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ETHNICITY AND CRIME: A STATEWIDE ANALYSIS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT
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Abstract

There have been two kinds of approaches to looking at crime using local government area analysis: one is to look at particular cases; the other is to consider the entire set of population data derived from local areas studies. This report is of the second kind. While there have been a number of studies looking at crime in local areas they tend to be particular, and include in-depth case studies. This present study is designed to provide information and analysis using parametric data, and is thus is a 'population' study rather than a sampling one. Information on police recorded crime rates and selected ethnicity variables were gained from all local government areas in Victoria. The general findings were that high rates of Australian born were related to lower property crime rates and, perhaps more importantly, Australian citizenship is significantly related to lower crime rates across LGAs. A higher rate of Recent Arrivals was strongly related to higher crime rates, and LGAs with rates of people born in Oceana/NZ, non-English speaking countries, other English Speaking Countries and rates of low proficiency in English positively correlates with some forms of crime but to a lesser degree. The difficulty of interpreting official statistics is recognised, as is the value of comprehensive population data on crime and ethnicity. Ill informed comments could have regrettable social implications: indeed there are some well informed comments that may have the same unintended effect. That point is one that a pluralistic democracy may have to tolerate within certain limits. Opportunity structures in host countries have both positive and negative consequences: this article highlights the latter rather than the former. These findings have implications not only for the allocation of resources at local government level but also for immigration policy. Using these data the conclusion is drawn that commitment to the host country, and coping in an alien environment are useful explanations.

Introduction

The study of the relationship between ethnicity and crime is of interest both for practical and for theoretical reasons. Such studies illuminate issues of psychological and criminological interest, and are of assistance in investing immigration policy, multicultural policy and community development programs.

There are a number of methodological approaches to the analysis of ethnicity and crime: one is that of looking at a local district (as distinct from a local government area). An example of that approach is the study by Collins, Noble, Poynting & Tabar (2000) that analysed and reported on Lebanese youth crime in a district in Western Sydney. That approach has the merit of depth rather than breadth.

The other main approach to the study of crime involves the collection of a wide array of data. The seminal work of Carcach and Huntley (2002) is an excellent example: they conducted an analysis of local government area data from the eastern states of Australia. Their research sought to test the proposition that participation in community-oriented activities corresponds to lower rates of violent and property crime. The matters that they examined were crime, economic change, population data, social structures, local resources, informal control, and participation in community organisations.

From their study, Carcach and Huntley concluded that crime rates are lower in local areas with high levels of participation in community-oriented activities; and that a doubling in the rate of membership in community organizations has the potential to reduce violent crime by between one-fifth and one-third, and property crime by between one-twentieth and one-tenth. It will be noted that the Carcach and Huntley analysis refers to out-migration from local government areas. Further, their valuable study has given us much useful information about the collectivity-crime dimension but did not include ethnicity variables.

Recently, Armstrong, Dussuyer, Francis and Totikidis (unpublished MS) attempted a partial replication and expansion of Carcach and Huntley's (2002): research that included an analysis of crime rates and community characteristics in Local Government Areas in the state of Victoria. Many of the measures examined by Carcach and Huntley were included in the Armstrong et al., study and additional community characteristics (indicators of need/disadvantage and capacity) were analysed. Several ethnicity variables were analysed in their study, including the rate of arrivals in the past 5 years, the rate of people born in a Non-English speaking (NES) country and low English proficiency rate.

The results showed low to moderately high significant positive correlations for the rate of people born in a NES country and the rate of arrivals in the past 5 years for Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property and Total Crime. Low English proficiency rates were also found to be significantly related to some categories of crime; positively with the rate of other crime and negatively to the rate of property and total crime. Where positive correlations may indicate a need for community development/crime prevention activities to tackle the disadvantages associated with ethnicity, negative relationships seem to imply that ethnicity also contributes to community capacity. Further investigation of crime and ethnicity variables is warranted to further explore these relationships.

Another work relevant to this present study was conducted by Vinson (1999). His focus was not on crime, nor ethnicity, but concentrated on social disadvantage. Further, his analysis was based on postcode rather than local government areas. There is, however, a useful conclusion to be drawn, and that is that a 'relatively small number of postcode areas account for a large percentage of the locations which rank highly on the ten social indicators used in Victoria' (Vinson, 1999, p.22).

