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# **IMMIGRATION AND THE CRIME DROP**

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## **Abstract**

The explanations to date of the remarkable decrease in crime that has been reported over the last two decades in a number of western countries have been less than convincing. In light of these limitations this article explores the impact that the recent increase of immigration into the UK may have had on recorded crime levels. Drawing on a range of international research the paper includes some empirical evidence from England and Wales that suggests that in contrast to the popular opinion that increased immigration is associated with an increase in crime, that not only are the recent waves of immigration not linked to rising crime, but also our findings lend qualified support to the contention that recent waves of immigration have contributed to the crime drop that has taken place in the UK and other countries over the last two decades.

**Keywords:** Immigration, crime, crime drop, violence, victimisation.

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## 1. Introduction

The decrease in recorded crime over the past two decades in the UK, America and other Western countries is without a doubt the most significant development in relation to crime in living memory. According to the International Crime Victims Survey (UNICRI 2000<sup>1</sup>; Farrall et al. 2010) crime has decreased over the last two decades in at least twelve different countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, France, Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA). In England and Wales the decrease in recorded crime in this period is in the region of thirty five per cent overall. Surprisingly, however, there has been a paucity of informed commentary on this development on both sides of the Atlantic. In fact, it was not until 2000, some six years after the crime drop began, that the first major publication appeared in America. This was an interesting but ultimately inconclusive collection of articles edited by Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman (2000<sup>2</sup>) that attempted to assess the significance of different determinants in influencing changing levels of crime.

The two main causes of the crime drop were widely held to be policing and imprisonment. Radical changes in styles of policing, particularly in New York, were held to have had a major impact on crime control. However, Andrew Karman (2000<sup>3</sup>), in his review of the decline of crime in New York City pointed out that recorded crime had also decreased significantly in other American cities that employed other forms of policing and consequently the claims about the primary role of the police in this process turned out to

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<sup>1</sup> UNICRI (2000), *International Crime Victims Survey (1989-2000)*, United Nations International Crime Research Institute.

<sup>2</sup> Blumstein, A and Wallman, J. (2000), *The Crime Drop in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Karman, A. (2000), *The New York Murder Mystery*. New York University Press.

be unconvincing. Similar limitations occurred in relation to imprisonment. Crime rates decreased in states where prison numbers were stable or decreasing as well as those where numbers increased. These arguments were swiftly followed by a number of other competing claims, such as changes in drug use, the legalisation of abortion, new forms of gun control as well as changing levels of lead in petrol which, it was argued, were responsible to some degree for reducing crime rates (Blumstein and Wallman 2000; Levitt 2005<sup>4</sup>; Conklin 2009<sup>5</sup>). Although these different factors may individually have had some effect on the crime rate in some locations they all seem to fall short in terms of providing a comprehensive explanation of the international and persistent nature of the decrease in recorded crime (Farrall 2013).

Significantly, there have only been five books focusing on the crime drop to date and they have all been published in America (Blumstein and Wallman 2000; Karman 2000; Conklin 2009; Parker 2008<sup>6</sup>; Zimring 2007<sup>7</sup>). Despite the fact that the decrease in recorded crime in the UK has almost mirrored that which has taken place in America, there is no major British text to date that directly addresses this issue.

Not surprisingly, the American books on the subject have concentrated on developments in America and paid relatively little attention to decreases in crime in other countries. Importantly, however, international comparisons make many of the leading 'explanations' for the crime drop even less tenable as changes in policing, imprisonment,

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<sup>4</sup> Levitt, S. (2005), 'Understanding why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six That Do Not.' *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18/1: 163-190.

<sup>5</sup> Conklin, J. (2003) *Why Crime Rates Fell*. New York: Allen and Bacon.

<sup>6</sup> Parker, K. (2008), *Unequal Crime Decline*; New York University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Zimring, F. (2007), *The Great American Crime Decline*. Oxford University Press.

drug use and the like show no clear or direct relation with the crime drop in other Western countries. Consequently, the books that have attempted to explain the crime drop have drawn equivocal conclusions. Franklin Zimring (2003), for example, who although taking some account of international developments admits in his conclusion that ‘this is a book without a bottom line’ and argues that the discipline as a whole suffers from parochialism and ‘ideological blinders’. In a similar vein, Andrew Karman (2000), after presenting a fairly exhaustive critique of the various accounts the crime drop is equally inconclusive, claiming that there was a ‘fortuitous confluence’ of factors and that no single factor is more important than the rest. He does, however, point out that the crime drop seems to have continued over the past two decades despite economic downturns and political fluctuations. The persistence of the decrease in recorded crime over time he adds questions the liberal claim that crime is a direct product of deprivation, as well as the conservative claim that crime can effectively be reduced by get-tough policies.

What arises from a review of the literature is that any plausible explanation of the crime drop has to account for four main developments. First, that recorded crime has decreased steadily year on year. It has not been a process of fluctuations or of gains and losses, but a fairly consistent fall over time. Second, the decrease has affected nearly all categories of crime including both violent and property crime. There are, of course, some variations in the changes in different countries and there are particular exceptions such as the increase in recorded rape cases in England and Wales, but the spread of the decrease is quite remarkable. Third, crime has decreased across most of the countries concerned

rather than just in specific locations (Ogston 2013<sup>8</sup>; Roberts 2014<sup>9</sup>; Warrell 2013<sup>10</sup>). Fourth, the crime drop has been an international phenomenon. Some twelve countries have reported significant decreases in recent years but the international nature of this development means that explanations have to move beyond the parochialism that pervades contemporary criminology.

The implication of these four aspects of the crime drop is that we need to embrace wider socio-economic and cultural explanations if we are to achieve an understanding. Even James Q. Wilson (1983<sup>11</sup>), who is probably best known for his arguments on the need to focus on minor crimes, incivilities and anti-social behaviour has recently suggested in an article in the Wall Street Journal that:

At the deepest level, many of these shifts, taken together suggest that crime in the United States is falling – even through the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression – because of a big improvement in the culture. The culture argument may strike some as vague, but writers have relied on it in the past to explain both the Great Depression fall in crime and the explosion of crime during the Sixties (Wilson 2011: 4<sup>12</sup>).

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<sup>8</sup> Ogston, G. (2013), '*Violent Crime Rates in Dundee Decrease*' The Courier, August 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Roberts, G. (2014), '*Violent Crime in Swansea City Centre is Decreasing*' *South Wales Evening Post*, December 19<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Warrell, H. (2013), '*Public Policy: Are We Safer Now?*' Financial Times July 17<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, J. (1983), *Thinking About Crime* (Revised Edition) New York: Basic Books.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson, J. (2011) '*Hard Times, Fewer Crimes.*' *The Wall Street Journal*. May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Although Wilson notes that measuring and examining ‘culture’ raises methodological difficulties he is no doubt correct that explanations based on broad socio-cultural forms of analysis offer the possibility of developing more plausible and credible explanations of the crime drop than many of those accounts that have been offered to date.

## **2. Immigration, Crime and Violence in America**

As a result of his exploration of the cultural aspects of the crime drop Robert Sampson (2006<sup>13</sup>; 2008) has suggested that mass immigration may have played an important role in changing the cultural mix in inner city communities and may have served to change the existing criminogenic culture in many American cities. This thesis at first appears counter intuitive and goes against the common sense wisdom that immigrants are disproportionately involved in crime. High levels of incarceration in different countries amongst various immigrant groups are often presented as an indication of their high level of criminal involvement. These claims, along with frequent media depictions of immigrants participating in high profile crimes such as drug dealing, sex trafficking and the like, reinforces the popular conception that serious crime is largely perpetrated by outsiders, foreigners and immigrants. Migrants, according to the popular myth come predominantly from poor countries, have low levels of education and skills, and travel to countries like the UK to take advantage of a relatively generous welfare system, or to

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<sup>13</sup> Sampson, R. (2006), ‘Open Doors Don’t Invite Criminals’. *New York Times*, March 11<sup>th</sup>.

engage in illicit enterprises (Charteris-Black 2006<sup>14</sup>; Sides and Citrin 2007<sup>15</sup>; Zedner 2010<sup>16</sup>).

