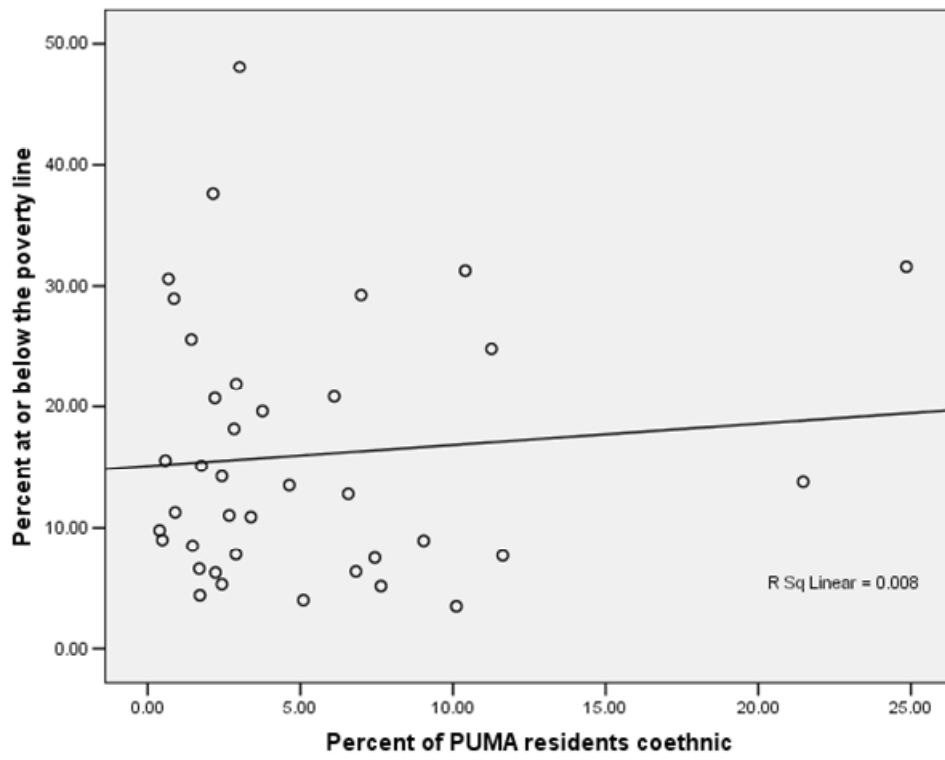


Table 1. Descriptives Statistics: Human Capital and Governmental, Societal and Community Reception for Select Ancestry Groups^a