Studies specific to immigration and crime have drawn the conclusion that, as a whole, immigrants have a lower rate than do the native born, although there are exceptions for some particular groups (see, for example, the classic studies of Abbot, 1931, Sellin, 1938, Van Vechten, 1941, Ferracuti, 1968, Cressey, 1969, Crabbe & Francis, 1980; Hazlehurst, 1987.

Meta studies are also a useful way of looking at the problem being addressed here. Yeager (1996), for example, looked at studies in Canada, Australia, the United States, and Continental Europe. He concluded that in Canada, the US, and Australia the criminality of first generation immigrants is less than that of the native born. That conclusion does not necessarily hold for all European countries, but the variety of nation states there brings in some unique factors that make it difficult to draw general conclusions. There it seems that the effect of higher criminality of the first generation immigrant is changed when demographic characteristics within the host country is taken into account (ie. controlled for age, sex, and other socio-economic factors).

In a comprehensive study Francis (1981) showed the general conclusion of low rates of crimes for immigrants to be true for Australia. In Australia, first generation incomers were found to have an overall lower rate of crime, their children have slightly higher rates with the next generation of children approximating those of native born (Francis, 1981). Among the explanations proffered were to do with marginalisation and the like. What is more likely is

that with incoming migrants having a lower rate of crime than that of natives one would expect a reversion to the mean – the tendency for any variation from the norm to revert to the norm in later generations (including intelligence, personality, height, weight, etc).

The present study found a negative correlation between being native born and crime across LGAs. This seeming anomaly might be accounted for by acknowledgement that the present correlations are across LGAs rather than an exposition of population data in general. Further, this present study breaks down the data by categories of ethnicity rather than by particular country of birth. It is this exact point that is so interesting.

The *Australian Institute of Criminology* website lists a host of reports on community safety issues, which also address the topic of social capital. Consideration of such studies shows substantial commonality in social capital, but little on the direct relationship of crime to ethnicity. An example on that site is that of the Ashfield Municipal Council Social Plan Report 2001-2006 which provided information on ethnicity and the needs of immigrants, and reports on offending – but did not directly connect those variables.

This leaves us with a general conclusion but one that requires more depth. The use of local government areas, with their diversity, is a valuable source. Additionally, the use of a complete database affords an excellent opportunity to give an overall picture which is not subject to the vagaries that might occur in studies using sampling procedures.

Theoretical concepts

There are a number of different hypotheses that might be used to predict high or low crime rates for migrants. Such explanations range from the biological, and are speculations without firm foundation upon the genetic disposition to move (the 'nomadic gene'). At the psychological level there is the notion of personality differences which dispose a person to relocate to find a better life rather than to be disposed to remain in the old life and adapt to it. In this kind of explanation one can see if it were true then the relocation of such people would have an impact not only on the country of choice for relocation but also upon the country of origin in that certain types of personality would be depleted in the country of origin and enhanced in the country of choice.

Socially speaking one might suppose that the adjustment difficulties that migrants experience would dispose them to crime, or that socio-economic disadvantage is an important factor in differential dispositions to offend. On the other hand one might suppose that they are so pleased to have arrived at a peaceful place with such an opportunity for a new life that they

would be less likely to offend. The opportunities for improvement available for those who arrive with very little are immense. Those who have little to lose are more inclined to take larger risks of failure than are those with more to lose. Put another way we might say that the potential for gain is great and the prospect of loss when one has so little is minimal.

The studies of Appleyard (1964) concluded on the importance of economic factors in migration. Those valuable are now dated with respect to population, but the issues addressed there are not.

Some of the hypotheses that we might use to explain the differential rates of immigrant crime are that of *Differential Association* (wherein the contact with the wider criminal community is diminished): it could be that those with a genetic disposition to low crime might be differentially attracted to migration as a means of improving one's lot: the *Frustration-Aggression hypothesis* suggests that frustration often leads to aggression whereas in a new environment there are many new opportunities and thus diminished frustration.

There may be some rather simple explanations: for example, there could be a higher rate than is evident in the official statistics because many migrants live in ethnic enclaves which could well contain criminal behaviour within the enclave, and thereby lead to under-reporting.

Motives for migration must be complex. It is improbable in the extreme that all migration has a unitary cause. Among the basic distinctions are 'push' and 'pull' migration. People may be repelled by where they are and wish to re-locate to more agreeable places, or they may be attracted by a particular place for some complex of reasons. Eisenstadt (1954) analysed this problem and gives an analysis in four parts. The first is the original society's inability to provide facilities for adaptation at a basic level; the second is that the achievement of certain instrumental goals (such as economic betterment) are not available in the country of origin; the third kind is an inability to gratify aspirations of social identity and solidarity; and the final one is the perceived failure of the original society to provide and meaningful and worthwhile pattern of life.