Sampson (2008<sup>17</sup>) argues that this depiction of immigrants is largely mistaken and that the empirical evidence presents a very different picture. In essence, a number of studies have shown that in America and elsewhere first generation immigrants are generally law abiding and hard working. Self-report studies, for example, indicate that criminal involvement is generally lower amongst immigrant groups in America (Kubrin and Desmond 2009; Butcher and Piehl 1998<sup>18</sup>). Moreover, immigrant groups tend to include the most confident, mobile, and energetic sections of the population in the countries from they come.

More specifically, it is claimed that the influx of immigrants can often revitalise certain areas and that rather than adding to the disintegration of the area into which they settle, they can become essential to the continuing vitality of the area by introducing and establishing new familial and neighbourhood institutions that can serve to improve the local economy (Sampson 2008; Kubrin 2012<sup>19</sup>). Sampson also suggests that certain

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<sup>14</sup> Charteris-Black, J. (2006), 'Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign.' *Discourse and Society* 17/5: 563-581.

<sup>15</sup> Sides, J. and Citrin, J. (2007), 'European Opinion About Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests and Information.' *British Journal of Political Science*. 37: 477-504.

<sup>16</sup> Zedner, L. (2010), 'Security, the State and the Citizen: the Changing Architecture of Crime Control.' *New Criminal Law Review* 13/2: 379-403.

<sup>17</sup> Sampson, R. (2008), 'Rethinking Crime and Immigration.' *Contexts* 7/1: 28-33.

<sup>18</sup> Butcher, K. and Piehl, A. (2007), 'Why are Immigrants' Incarceration Rates so Low? Evidence on Selective Immigration, Deterrence, and Deportation.' Working paper No. 13229. National Bureau of Economic Research.

<sup>19</sup> Kubrin, C. (2012) 'Immigration and Crime' in F. Cullen and P. Wilcox (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminological Theory*; Oxford University Press.



immigrant groups, particularly the Hispanics in America, have a lesser culture of violence than the indigenous population and therefore can have a depressing effect on the culture of urban violence.

Drawing on his Chicago research, Sampson (2008) claims that there is a growing volume of evidence that points to increased immigration as a major factor associated with lower crime rates. He suggests that:

In today's society, I would hypothesize that immigration and the increasing cultural diversity that accompanies it generate the sort of conflicts of culture that lead not to increased crime but nearly the opposite. In other words, selective immigration in the current era may be leading to the greater visibility of competing non-violent mores that affect not just immigrant communities but diffuse and concatenate through social interactions to tamp down violent conflict in general (Sampson 2008: 33).

These themes have been explored and endorsed in the American context by other commentators. A study of violent crime employing a pooled cross sectional time series analysis by Jacob Stowell et al. (2009<sup>20</sup>) concluded that violent crime tended to decrease as Metropolitan areas experience gains in their concentration of immigrants. This inverse relationship was found to be especially robust in the case of robbery.

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<sup>20</sup> Stowell, J., Messner, S. McGeever, K. and Raffalovich, L. (2009), 'Immigration and the Recent Violent Crime Drop in the United States: A Pooled, Cross Sectional Time Series Analysis of Metropolitan Areas' *Criminology* 47/3: 889-928.

Another study of violent crime in America by Tim Wadsworth (2010<sup>21</sup>) also found that cities with the largest increases in immigration between 1990 and 2000 experienced the largest decreases in homicide and robbery in this period. Wadsworth, like other researchers, has focused on violent crime and robbery mainly because the data on these offences are seen to be relatively reliable and because violent crime tends to be a public and policy priority. Significantly, immigrant composition has been found to have a negative association with violent crime rates in Chicago (Velez 2009<sup>22</sup>), Los Angeles (Fieldmeyer 2009) as well as Miami, El Paso and San Diego (Martinez et al. 2004<sup>23</sup>).

Graham Ousey and Chris Kubrin (2009<sup>24</sup>) have explored the connection between immigration and crime rates in 159 US cities between 1980 and 2000. Focusing on the macro-level of change they examined how immigration affects demographic, economic and social structures and how these changes in turn might affect crime rates. They found that on average that cities that experienced increases in immigration from 1980 to 2000 experienced a decrease in violent crime rates and concur with Sampson's (2006) claims 'that immigration may be a key factor contributing to the crime drop of the 1990s'. They claim that this outcome is mainly a consequence of immigration having a depressing effect on crime by bolstering the family and local economies. This and related research

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<sup>21</sup> Wadsworth, T. (2010), 'Is Immigration Responsible for the Crime Drop? An Assessment of the Influence of Immigration on Changes in Violent Crime Between 1990 and 2000.' *Social Science Quarterly* 91/2: 531-553.

<sup>22</sup> Velez, M. (2009), 'Contextualising the Immigration and Crime Effect.' *Homicide Studies* 13: 325-335.

<sup>23</sup> Martinez, R., Lee, M. and Nielson, A. (2004), 'Segmented Assimilation. Local Context and Determinants of Drug Violence in Miami and San Diego.' *International Migration Review*, 38 :131-157.

<sup>24</sup> Ousey, G., Kubrin, C. (2009), 'Exploring the Connection between Immigration and Violent Crime Rates in U.S. Cities, 1980–2000' *Social Problems* Vol.56 No.3 : 447-473.

has raised the question of criminal involvement amongst different generations of immigrants as well as the differential involvement in crime and victimisation amongst different ethnic groups (Hagan et al. 2008<sup>25</sup>; Wortley 2009<sup>26</sup>).

### 3. Immigration and Crime: The European Experience

Research on immigration and crime in Europe has produced mixed results. (Tonry, 1997<sup>27</sup>; Aebi and Linde 2010<sup>28</sup>). Various studies have reported that those from ethnic minority groups in Western countries are disproportionately likely to be arrested and imprisoned for different crimes. (Albrecht 1999<sup>29</sup>; van Kalmthout et al. 2007<sup>30</sup>; Tonry 1997).

Research on crime in Germany and Denmark has found that in Germany approximately one fifth of all crime suspects are immigrants (Entorf and Larsen 2010). However, it is reported that the proportion of non-German crime suspects has decreased from 26.7 per cent in 1993 to 19.3 per cent in 2011. It is also pointed out that a substantial share of

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<sup>25</sup> Hagan, J. Levi, R. Dinovitzer, R. (2008), 'The Symbolic Violence of the Crime-Immigration Nexus: Migrant Mythologies in the Americas'. *Criminology and Public Policy*. 7/1: 95-112.

<sup>26</sup> Wortley, S. (2009), 'The Immigration-Crime Connection: Competing Theoretical Perspectives.' *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 10/4: 349:358.

<sup>27</sup> Tonry, M. (1997), *Ethnicity, Crime and Immigration*. University of Chicago Press

<sup>28</sup> Aebi, M. and Linde, A. (2010), 'Is There a Crime Drop in Western Europe? *European Journal of Social Policy and Research*, 16/4: 251-277.

<sup>29</sup> Albrecht, H-J. (1997), 'Ethnic Minorities, Crime and Criminal Justice in Germany'. In M. Tonry (ed.) *Ethnicity, Crime and Immigration*. University of Chicago Press

<sup>30</sup> Van Kalmthout, Menlen H-V. and Dunkel, F. (2007), *Foreigners in European Prisons*' Vol 1. Wolf Legal Publishers.

criminal cases in this period involved asylum seekers and that their offences were mainly to do with their under-status as non-Germans.