ANCESTRY	% in Poverty^b	% with One or More Empty Pars	Mean Parental Educ^c	Refugees per 1,000 Immigrants	% Black	% White	% Coethnic in PUMA	%Coethnic Employed in PUMA	%Coethnic Professional in PUMA	% Employed in PUMA	N
English	6.4%	96.1%	14.9	1.4	2.4%	94.9%	6.8%	51.7%	28.9%	48.4%	2,541
French	6.6%	92.9%	14.9	4.8	4.9%	79.6%	1.7%	53.8%	28.7%	48.2%	1,120
German	7.7%	94.9%	14.3	5.1	0.9%	92.1%	11.6%	54.7%	25.1%	47.7%	2,979
Irish	3.5%	97.1%	14.6	0.1	0.8%	96.7%	10.1%	53.1%	26.0%	48.3%	1,924
Italian	8.9%	91.1%	13.9	5.9	0.8%	65.9%	9.0%	50.8%	23.9%	47.5%	2,036
Portuguese	7.5%	84.7%	11.4	0.4	0.6%	83.9%	7.4%	50.3%	14.5%	45.5%	1,798
Polish	5.2%	91.9%	14.1	261.3	0.0%	94.5%	7.6%	52.0%	22.4%	47.5%	3,340
Russian	10.9%	93.2%	14.8	^d	0.0%	93.7%	3.4%	49.1%	30.7%	47.6%	1,708
Mexican	31.6%	73.1%	9.8	^d	0.4%	0.4%	24.9%	39.2%	6.4%	41.5%	141,387
Guatemalan	25.6%	73.7%	10.2	^d	0.8%	0.9%	1.4%	44.0%	5.9%	43.0%	6,130
Honduran	29.0%	73.8%	11.2	^d	7.8%	0.6%	0.9%	42.9%	6.1%	41.8%	2,677
Nicaraguan	18.2%	76.2%	12.5	53.7	1.6%	0.5%	2.8%	42.1%	9.2%	42.2%	3,222
Salvadorian	21.9%	75.9%	10.2	4.7	0.7%	0.9%	2.9%	45.1%	5.4%	44.2%	12,463
Colombian	14.2%	80.5%	13.2	2.6	1.5%	0.7%	2.4%	46.2%	13.2%	45.5%	4,127
Ecuadorian	20.7%	75.3%	12.4	^d	1.3%	1.1%	2.2%	46.6%	9.7%	42.8%	2,247
Peruvian	11.3%	84.7%	13.9	3.5	1.2%	1.0%	0.9%	47.8%	13.5%	45.6%	2,475
Puerto Rican	29.3%	70.3%	12.7	^d	3.8%	0.1%	7.0%	38.0%	11.0%	42.9%	7,534
Cuban	13.8%	81.5%	13.2	746.6	2.8%	0.3%	21.5%	42.9%	15.4%	42.8%	1,482
Dominican	31.3%	66.8%	12.2	^d	11.5%	0.4%	10.4%	36.2%	7.8%	39.9%	7,946
Jamaican	13.5%	88.0%	13.4	^d	98.1%	0.6%	4.6%	52.4%	18.3%	43.7%	5,044
Haitian	20.8%	82.4%	12.8	^d	98.6%	0.3%	6.1%	42.5%	11.0%	43.6%	5,519
Guyanese	11.0%	92.2%	13.3	^d	53.0%	1.2%	2.7%	52.5%	17.0%	42.1%	1,524
Egyptian	9.8%	91.8%	15.4	16.5	2.6%	71.8%	0.4%	42.8%	24.9%	47.0%	1,164
Iranian	8.5%	93.9%	15.2	561.3	0.2%	80.5%	1.5%	48.0%	28.7%	50.0%	1,830
Lebanese	15.1%	86.9%	14.6	^d	0.2%	81.8%	1.8%	43.1%	23.0%	47.1%	1,409
Armenian	24.8%	83.1%	13.7	32.2	0.0%	72.3%	11.3%	38.2%	16.4%	44.7%	1,447
Nigerian	9.0%	94.3%	15.5	0.4	99.9%	0.0%	0.5%	47.9%	29.9%	47.6%	1,811
Asian Indian	6.3%	93.1%	15.0	^d	1.9%	0.3%	2.2%	49.8%	33.9%	48.0%	12,803
Pakistani	15.6%	90.0%	14.7	^d	0.1%	1.2%	0.6%	38.0%	18.5%	47.5%	2,994
Cambodian	37.6%	63.2%	9.0	1180.5	0.2%	0.2%	2.1%	31.3%	6.7%	43.9%	4,576
Chinese	12.8%	91.4%	13.5	14.7	0.2%	0.1%	6.6%	48.3%	28.5%	47.2%	14,327
Filipino	4.0%	88.2%	14.9	^d	0.3%	0.8%	5.1%	49.8%	22.2%	46.1%	14,608
Japanese	5.3%	93.6%	15.1	0.7	0.3%	0.8%	2.4%	46.2%	28.9%	49.1%	1,556
Korean	7.8%	91.3%	14.5	0.3	0.3%	0.6%	2.9%	43.3%	19.8%	48.1%	8,496
Laotian	30.6%	73.0%	9.8	1067.9	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	35.4%	5.4%	44.7%	2,482
Hmong	48.0%	63.6%	7.6	1068.5	0.2%	0.0%	3.0%	24.1%	5.0%	43.6%	2,550
Taiwanese	4.4%	91.9%	15.4	^d	0.1%	0.0%	1.7%	46.0%	35.4%	48.8%	2,753
Vietnamese	19.6%	82.5%	12.2	1324.1	0.4%	0.5%	3.8%	44.3%	14.8%	46.9%	7,749
Mean	16.0%	84.4%	13.2	276.4	10.5%	26.9%	5.1%	45.0%	18.2%	45.6%	303,778

Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census 5% PUMS (Ruggles and Sobek 2006)

^aImmigrant groups comprised of individuals who arrived in the 1980's and now have substantial numbers of coresident American-born children are included here.