What is evident now is that we are not able to solve this complex pattern, nor does this study attempt to do so. What it does aim to do is to outline some of the basic culturally related variables, and to attempt an explanation that might some merit for continuing studies. It should also afford an opportunity of using that data to consider the range of hypotheses that might be used to explain the findings. Inevitably, the comprehensiveness of the analysis will

be constrained by the availability of data on an array of variables. Working within such constraints this study aims to help clarify at least some of the available explanations.

All of this assumes that we have identified some appropriate hypotheses. However, at this stage of investigation it is more fruitful to use the grounded theory approach with the basic aim of exploring the relationships between recorded crime rates and ethnicity.

The Present Study

This article presents an analysis of crime rates within local government areas in Victoria with respect to birth place and other cultural variables. The present study attempts to tease out some of the variables associated with ethnicity – and therefore explicitly excludes crimes committed by those of Aboriginal birth. The data is statewide for Victoria, and thus the analyses are population parameters. The parameters measured are not subject to sampling error, and may represent the picture in some other states, but may not be applicable to some other jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory, where the ethnic and Aboriginal constituents of the population are rather different (it is known that the rate of crime in such jurisdictions is inflated by the presence of persons of Aboriginal descent).

This study aims to add to our understanding of immigration and crime by looking at the issue from the perspective of local government areas, and to piece together some variables indicative of cultural differences in order to attempt to determine larger patterns, and areas which might be fruitful of further investigation.

Method and Measures

This study used officially recorded crime and ethnicity data. The indices used in the present study were police recorded crime rates, based on a rate per 10,000 of population at risk (15 to 64 years old). The crime measures included Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property, Drug Offences, Other Crime and Total Crime. Crimes Against the Person consists of homicide, rape, sex, robbery, assault and abduction/kidnap. Crimes Against Property includes various types of burglary, deception, arson, damage and various types of theft. Drug Offences include drug cultivation,/manufacture/trafficking and possession/use. Other Crime consists of going equipped to steal, justice procedures, regulated public order, weapons/explosives, harassment and behaviour in public. Total Crime is the sum of all the crimes listed above. This crime rate was calculated as the number of crimes (for each crime category) divided by the number of 15-64 year olds in each LGA, multiplied by 10,000.

The ethnicity variables were derived from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing: Basic Community Profile Series (ABS, 2002). These included four birthplace variables and three other cultural variables. The birthplace variables were the number of people born in: Australia, a Non-English Speaking country, New Zealand and Oceania and English speaking country. The other cultural variables were the number of: Arrivals to Australia (migration) 1997-2001, people with Low English proficiency and Australian citizens. All figures were converted to a rate per 1,000 of the LGA population (number/LGA population*1000) prior to analysis.

Among the difficulties here are those of which stage (police, courts, prisons) data is collected, the possible differential discretion exercised by the police, some communities receiving unjustified adverse discrimination. Behind the hard-core statistics may lie some unrecorded crime. Ethnic enclaves may contain their criminal problems, and be reluctant to reveal them either to the police or to researchers. Of course, that point may be true of other groups but, apart from such techniques as hidden delinquency studies, we have no way of knowing. What does seem likely, however, is that the more alien the group the more likely it is to act cohesively and be less connected to the mainstream of society.

Although there are legal measures in place to combat racism in Australia it must be recognised that there may still be elements of racism in certain places. To combat this Collins (2000) proposed that cultural diversity programs accompany policy change. Chan (1996) had already argued that there are at least three elements of racism in this context. One is the way in which may be manifested in police work; a second is the issue of governmental reforms aimed specifically at police racism; the third is in the context of real life policing and of the nature of police organisations. Here we need to be careful to stay close to our data, and not make assumptions that there is widespread racism.

There are some other issues which bear comment. One such issue is that of the impact of revealed data. For example, (Chan, 2000) noted that collecting data on the ethnicity of criminal offenders may help us gain insights into the relationship between ethnicity and crime, but caution is needed in both careful interpretation, and because of the possibility that ill-informed comments may have unfortunate political and social implications. The powerful effects of labelling are well known, as is their capacity for harm.