In Denmark, the evidence suggests that immigrants are generally over-represented in the crime figures. However, their involvement in violations of the Penal Code has steadily decreased for males from 44.5 per cent in 1995 to 38.09 per cent in 1998 and then to 34.7 per cent in 2000 (Entorf and Larsen 2005<sup>31</sup>). The authors make a distinction between asylum seekers, illegal immigrants and foreign citizens with a residence permit. While asylum seekers were found to constitute a higher percentage of all convictions for violations of the Penal Code between 1997 and 2001 the percentage of foreign born citizens with a residents permit who were convicted in this period decreased from 12.2 per cent to 11.4 per cent.

Cesar Alonso-Borrego and his colleagues (2012<sup>32</sup>) have examined the situation in Spain between 1999 to 2009 and found that during this period there were large waves of immigration from various parts of the world. These authors suggest that while some immigrant groups have contributed to certain forms of crime, Latin American immigrants who were more easily assimilated into the culture have probably undermined the potential rise in crime rates in Spain.

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<sup>31</sup> Entorf, H. and Larsen, C. (2005) 'Immigration and Crime in Denmark and Germany' in Tranaes, T. and Zimmerman, K. (eds.) *Migrants Work and the Welfare State*. University Press of Southern Denmark

<sup>32</sup> Alonso-Borrego, C., Garoupa, N., Vasquez, P. (2012), 'Does Immigration Cause Crime? Evidence from Spain.' *American Law and Economic Review*.14/1: 165-191.

In a similar vein Tuba Bircan and Marc Hooghe (2011<sup>33</sup>) differentiate between different immigrant groups settling in Belgium between 2001 and 2006. Their focus is on the neighbourhood level and the differences in criminal involvement amongst different ethnic groups. By breaking down immigrants into a number of sub-groups in relation to ethnicity the authors conclude that it is the unemployment rate amongst those different groups that most directly influences the crime levels. Although the authors note that both property and violent crime have decreased significantly in the period under study and that this was a period of high immigration into Belgium, it is claimed that it is unemployment and not the concentration of immigration in different neighbourhoods that is most prominently associated with the decrease in recorded crime.

This research, however, is limited both conceptually and methodologically. Conceptually, the authors advocate a version of social disorganisation theory which would predict a rise in crime following waves in immigration involving different ethnic groups, leading to a weakening of community ties and the breakdown of informal controls. However, they note that there has been no discernible increase in either property crime or violent crime in neighbourhoods with high immigrant concentration. This observation would appear to question the validity and explanatory value of social disorganisation theory in this context (Wortley 2009). Also, as the authors note themselves the data addresses a relatively short period and is unable to identify trends. Moreover, their investigation is reminiscent of the classic critiques of the unemployment and crime relation which pointed out that because this research does not examine the

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<sup>33</sup> Bircan, T., Hooghe, M. (2011), 'Immigration, Diversity and Crime: an Analysis of Belgian National Crime Statistics, 2001–6.' *European Journal of Criminology*, 8/3: 198-212.

relevant populations at the individual level it is never clear whether it is actually the unemployed in the selected areas who are committing crime (Box and Hale 1986<sup>34</sup>).

Interestingly, the immigration-crime nexus raises questions about the explanatory value not only of social disorganisation theory but also of other mainstream criminological theories including culture conflict, strain theory, labelling theory as well as rational choice and routine activities theory (Farrell 2013<sup>35</sup>). Indeed, the most appropriate theoretical approach would seem to be some form of cultural criminology, but not so much in the form that focuses mainly on street culture, popular culture and the media, but one that embraces a wider notion of ‘culture’ (see O’Brien 2005<sup>36</sup>; Martinez and Lee 2000<sup>37</sup>).

#### **4. Immigration and the Crime Drop in the UK**

There has been a noticeable reticence amongst British scholars to address the remarkable decrease in recorded crime that has taken place in the UK over the past two decades. Two of the main responses to the issue of the crime drop in the UK amongst British criminologists has either been to play down these developments and to claim that either the crime drop is a function of the manipulation of the crime figures by the key agencies,

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<sup>34</sup> Box, S. and Hale, C. (1986), ‘Unemployment, Crime and Imprisonment’ in R. Matthews and J Young (eds.) *Confronting Crime*. London: Sage.

<sup>35</sup> Farrell, G. (2013) ‘Five Tests for a Theory on the ‘Crime Drop’.’ *Crime Science* 2/5: 1-7.

<sup>36</sup> O’Brien, M. (2005) ‘What is Cultural About Cultural Criminology?’ *British Journal of Criminology* 45: 599-612.

<sup>37</sup> Martinez, R. and Lee, M. (2000) ‘On Immigration and Crime’, in LaFree, G. *The Nature of Crime: Continuity and Change*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice

or that traditional forms of crime have been replaced by the growing volume of cybercrime (Fitzgerald 2014<sup>38</sup>; Segal and Senna 2008<sup>39</sup>).

In relation to the manipulation of the crime figures there is clear evidence that the police have changed recording practices in recent years and have admitted ‘massaging’ the crime figures. In December 2014 the gold standard ‘national statistics’ status was withdrawn from the police in England and Wales due to discovery that they had been ‘fiddling’ the figures (Travis 2014<sup>40</sup>). However, the continued and widespread decrease in a range of crimes over time, particularly those where the police are able to exercise limited discretion, or where there is not much room for manipulation such as car crime, robbery and serious violence, suggests that a significant decrease has taken place - at least amongst certain crime types. The international nature of the crime drop also suggests that despite dubious police recording practices in the UK, crime is decreasing in different countries where recording practices have remained relatively stable. In addition, the simultaneous decrease in victimisation recorded by the Crime Survey for England and Wales tends to reinforce the conception that crime rates are decreasing.

In relation to the increase in new forms of cybercrime there can be little doubt that it is taking place, but it is extremely questionable that traditional forms of ‘street crime’ are being displaced in this way. Cybercrime would in all probability increase in the current period irrespective of changes in other forms of crime. However, it is important to note

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<sup>38</sup> Fitzgerald, M. (2014), ‘The Curious Case of the Fall in Crime.’ *The Economist*. July 20th.

<sup>39</sup> Segal, L. and Senna, J. (2008), *Introduction to Criminal Justice* (Eleventh edition). Thompson: Wadsworth.

<sup>40</sup> Travis, A. (2014), ‘Police Crime Figures Lose Official Status over Claims of Fiddling.’ *The Guardian*. January 15th.

that cybercrime involves a distinctly different group of offenders than traditional forms of street crime as well as having a different set of victims (Wall 2007<sup>41</sup>).

There are two main studies, to date, on the crime drop in the UK. The first and probably the best known is by Graham Farrell and his colleagues (2011<sup>42</sup>) which explores the ‘security hypothesis’ focusing mainly on property crime and the role of crime prevention measures. Drawing on routine activities and opportunity theory the authors claim that changes in both the quantity and quality of security has been a key driver of the crime drop. Taking the widespread use of electronic immobilisers and central locking mechanisms for cars as their empirical reference point they claim that the subsequent reduction in car theft may have induced a decrease in other crimes including violence. There are however, questions concerning the fit between the introduction of these security measures and the decrease in vehicle crime in different countries as well as major doubts about the impact of car crime security on other forms of crime, particularly violent crime. Even Home Office researchers who are generally sympathetic to accounts based on routine activities theory and opportunity theory are sceptical about the explanatory value of the ‘security hypothesis’ and point out that:

The hypothesis is largely silent on why violence has fallen alongside theft. And for acquisitive crime, the case that better security caused the drop rests on the largely untested assumption that car immobilisers also prevented thieves from committing other types of theft. Data suggests that the opposite is equally likely – that as one

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<sup>41</sup> Wall, D. (2007), *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

<sup>42</sup> Farrell, G., Tseloni, A., & Tilley, N. (2011), ‘The Effectiveness of Vehicle Security Devices and their Role in the Crime Drop.’ *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 11/1: 21-35.



thing becomes harder to steal, thieves switch to something else. So, because all types of theft fell markedly at the same time in the mid-1990s it seems likely that a change in offender propensity for crime is more likely to provide the main explanation (Home Office 2015<sup>43</sup>).