^bPoverty is defined here as residing with a family whose income falls at or below the federally established poverty threshold value for the year 2000. This percentage is based on an analysis of poverty among immigrant parents weighted by the number of coresident children they have.

^cParental education is based entirely on the years of schooling completed by the most educated of each child's parents.

^dData on refugees/asylee admissions are not available for these groups.

Table 2. Correlates of Group-Level Poverty among the Coresident Children of Recent Immigrants

Correlate	<i>Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's R)</i>	<i>% of Variance Explained (R² * 100)</i>	N
% with One or More Employed Parents	-0.92 ***	85.0%	38
Mean Parental Education	-0.86 ***	74.6%	38
Refugees per 1,000 Immigrants	0.70 ***	48.8%	23
% Black	-0.05	0.2%	38
% White non-Hispanic	-0.43 **	18.6%	38
Mean % Coethnic in PUMA	0.09	0.8%	38
Mean % of Coethnics Employed in PUMA	-0.86 ***	74.6%	38
Mean % of Coethnics Professional in PUMA	-0.81 ***	65.9%	38
Mean % Employed in PUMA	-0.71 ***	50.5%	38

Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census 5% PUMS (Ruggles and Sobek 2006)

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

Table 3. OLS Regression Coefficients from Models Predicting Group-Level Child Poverty

Covariates	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β	Model 4 β	Model 5 β	Model 6 β	Model 7 β	Model 8 β	Model 9 β
% w/ One+ Working Parents	-1.02 *** (.071)	-0.78 *** (.141)	-0.92 *** (.124)	-1.03 *** (.072)	-1.05 *** (.084)	-1.02 *** (.073)	-0.70 *** (.096)	-1.06 *** (.159)	-1.08 *** (.119)
Mean Parent's Educ		-1.30 (.682)							
Refugee Rate (RRAA)			0.00 (.003)						
%Black				0.03 (.025)					
%White non-Hispanic					0.02 (.020)				
Mean % Coethnic in PUMA						0.01 (.130)			
Mean % Coethnics in PUMA who are employed							-0.58 *** (.141)		
Mean % Coethnics in PUMA who are Professional								0.05 (.166)	
Mean % Employed in PUMA									0.29 (.450)
Intercept	101.98	99.21	92.38	102.57	104.44	101.94	101.68	104.83	94.06
Variance Explained (R ²)	85.0%	86.4%	86.4%	85.6%	85.3%	85.0%	89.9%	85.1%	85.2%
Add'l Variance Explained ^a		1.4%	1.4%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	4.9% ***	0.1%	0.2%
N	38	38	23	38	38	38	38	38	38

Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census 5% PUMS (Ruggles and Sobek 2006)

^aCalculated by subtracting the variance explained in the baseline model (model 1) from the variance explained for each trivariate model respectively.

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

Table 4. OLS Regression Coefficients from Models Predicting Group-Level Parental Employment

Covariates	Model 1 β	Model 2 β	Model 3 β	Model 4 β	Model 5 β	Model 6 β	Model 7 β	Model 8 β
Mean Parent's Educ	4.22 *** (.391)	3.94 *** (.497)	4.20 *** (.397)	3.83 *** (.400)	4.23 *** (.399)	3.02 *** (.419)	1.99 ** (.649)	2.98 *** (.452)
Refugee Rate (RRAA)		0.00 (.002)						
%Black			0.01 (.029)					
%White non-Hispanic				0.05 * (.020)				
Mean % Coethnic in PUMA					0.05 (.148)			
Mean % Coethnics in PUMA who are employed						0.56 *** (.127)		
Mean % Coethnics in PUMA who are Professional							0.56 *** (.141)	
Mean % Employed in PUMA								1.41 *** (.354)
Intercept	28.95	34.25	29.07	32.69	28.51	19.59	48.00	-19.14
Variance Explained (R ²)	76.4%	86.0%	76.5%	79.8%	76.4%	84.8%	83.7%	83.8%
Add'l Variance Explained ^a		9.6%	0.1%	3.4% *	0.0%	8.4% ***	7.3% ***	7.4% ***
N	38	23	38	38	38	38	38	38

Data Source: 2000 U.S. Census 5% PUMS (Ruggles and Sobek 2006)

^aCalculated by subtracting the variance explained in the baseline model (model 1) from the variance explained for each trivariate model respectively.

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