Another issue is the commission of offences that are business offences, or offences under civil rather than criminal law. As those offences are in the civil rather than the criminal jurisdiction they do not appear in this analysis – nor is any conclusion drawn about. There

may be offences which span more than one jurisdiction. For example, a civil offence of a business kind might be committed, and compounded with a criminal offence (standover tactics, for example). The only comment to be made here is that criminal offending and civil offending may or may not be related, and thus no conclusions should be drawn about offences in jurisdictions other than the criminal one.

Results

Correlations of Crime with Ethnicity Variables

An SPSS database was developed utilising all the measures described. Firstly, Pearson bi-variate correlations were computed to determine the strength, direction and significance of the relationships between crime rates (for each type of crime) and the ethnicity variables. Variables which had a significant association with crime rates were further analysed by means of SPSS Standard Regression tests to determine the unique and combined impact of the variables on each category of crime.

The database was comprised of police statistics as presented to *Crime Prevention Victoria*, and covered the year 2001. As such the statistics record the official position and do not accommodate victimless crimes, nor any possible culturally biased differential application of police discretion to arrest and charge. The other data were obtained from the Australian national census of 2001. As they are population parameters reporting bias is far less probable. All of the recorded variables on ethnicity common to both data bases were used.

Table 1 below sets out the correlations between five categories of formally recorded crime and ethnicity related variables. It will be noted that these are population data rather than samples, and thus not subject to significance testing. Even so, significance levels are shown for the sake of convention and to draw attention to the stronger correlations in the table.

Table 1

Relationships between recorded crime rates, birthplace and other cultural variables in Victorian Local Government Areas

	Crimes Against	Crimes Against	Drug Offences	Other Crime	Total Crime

	the Person	Property			
Birthplace					
Australia	-.03	-.44 ***	-.20	-.03	-.37 ***
NES Country	.05	.46 ***	.26 **	.02	.39 ***
NZ & Oceania	.24 *	.60 ***	.38 ***	.21	.55 ***
English Speaking Country	.02	.32 ***	.09	-.04	.27 *
Other Cultural Variables					
Arrivals to Australia (1997-2001)	.48 ***	.86 ***	.65 ***	.50 ***	.83 ***
Low English Proficiency	.06	.38 ***	.26 **	.01	.33 ***
Australian Citizens	-.37 ***	-.79 ***	-.49 ***	-.32 ***	-.73 ***

Notes. Two tailed test. *= <.05; **<.01; ***<.001; N was 78 for each coefficient. Crime rates calculated from 2001 police recorded crimes (supplied by CPV, 2002) using ('at risk') population of 15-64 year olds in each LGA. Birthplace and Other Cultural Variables drawn from ABS Basic Community Profiles for LGAs (2001). A total of 78 Victorian LGAs included in analysis ('unincorporated' LGA not included). English Speaking Country includes: people born in United Kingdom, Ireland & Northern America. Low English Proficiency consisted of two summed categories (Speaks other language and speaks English: Not well or Not at all).

In summary, the correlation analysis revealed a total of 24 significant variables. The crime categories having the greatest number of significant correlations were the rate of crime against property and total crime, with each producing low to high significant correlations with all seven variables analysed. The drug crime rate was significantly associated with five variables, crime against the person with three and other crime rate with two variables.

Two ethnicity variables - the rate of Australian Citizens and Arrivals to Australia were significantly associated with all four categories of crime (person, property, drug, other) as well as with total crime. These two variables were also implicated in the *top ten highest correlations* with crime as summarised below:

- Arrivals to Australia with property ($r = .86$) and total ($r = .83$) crime, drug offences ($r = .65$), other crime ($r = .50$) and person crime ($r = .48$). This clearly suggests that the greater the rate of new arrivals in a community the greater are the rates of all categories of recorded crime.
- Australian citizens with property ($r = -.79$), total crime ($r = -.73$) and drug ($r = -.49$) crimes; suggesting that the greater the number of citizens the lesser are some types of crimes.

- Rate of NZ and Oceania born people with property ($r = .60$) and total crime ($r = .55$), suggesting that communities with greater numbers of people born in this region have higher rates of property/total crime.

In interpreting the above table it will be noted that property crime comprises the bulk of all crime, and thus the property crime and total crime correlations will be similar. Further, it will be noted that the rates for crime are given as population at risk. The matrix was also calculated with whole populations within LGAs – with only negligible differences, and thus we have preferred the stricter criterion of population-at-risk.

The correlations shows that LGAs in which there is a high rate of Australian citizens the rate for each category of crime is lower – and strongly so for property crime. Looking at LGAs with a high rate of arrivals in Australia (1997-2001) the correlations indicate higher crime rates – and strongly so for both property crime and drug offences.