Thus we are left with the nagging problem of explaining why there was a decrease in nearly all forms of crime from the mid-1990s onwards in a number of different countries. This suggests that a broader explanation that identifies not only changes in the modes of regulation but also changes in the nature of agency, is required.

The second study in the UK has been carried out in the UK has been conducted by researchers based in the London School of Economics. Significantly, this study focuses on the immigration-crime relation. In a series of reports Stephen Machin and his colleagues have examined what they see as the two main waves of immigration in the UK (Bell, Machin and Fasani 2010<sup>44</sup>; Bell and Machin 2011<sup>45</sup>; Jaitman and Machin 2013<sup>46</sup>). The authors suggest that the first wave occurred in the late 1990s and involved asylum seekers, while the second wave from 2004 onwards involved workers from

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<sup>43</sup> Home Office (2015), *Opportunity/Security as a Driver of Crime: A Discussion Paper*. London: Home Office.

<sup>44</sup> Bell, B., Machin, S., and Fasani, F. (2010), 'Crime and Immigration: Evidence from Large Immigrant Waves.' Centre for Economic Performance. Discussion Paper 984.

<sup>45</sup> Bell, B. and Machin, S. (2011) 'The Impact of Migrations on Crime and Victimization.' Centre for Economic Performance. London School of Economics.

<sup>46</sup> Jaitman, L. and Machin, S. (2013), *Crime and Immigration; New Evidence From England and Wales*. Discussion Paper 1238. Centre for Economic Performance: London School of Economics.

different EU countries. Drawing on Becker's (1968<sup>47</sup>) economic theory of crime they conclude that the first wave of asylum seekers contributed to an increase in property crime but not violent crime, while the second wave of what they refer to as A8 European migrants have a negative effect on property crime and no effect on violent crime. They also conclude that immigrants have a lower level of victimisation than the indigenous population.

The economic model of crime that they adopt assumes that the fundamental driver of criminal involvement is access to the legal labour market. Thus, it is suggested that immigrant groups with low employment prospects or who find themselves in situations in which the gains from employment are less than those for crime will be drawn into crime. Adopting a classic rational choice perspective the authors argue that it was the weak labour market attachment that propelled the first wave of asylum seekers to engage more actively in property crime. However, there are unresolved questions about whether the actions of criminals can be adequately explained by the concept of 'rationality' (Green and Shapiro 1994<sup>48</sup>; Nussbaum 1997<sup>49</sup>). In reality, it is widely recognised that offenders are often unable to make meaningful cost-benefit analyses about their involvement in crime, while as cultural criminologists have pointed out, criminal involvement often

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<sup>47</sup> Becker, G. (1968), 'Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach' *Journal of Political Economy*, 76:175-209.

<sup>48</sup> Green, D. and Shapiro, I. (1994), *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*: Yale University Press.

<sup>49</sup> Nussbaum, M. (1997), 'Flawed Foundations: The Philosophical Critique of (a Particular Type of) Economics.' *University of Chicago Law Review*. 84/4: 1197-1214.

involves expressive and risk taking dimensions (Katz 1988<sup>50</sup>; Hayward 2007<sup>51</sup>). Moreover, in the UK the influx of poorer Asians from countries like Pakistan and India in the 1990s did not result in this group having a high involvement in crime or having high rates of imprisonment. The economic model of crime also does little to explain white collar crime and corporate crime or why the rich frequently engage in malpractices such as fraud and embezzlement. However, Machin and his colleagues raise some important issues in relation to the use and reliability of the available data. In particular, they raise the problem of controlling for endogeneity since migrants tend to settle in areas that already have high crime rates. This, in turn, raises questions about causality and the neighbourhood effects on crime.

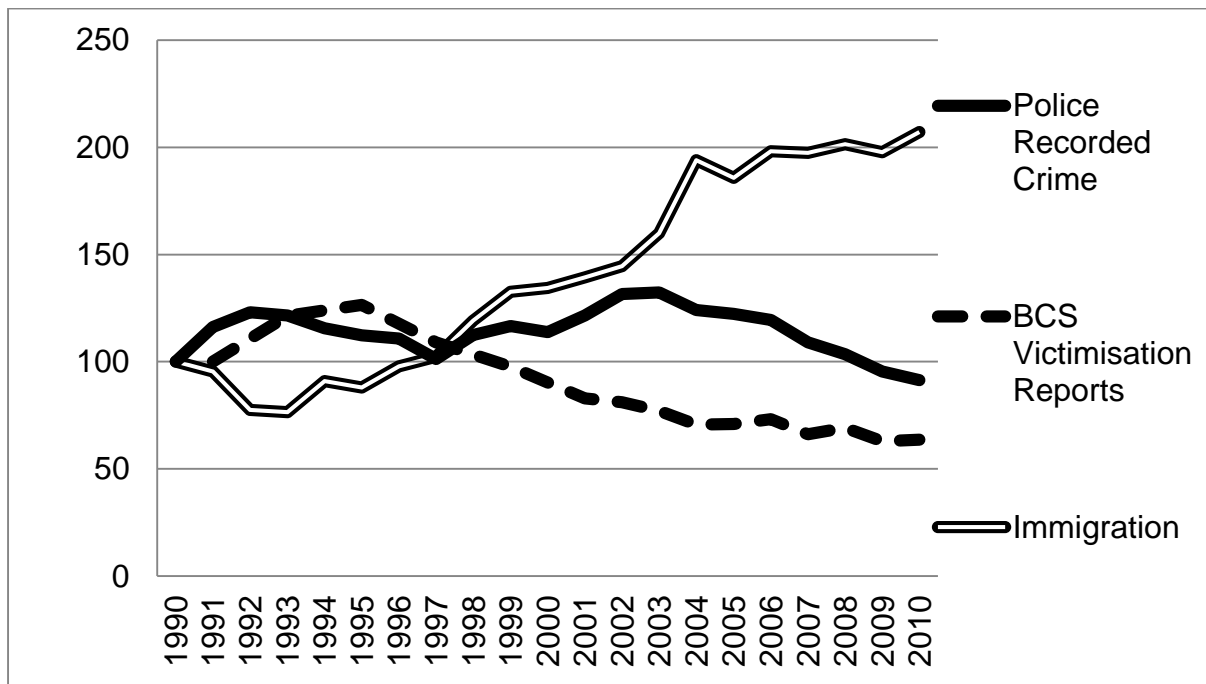
Having considered these contributions to the immigration-crime debate in the UK we turn to our own explorative investigation on the relationship between immigration and the crime drop. We begin from the observation that there is an inverse relationship between the decrease in recorded crime and the increase in immigration in England and Wales during the period of 1990-2010. The question that Figure 1 below raises is whether this relationship is significant or coincidental. The objective of our study is to examine the available data with the aim of presenting four ‘snapshots’ designed to identify different aspects of the immigrant-crime relationship.