With respect to proficiency in English those communities with a low rate of proficiency in English have a disposition toward higher property crime rates and a less high, but still important, rate for drug offences. Contrary to some studies, the finding of a negative correlation between Australian born and crime rates was only upheld for property crime. That conclusion is shown to be enhanced when 'Australian citizens' is used. This seems to indicate that commitment to Australia as a homeland carries with it a lowered crime rate.

In this connection is it worthy of note that 'Recent arrivals to Australia' is one which positively correlates with crime rates as does the rate of people 'Born in Oceana/NZ' with some forms of crime but to a lesser degree. It is possible that that these groups are at greater risk as they might comprise one in which there is a preponderance of those in the crime-prone years – a point worthy of further investigation.

Higher rates of people born in a non-English speaking country seems to go with higher property crime and drug offences, as does low proficiency in English while higher rates of people born overseas in an English speaking country (United Kingdom, Ireland & Northern America) was only related to property crime. That conclusion may or may not have the same explanation – or at least be worthy of further investigation.

Taken as a whole the Table 1 shows that a commitment to local birth/citizenship has a lower crime rate whereas recency of arrival and crime has an elevated correlation. High rates

of persons with origins in non-English speaking countries, and low proficiency in English all seem to carry an implication for higher rates of some types of crime.

Standard Regression Statistics for Crime and Ethnicity

 The 24 significant variables were further analysed by means of SPSS Standard Regression tests to determine the unique and combined impact of the variables on each category of crime. Five regression tests were conducted, one for each of the four categories of crime and one for total crime. The results of the analyses are shown in Table 2 and discussed following.

Crimes Against the Person

 Three variables were entered into the regression analysis for rate of crime against the person – the rate of people born in NZ and Oceania, Australian citizens and Arrivals to Australia. However, the predictive capacity of these variables on violent crime was of no statistical significance.

Crimes Against Property

 Seven variables were entered into the regression analysis with rate of crime against property. As shown in Table 2, the results showed a significant overall impact of these variables with an F Ratio of 65.154 (<.001) and an R-square of .846 (r = .920), thus accounting for approximately 85% of the variance in the rate of crime against property. The Standardized Beta Coefficients, 't' values and probability levels for this model revealed that three of the seven variables made a significant unique contribution to crimes against property. These were the rates of people from non- English Speaking country, Arrivals to Australia and Low English proficiency.

Table 2

Standard regression statistics for rates of crime and other cultural variables in Victorian Local Government Areas

Variable	Standardised Beta Coefficients	t	F ratio
Property crimes			65.154 ***
Born Australia	-0.238	-1.295	
Born Oceana/NZ	-0.138	-1.351	
Born non-English speaking country	-1.012	-4.915 ***	
Born English speaking country	0.077	0.851	
Arrivals in Australia 1997-2001	1.121	7.181 ***	
Australian citizens	-0.238	-1.295	
Low English proficiency	0.526	3.019 **	
Drug offences			25.483 ***
Born non-English speaking country	-1.345	-4.900 **	
Born Oceana/NZ	0.002	0.014	
Australian citizens	0.368	1.599	
Arrivals in Australia 1997-2001	1.466	7.684 ***	
Low English proficiency	0.838	3.686 ***	
Other crimes			24.008 ***
Arrivals to Australia 1997-2001	1.427	5.947 ***	
Australian citizens	1.002	4.175 ***	
Total crime			46.813 ***
Born Australia	0.004	0.033	
Born Oceana/NZ	-0.118	-1.083	
Born non-English speaking country	-1.125	-5.104 ***	
Born English speaking country	0.061	0.631	
Arrivals in Australia 1997-2001	1.231	7.361 ***	
Australian citizens	-0.146	-0.741	
Low English proficiency	.594	3.187 **	

Two tailed test: *=<.05: **=<.01: ***=<.001. N = 78

Drug Offences

The five variables that correlated with the rate of Drug Offences were entered into another regression analysis. The results in Table 2 show that the combined impact of these

variables was again quite strong with an F Ratio of 25.483 (<.001) and an R-square of .639 (r = .799), which contributes 64% of the variance in the drug offence rate. Further Standardized Beta Coefficients, t values and probability statistics show that (as with property crime) three of the five variables: the rate of people from a Non-English speaking country, Rate of arrivals and Low English proficiency each had a unique significant impact of this category of crime.