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<sup>50</sup> Katz, J. (1988), *The Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions of Doing Evil*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>51</sup> Hayward, K. (2007), ‘Situational Crime Prevention and its Discontents: Rational Choice Theory Versus “The Culture of Now”’, *Social Policy and Administration* 41/3: 232-250.

Figure 1. Changing Levels of Crime and Immigration in England and Wales 1990-2010, Indexed to 100.



Source: Office for National Statistics, Crime Survey for England and Wales 1990-2010.

First, we compare the decrease in violent crime in cities with high levels of recent immigration with cities with relatively low immigration levels. Second we explore variations in recorded criminal involvement amongst different immigrant groups living in different areas. Third, we examine the data on anti-social behaviour and disorder noting that there is a blurring of the distinction between anti-social behaviour and crime at certain points. Fourth, we look at the arrest data for Greater London in 2011.

Our research draws predominantly on two central data sources. First, the census data for 2001 and 2011 which features population numbers based on country of birth, which is deemed to be the most appropriate classification since it allowed the identification of first generation immigrants who are the main focus of our analyses. Second, crime data was taken from the Notifiable Offences recorded by the Police in 2001 and 2011 (Home

Office, 2001/2011<sup>52</sup>). Although, as noted above, this police generated data has to be treated with some caution it was seen as more appropriate for our purposes than national victimisation data, which, of course, has its own limitations. Moreover, the largest victimisation dataset in the UK, the Crime Survey for England and Wales only includes low level geographical variables since 2008. This data would therefore severely restrict the range and relevance of the analysis.

The initial analysis displayed in Figure 2 was carried out using the changes in first generation immigration levels and total violent crime rates, between 2001 and 2011. Both variables were first coded in prevalence ratios per 100,000 standardised population in each available area. By using prevalence ratios it was possible to express our variables in a geographically comparable manner and to account for the differences in population numbers. Subsequently, a difference between ratios in 2001 and 2011 was calculated in order to determine the change in each variable over the decade. Total immigration rate in this case relates to the total number of recorded first generation immigrants in the area between 2001 and 2011 per 100.000 population. Total violent crime rate is the combination of five categories as recorded by the police – common assault, robbery, wounding or other act endangering life, other wounding and harassment, expressed in the same manner. It should be noted that a necessary distinction between street robbery and commercial robbery cannot be made due to the available data combining both forms of robbery.

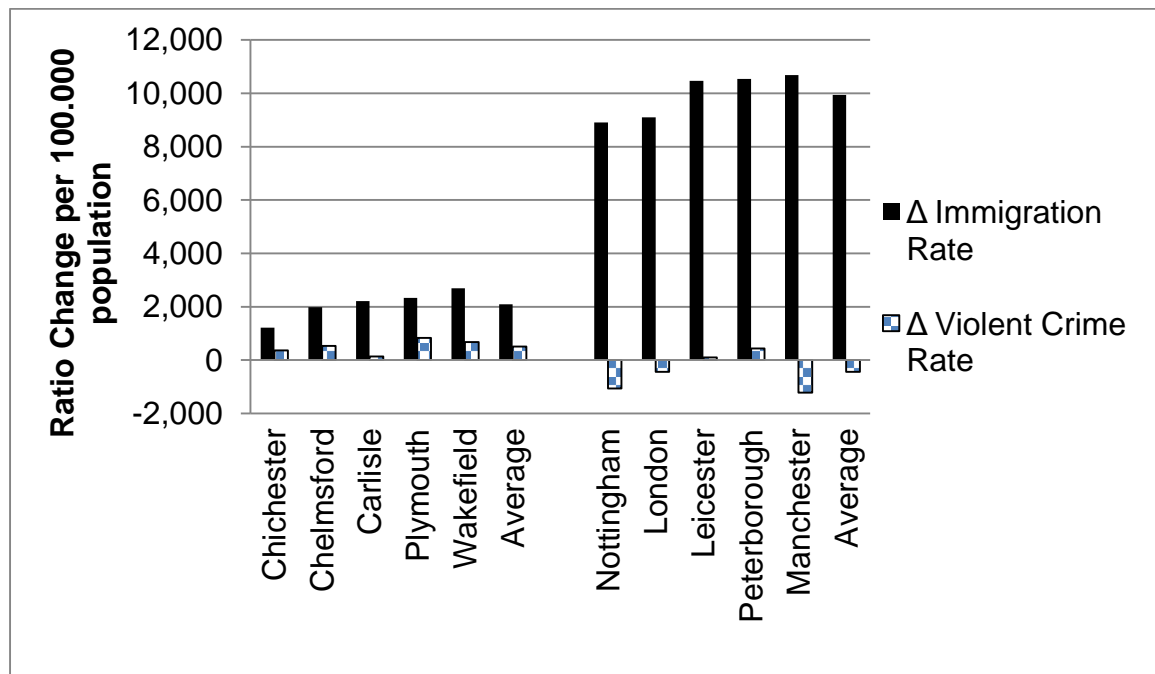
A comparison of five cities with the lowest levels of immigration between 2001 and 2011 (Chichester, Chelmsford, Carlisle, Plymouth, Wakefield) with the cities with the highest

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<sup>52</sup> Home Office (2001/2011), *Notifiable Offences as Recorded by the Police*, Ministry of Justice.

levels of immigrants during this period (Nottingham, London, Leicester, Peterborough, Manchester) indicates that the cities with the lowest levels of immigration, on average, have experienced an increase in violent crime as opposed to cities with high immigrant influx. Although there are some notable variations in recorded levels of violent crime, what is significant is that crime is not increasing in four out of the six areas with high levels of immigration.

Figure 2. Immigration and Violent Crime In Ten Cities in England and Wales, 2001-2011.



Source: Office for National Statistics, UK Census 2001 and 2011, Notifiable Offences

Recorded by the Police 2001 and 2011.

Interestingly, London and Manchester – two of the largest cities in the UK - have both experienced significant decreases in violent crime. In London the immigrant population was 1.5 million in 1991, increasing to 1.9 million in 2001 and then growing to 58 percent

in the following ten years to reach 3 million by 2011 (Jaitman and Machin 2013; Travis 2015<sup>53</sup>).

As has been noted, there are likely to be significant differences in criminal involvement amongst different immigrant groups. In order to explore some of these differences we looked into associations between different immigrant groups and crimes. Variables were coded in prevalence ratios for 344 local authorities across England and Wales for the years of 2001 and 2011. Four local authorities - Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Cheshire West & Chester, Chester East - had to be excluded from the analysis due to the structural changes to local governments in England in 2009.

In order to encapsulate the various associations between different immigrant groups and crime types a number of more specific sub-groups were created using available data. These include 'South Asian' immigrants largely from India and Pakistan. 'Far Eastern' immigrants from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. 'Middle Eastern' groups who largely come from Iran and Cyprus. 'Western European' immigration refers to the total of French, German, Italian and Spanish immigrants. 'Other European' category, as per the following analysis, was created by deducting the total number of 'Western European' immigrants from France, Germany, Italy and Spain from the total European cohort. Therefore, majority of 'Other European' immigrants come from Eastern Europe, Scandinavia as well as southern Europe. By including these, more disaggregated immigrant sub-groups in the analysis the intention was to examine a wider spectrum of immigrant groups that have settled in England and Wales and their individual relationships with crime. The category of 'violent crime' used in this figure is the same

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<sup>53</sup> Travis, A. (2015), 'London and South-East See Largest Increase in Foreign-Born Residents' *The Guardian* March 6<sup>th</sup>.

as that used in Figure 2. Property crime category includes theft, criminal damage, arson, burglary and vehicle crime. Pearsons' correlation analyses were carried out and are presented in Table 1. Significant correlations are highlighted.

Table 1. Relationships Between Different Immigration Sub-Groups and Crime between 2001-2011

	Total Crime	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Common Assault	Robbery	Theft from the Person	Criminal Damage	Burglary	Motor Vehicle Theft	Theft from Motor Vehicle
Total Immigration	.022	<b>-.167**</b>	.026	<b>-.289**</b>	<b>-.373**</b>	-.068	.049	-.011	.048	.031
South Asian	.079	-.058	.081	<b>-.143**</b>	-.099	-.095	.089	.065	.090	.076
Far Eastern	-.050	<b>.179**</b>	-.055	<b>.242**</b>	<b>.224**</b>	.010	-.050	-.060	-.071	-.049
Middle Eastern	.033	-.008	.032	.006	-.092	.031	.027	.027	.033	.026
African	.092	-.020	.092	<b>-.113*</b>	-.100	-.026	<b>.106*</b>	.071	.099	.087
Other European	<b>-.708**</b>	-.104	<b>-.704**</b>	-.105	.027	<b>.647**</b>	<b>-.785**</b>	<b>-.654**</b>	<b>-.602**</b>	<b>-.786**</b>
Western European	<b>-.200**</b>	<b>-.264**</b>	<b>-.191**</b>	<b>-.359**</b>	<b>-.572**</b>	-.088	<b>-.136*</b>	<b>-.256**</b>	<b>-.113*</b>	<b>-.177*</b>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Office for National Statistics

The first point of interest is that common assault and robbery rates as well as violent crime in general appear to be negatively associated with immigration flow. Therefore, areas with high new immigrant populations appear to experience a higher decrease in violent crimes than areas with lower levels of recent immigration. European immigration in particular has been found to have an inverse relationship with majority of crime types. The associations do vary and immigration is linked to an increase in recorded crime in five cases, but this increase is relatively small. Overall, Table 1 shows that there is a statistical association between immigration and decreases in violent crime, particularly common assaults and robberies. Although there is also an inverse relation with property crime, this relationship is not so strong.



To examine how immigration has affected low level disorder, UK Census data as well as recorded Anti-Social Behaviour data from the police for year 2011 were sourced for every Middle Layer Super Output Area in England and Wales. MLSOAs are commonly used by the Office for National Statistics when publishing small area statistics. There are currently 7201 MLSOAs in England and Wales, each with a minimum occupancy of 5,000 residents and 2,000 households (and average occupancy of 7500). It should be noted that while anti-social behaviour and disorder are generally seen as involving forms of ‘pre-crime’ that the categories of ASB tend to morph into various types of crime in certain cases (Matthews 1992<sup>54</sup>).

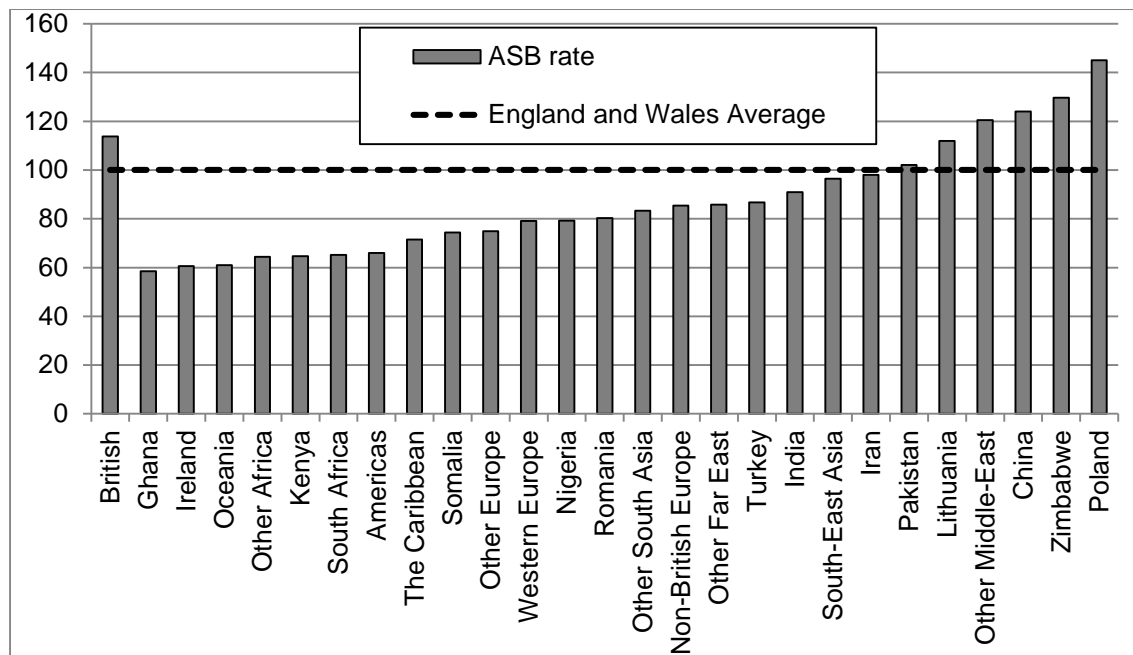
The UK Census data is not sufficient to examine immigration from every country. For this reason, immigration was divided into a number of detailed categories and adapted to suit available ASB data. For this analysis, ‘Other Africa’ includes immigrants from all African countries apart from Ghana, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The sub-group of ‘Other European’, as per this analysis, includes immigrants from all European countries apart from Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Western Europe which are examined separately. ‘Western Europe’ sub-group refers to immigrants from France, Germany, Portugal and Spain. ‘Other South Asia’ includes all South Asian countries apart from India and Pakistan. ‘Other Far East’ includes all Far Eastern countries apart from China. ‘Other Middle-East’ includes all Middle-Eastern countries apart from Iran. ‘Non-British Europe’ refers to all European immigrant populations combined. MLSOAs were ranked from lowest to highest by every immigration type. The average rate of ASB was calculated for top 10 per cent of areas with highest proportion of every inhabitant

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<sup>54</sup> Matthews, R. (1992), ‘Replacing Broken Windows’ in R. Matthews and J. Young (eds.) *Issues in Realist Criminology*. London: Sage.

group. The average ASB rate in England and Wales was indexed to 100. The findings are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. ASB rates within areas with predominant immigrant type and indigenous population, 2011.



Sources: UK Census 2011, Anti-Social Behaviour as Recorded by the Police 2011.

A number of points can be gleaned from this figure. First, areas with the highest proportion of British nationals suffer from greater-than-average rate of ASB by roughly 13 per cent. Only those from Poland, Zimbabwe, China and Middle East are associated with higher ASB rates than the indigenous population. Second, not only are the majority of immigrants associated with lower ASB rates than the indigenous population, but also in areas with high immigrant populations ASB rates are mostly found to be significantly below the average for England and Wales.

Our fourth investigation of the immigration-crime relationship involves an exploration of the arrest rates of various immigrant groups in the Greater London area. This arrest data

was supplied by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) following a freedom of information request. Immigrant numbers were sourced from a corresponding UK Population Census for 32 London Boroughs that fall under the responsibility of MPS. Due to the limitations of UK Census, only 27 immigrant sub-groups could be distinguished.