Other Crime

Two variables (Arrivals to Australia and Australian citizens) were entered into a regression analysis with the rate of other crime. The results in Table 2 show a significant combined effect of these variables on other crime with an F Ratio of 24.008 (<.001) and an R-square .39 (r = .625), explaining 39% of the variance. These two variables also made a significant unique contribution to the rate of Other Crime as revealed in the Standardized Beta Coefficients, t values and probability levels for this analysis.

Total Crime

As with property crime, all seven variables were entered into the regression analysis with rate of total crime. The results showed a significant overall impact of these variables with an F Ratio of 46.813 (<.001) and an R-square .824 (r = .908), thus accounting for approximately 82% of the variance in the rate of total crime. The Standardized Beta Coefficients, t values and probability levels for this model revealed that three of the seven variables made a significant unique contribution to Crimes Against the Property. As with property and drug offences, these were the rates of people born in a Non- English Speaking country, Arrivals to Australia and Low English proficiency.

Regressions and the Unique Impact on Crime Rates

Having disentangled those variables with a combined effect on crime from those that make a unique contribution, Table 3 summarises the findings. This does not mean that variables with a combined or inter-correlated impact on crime are unimportant but rather that we can be somewhat more certain of what is happening when looking at variables that make a direct contribution. Table 3 therefore shows the correlations for only those variables that had a significant unique impact on crime.

Table 3

Summary of correlations for variables with significant unique impact on crime

Variable	Property	Drug	Other	Total
Born non-English speaking country	.46***	.26 *		.39***
Arrivals Australia 1997-2001	.86***	.65 ***	.50 ***	.83 ***
Australian citizens			-.32 **	
Low English proficiency	.38**	.26*		.33**

Two tailed test: *=<.05: **=<.01: ***=<.001. N = 78

As will be seen in Table 3, recency of arrival had a significant positive relationship and unique impact on all types of crime, except Crime Against the person. This suggests that LGAs with higher rates of recent arrivals tend to be more crime ridden but are not necessarily more violent. This is also reflected in the finding that LGAs with high rates of people born in a non-English speaking country and Low English proficiency had a significant unique impact on property, drug and total crime but not on personal crime, or on other crime. The impact of the Australian citizen variable is not as strong in predicting crime, only having a unique part to play in 'Other crime'.

Conclusions and Discussion

The methods of analysis employed in this research allowed us to move through a process of data reduction and greater clarification regarding the impact of ethnicity on crime in Local Government Areas in Victoria. We began with a correlational analysis that showed which variables merited further investigations and which did not. While some of those relationships seem to lead to certain conclusions we then conducted regression analysis to avoid what is sometimes called the 'third variable problem' in statistics.

For example, a conclusion regarding the relationship of Arrivals and Australian citizenship with high and low crime, respectively, might be that the period of social fluidity consequent upon arrival disposes a person to all sorts of social non-coping. This includes an increase in the disposition to crime (especially, property and drug crime) but that when the arrivals convert to citizenship (and commitment to Australia) that rate reverses dramatically. However, the regression analysis showed that while the rate of Arrivals to Australia still had an impact on crime (with the exception of violent crime); the citizenship effect only remained

significant for the rate of other crimes. Given these results other possible conclusions might include that:

- New arrivals are not committing the crime but tend to 'arrive to' already disadvantaged and crime-ridden areas
- Crime does not decrease with the decision to become a citizen rather a third variable such as increasing age contributes to lower crime as well as to greater citizenship
- Younger people in the general Australian population tend to commit more crimes; new arrivals also tend to be younger and therefore as equally crime prone as other young people

These conclusions point to the complexities involved in researching community crime. What does seem to be established is the constellation of factors that are related to crime, and have largely to do with both methodological issues as mentioned above, and the distinct possibility of social factors of commitment and opportunity. It is this latter point that may provide a valuable insight for local government into the way that social problems are addressed, and the way that community resources are allocated.

The authors are mindful of the fact that Victoria is a largely urbanised state with a relatively low proportion of indigenous inhabitants (known to be at high risk). These findings may find application in like states such as New South Wales and South Australia but are less likely to be applicable to other jurisdictions such as the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

In addition to explanatory hypotheses these findings have clear implications for migration policy, for local government, and for the host country. The issue of visas, of refugee status, of trade and professional skills and of human rights are all bound up in this issue, as is settlement and support of migrants after arrival. For that reason, studies such as this may help invest migration policy, and of treatment at the local government area, with some statistical evidence. It is this general finding that might commend itself to other researchers as a new point of departure.

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