Figure 4 below depicts arrest rates by country of birth. The average arrest rate in London in 2011 was 3.3 per cent, indexed to 100. For an overwhelming majority of immigrant sub-groups arrest rates were found to be significantly below the average. Low arrest rates were associated with immigrants from a variety of cultures and continents, suggesting relatively low criminogeneity regardless of country of origin. Very few immigrant sub groups were found to be arrested more than average, except for Romanians and Lithuanians. However, as Laura Jaitman and Stephen Machin (2013) have pointed out that there are important demographic differences between immigrant groups and the indigenous population particularly with respect to age. It is, in the main, younger people who migrate between countries and this population tends to be made up, for the most part by young males who are statistically speaking the most likely group to become involved in criminal activity. It is also the case that that the use of stop and search powers is skewed towards males in the 21-40 age group and towards certain ethnic minority groups (Bowling and Phillips 2007<sup>55</sup>). However, being arrested is not proof of culpability and it

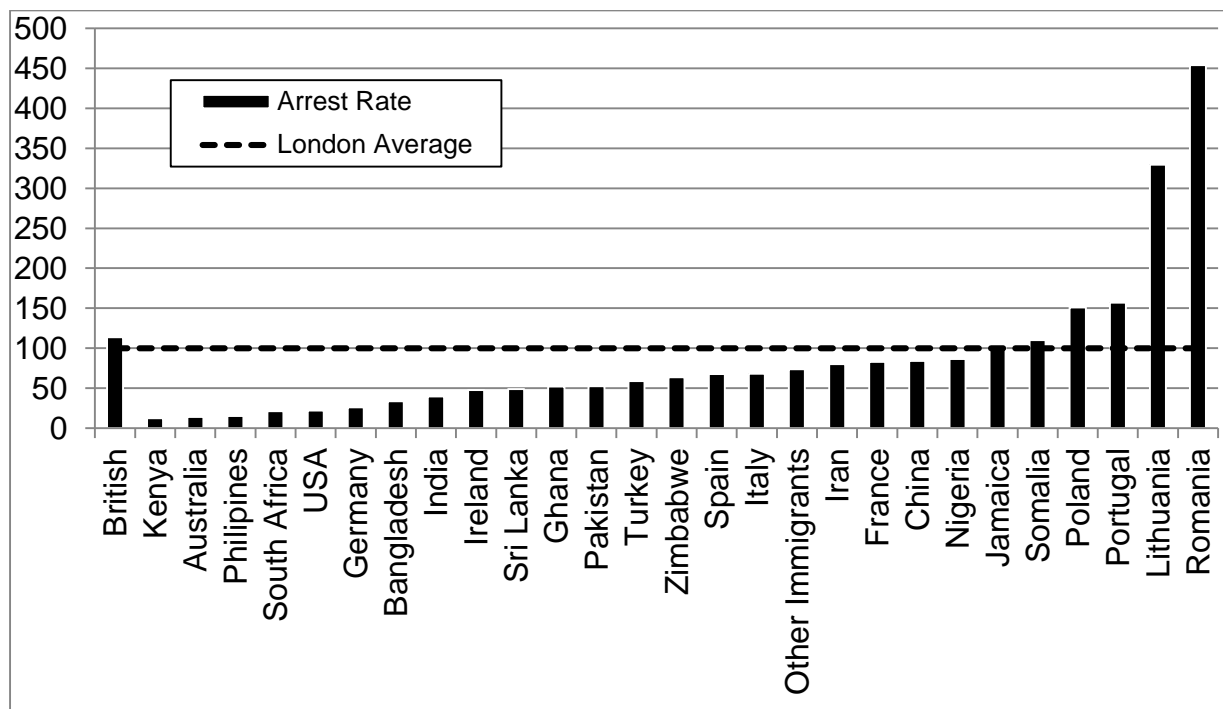
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<sup>55</sup> Bowling, B. and Phillips, C. (2007), 'Disproportionate and Discriminatory: Reviewing the Evidence of Police Stop and Search' *The Modern Law Review* 70/6: 936-961.

is estimated that approximately 40 per cent of those arrested result in the individual facing actual charges (Ministry of Justice 2012<sup>56</sup>).

Since over a million immigrants were not included in the 27 categories explored here, the arrest rate of ‘other immigrants’ was calculated in order to try to compensate for the shortcomings of datasets and to ensure the inclusion of all immigrants in the analysis. Due to the low arrest rates associated with the majority of individual immigrant sub-groups as well as the aggregate category of ‘other’, the conclusion to be drawn is that immigrants in the London area at least have a lower arrest rate than the indigenous population, with very few notable exceptions.

Figure 4. Arrest Rates in London by Country of Birth, 2011.



Source: Metropolitan Police Service, UK Census 2011

<sup>56</sup> Ministry of Justice (2012), *Understanding the Justice Outcome Data on the Police*: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/217421/police-uk-statistics.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/217421/police-uk-statistics.pdf)

These trends, it should be emphasised, are suggestive rather than conclusive in terms of the effects that immigration might have on crime. While the limited evidence presented in this paper suggests that recent waves of immigration have not resulted in an increase in recorded crime, but rather may have contributed to the crime drop there are some variations between areas and different immigrant groups. In order to explore this relation in more detail it would be necessary to engage in an analysis of the relation between neighbourhood structure the rate of immigration and the changing levels of recorded crime. Such an analysis would need to consider the role of other variables such as employment levels, housing, cultural variations between different ethnic groups, levels of social integration and the like.

The correlations that we have found however ‘significant’ they might be at the statistical level do not necessarily indicate a causal relationship. Our research remains suggestive and speculative. In order to develop a more persuasive causal explanation of these developments there is a need to theorise these processes more thoroughly and formulate some testable hypotheses (Sayer 2010<sup>57</sup>; Pawson and Tilley 1997<sup>58</sup>). It is not just a matter of listing variables but of trying to explain the relationship between them and how they might be connected. The question is how and why does immigration impact on crime and what are the intervening mechanisms that might account for this phenomenon.

## **5. Theorising the Immigration-Crime Relation**

The impression that emerges from the four ‘snapshots’ that we have presented is that immigration has not been found to be generally associated with increasing crime and as

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<sup>57</sup> Sayer, A. (2010), *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach*. London: Routledge.

<sup>58</sup> Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997), *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage.

Robert Sampson (2008) has suggested immigration could be an important contributory factor in the crime drop at least in certain areas and amongst different ethnic groups. This is important since as he points out, patterns of immigration are currently reshaping the social demographics of the western world.

Drawing on the available literature it is possible to outline a number of hypotheses which aim to identify the mediating processes that may be in play and which might help us to explain the apparent inverse relationship between immigration and the crime drop (Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Sampson 2006). These hypotheses are linked to the key processes of dilution, diffusion, diversity, concentration, regeneration and receptivity.

*a) Dilution.*

Dilution refers to the process by which established social mores, particularly those associated with established forms of ‘macho culture’ or street culture’ are diluted by incoming migrants who hold alternative less aggressive, anti-social and individualistic values systems. The dilution of those negative values that have been traditionally associated with crime - particularly violent crime - can have a profound impact on the sense of community, neighbourhood cohesion and informal systems of control.

Dilution can occur at both the micro and the macro levels. Research has repeatedly shown that certain ethnic minority groups have a low level of criminal involvement; while at the macro level first generation immigrants tend to be more law abiding than either the indigenous population or than subsequent immigrant generations (Kubrin and Desmond 2014<sup>59</sup>)

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<sup>59</sup> Kubrin, C. and Desmond, S. (2014) ‘The Power of Place Revisited: Why Immigrant Communities Have Lower Levels of Adolescent Violence.’ *The Sociological Quarterly* 50/4: 581-607.

*b) Diversity.*

Diversity involves the influx of a number of different groups. These immigration flows are seen to have an impact on established social relations and even existing ethnic relations replacing them with a complex mixture of values, norms, priorities and controls. Thus the authority and acceptance of established social norms, attitudes and practices are challenged and in some cases transformed. The transformation of the dominant culture is seen to involve a normative shift towards greater tolerance and civility. Growing diversity, it is argued, introduces different experiences, lifestyles, knowledge and capabilities adding to the richness of urban life. Thus the cultural diversity of the population may benefit the community if it increases the variety of complementary goods, skills abilities and services.

In his study of Chicago neighbourhoods Sampson (2008) found that in both high and low poverty communities that foreign born diversity was strongly linked to lower violence. Although concentrated poverty was found to predict higher levels of violence, this was found to be lower as diversity increased for low and high- poverty neighbourhoods alike.

*c) Diffusion.*

The process of diffusion refers to the spread of immigrants amongst the native population. It is suggested that the effect of the diffusion of immigrants into existing neighbourhoods produces greater cultural variation which is often accompanied by a lower propensity to violence has because it 'dilutes' the criminogenic nature of a number of previously high crime inner city areas. The growing diffusion of different ethnic and cultural groups, it is argued can transform social relations in a largely positive way by breaking down established power relations, particularly in urban areas (Kubrin and Desmond 2014; Martinez et al. 2004; Sampson 2008). The extent to which diffusion takes place will be

conditioned not only by the numbers of immigrants but also by the level of porosity of the affected neighbourhoods. Cultural diffusion and hybridization can also serve to promote the conditions that prevent inter-group conflict and crime.

*d) Concentration.*

It is widely reported that new immigrants tend to gravitate to areas in which previous generations of immigrants have settled. In some cases this results in the formation of ethnic enclaves. While there may be some negative effects of such concentration in heavily deprived areas of segregation Graif and Sampson (2009<sup>60</sup>) in their study of neighbourhood characteristics in Chicago found that immigrant concentration was either unrelated or inversely related to homicide, whereas diversity was found to be linked to lower homicide rates. However, they also point out that residents in Chicago neighbourhoods with 40 per cent more immigrants are 20 per cent less likely to commit violence than residents in immigrant free neighbourhoods This finding, they suggest, indicates that immigrant concentration can act as a buffer against crime in certain locations.

In a study of Los Angeles conducted by John MacDonald and his colleagues (2013<sup>61</sup>) the authors modelled the link between within-neighbourhood changes in crime and predicted immigrant settlement taking into account population effects and housing characteristics. Their results suggest that a greater concentration of immigrants in specific neighbourhoods has been associated with significant reductions in serious crime,

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<sup>60</sup> Graif, C. and Sampson, R. (2009) 'Spatial Heterogeneity in the Effects of Immigration and Diversity on Neighborhood Homicide Rates.' *Homicide Studies* 13/3: 242-260.

<sup>61</sup> MacDonald, J. Hipp, J., and Gill, C. (2013), 'The Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Changes in Neighbourhood Crime Rates' *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. 29/2: 191-215.



particularly in areas containing previously settled groups of the same ethnic groups. Unfortunately the authors do not explain why this concentration effect occurs.

In order to address this question Kubrin and Desmond (2014) have attempted to identify the extent to which social capital and vicarious victimisation may account for the effects of immigrant concentration on crime and delinquency. However, contrary to their expectations their research suggests that that these processes do not mediate immigrant concentration and adolescent violence and suggest that other, yet to be identified factors, are responsible.

*d) Revitalisation.*

One possible effect of immigrant concentration, it has been suggested, is that it may revitalise social and economic life by introducing new products, organisations and services as well as new forms of consumer demand. As Lee and Martinez (2002<sup>62</sup>) have argued the development of strong familial and neighbourhood institutions as a result of immigration as well as enhanced job opportunities immigration can serve to revitalise certain areas, particularly those that have experienced population decline in previous decades. The formation of new social networks and organisation can create a social structure that facilitates action and participation as well as establishing informal controls and civic participation. The combination of these processes serves to reduce crime and create new forms of civility. Where revitalisation takes place it can also have a positive effect on the indigenous, often urban poor, populations. The increases in economic and

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<sup>62</sup> Lee, M., and Martinez R. (2009), 'Immigration Reduces Crime: An Emerging Scholarly Consensus', in W. McDonald (ed.) *Immigration, Crime and Justice*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

civic health of cities along with the substantial decrease in crime in some area can provide significant benefits for the indigenous population as well.

*e) Receptivity*

David Ramey (2013<sup>63</sup>) has argued in relation to the revitalisation thesis that it is the degree of receptivity which immigrant groups experience in the areas in which they settle that is significant. He suggests that it is not so much whether neighbourhoods are rich or poor but the degree of inclusion and incorporation and what Portez and Rumbaut (2006<sup>64</sup>) refer to as the ‘contexts of reception’. Thus what is important for immigrants is whether the structures are in place to address health issues, provide jobs and services that encourage civic participation. In areas of low receptivity immigrant groups may face both exclusionary and discriminatory practices. Previous research has shown that new groups of immigrants tend to gravitate to those areas where immigrants from their own country have previously settled. It is arguably the case that the more established and integrated the original immigrant groups are the lower the crime rate is likely to be amongst incoming immigrants.

The nature of the Labour market plays an important role in the process of integration and the degree of receptivity, but it may be that the benefits that are gained in terms of crime complement the findings of recent research that shows the positive economic impact in the UK of immigration from Europe (Dustmann and Frattini 2014<sup>65</sup>). Moreover as

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<sup>63</sup> Ramey, D. (2013), ‘Immigrant Revitalization and Neighbourhood Violent Crime in Established and New Destination Cities.’ *Social Forces*, 92/2: 597-629.

<sup>64</sup> Portez, A and Rumbaut, R. (2006), *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. University of California Press.

<sup>65</sup> Dustmann, C. and Frattini, T. (2014), ‘The Fiscal Effects of Immigration to the UK.’ *The Economic Journal*, 124: 593-643.

Thomas Piketty (2014<sup>66</sup>) has argued countries like Britain and America will need to attract millions of immigrants over the next few decades not only to supplement the labour market but also to maintain a viable tax base.

In order to test these hypotheses and to identify the mediating causal mechanisms future empirical research will have to examine the impact of immigration into both high and low crime areas, which may be very different (Bui et al 2005<sup>67</sup>). At the neighbourhood level empirical investigation may be rendered particularly difficult because the selected area may combine of areas of concentration alongside forms of segregation and diversity.

## 6. Conclusion

Our brief investigation concurs with the findings of the majority of studies carried out in America as well as the studies by European researchers, which suggest that over the last two decades that large scale immigration is not associated with an increase in recorded crime and that immigration in general over the last two decades may have made a significant contribution to the crime drop in the UK.

Although it has been suggested that immigration may go some way to meeting the conditions for developing any credible and comprehensive explanation of the crime drop, it should be emphasised that any future investigation will need not only to develop testable hypotheses but to combine qualitative and quantitative - intensive and extensive - forms of analyses that are able to examine the diverse effects of different forms of

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<sup>66</sup> Piketty, T. (2014), *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*: The Belknap Press.

<sup>67</sup> Bui, H. and Thongniramol, O. (2005) 'Immigration and Self-Reported Delinquency; The Interplay of Immigration, Generations, Gender, Race and Ethnicity' *Journal of Crime Justice*, Vol. 28 No. 2: 71-99.

immigration, as well as the impact of different generations of immigrant groups over time (Graif and Sampson 2009; Kubrin 2012).

There is a growing body of evidence, particularly from America, that there is a discernable relationship between increases in immigration and the decrease of recorded crime. However, most of these studies, like our own, are based on correlations that are suggestive but not conclusive. Therefore, there is a need to understand the causal mechanisms in play and explain the *why* and the *how* of this process. A number of possible causal hypotheses have been presented which need testing empirically. This will require undertaking not only cross sectional but also longitudinal analysis that can locate these changes within the socio-economic context in which they occur. In this way the aim is to move from observations and descriptions to explanations. This will require a series of detailed qualitative studies that are better equipped to uncover the motivations and attitudes of the relevant populations.