

Research Article

# The Role of the Family in Asian American Juvenile Delinquency

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## Abstract

Using the family delinquency theory as a framework, this study explores family characteristics as predictors for delinquent acts against property and persons by AAPI adolescents. The weighted survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health is a nationally representative sample of seventh to twelfth graders. Parental monitoring served as a protective factor for delinquent acts against property. Family structure was a predictive factor for delinquent acts against persons. Overall, the findings partially supported the family delinquency theory, underscoring the importance of developing culturally appropriate theories. Implications for the development of intervention and prevention programs are discussed.

## Introduction

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) make up one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, between 1990 and 2000, there was a 72% increase in this population (Barnes and Bennett, 2002). Moreover, AAPI youth have the largest projected growth rate of all adolescents between 1995 and 2015 (Snyder and Sickmund 1999). Despite this increase, there is a dearth of empirical studies on juvenile delinquent acts committed by AAPIs (Kim and Goto 2000; Pope et al. 2002; Toy 1992b; Wolf and Hartney 2005). The neglect of AAPIs is unfortunate as the rate of delinquency within this population, along with increases in Asian immigration, has been on the rise in recent years (Kim and Goto 2000; Lai 2005; Le et al. 2001). While AAPIs are arrested at a rate lower than other racial/ethnic (i.e. African American, Hispanic, White) youth, they have the highest conviction rate (Lai 2005). Although this paper focuses on AAPIs as a group, it is important to acknowledge notable differences be-

tween the various ethnic subgroups in the AAPI population with respect to rates of delinquency and arrest. Southeast Asians (e.g. Cambodians, Laotians, Vietnamese) have higher rates than East Asians (e.g. Chinese, Korean, Japanese) (Le 2002; Le et al. 2001) and Samoan, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Korean youth have the highest rates of arrest that result in referrals to probation, second to African American youth (Lai 2005).

The paucity of literature on AAPIs extends to the relationship between family functioning and adolescent outcomes; the majority focuses on European American families. Few look at Asian Americans or Pacific Islander adolescents (Crane et al. 200; Greenberger and Chen 1996; Hishinuma et al. 2004). And among those that do, the focus is academic achievement, not delinquency (Fan and Chen 2001). The goal of this study is to begin filling the gap in the knowledge base of AAPI delinquency by examining the relationship between the family environment and delinquent behavior and determining the applicability of the family delinquency theory to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Family plays a very important role in AAPI collectivist culture. In his study of Hong Kong adolescents, Shek (1997) points out that the cultural emphasis of familism may add to the impact of family functioning on adolescent adjustment, including delinquent behaviors. Research has also found that AAPI cultural values, such as respect for authority and elders, belief in family honor, and not bringing shame to the family, serve to reduce rates of delinquency (Le 2002; Le and Stockdale 2005). Nagasawa, Qian and Wong (2000) found that in Chinese and Asian Indian households, families played a preventative role towards adolescent drug and alcohol use. Research (Crane et al. 2005; Shek 1997; Tseng and Fuligni 2000) consistently shows that acculturation conflict between parents and child negatively influences family cohesion; however, Crane et al. (2005) found that family functioning, which included involvement in activities and emotional expression, was a better predictor of delinquency.

While there have been many useful theoretical frameworks developed to study the role of the family in the development of juvenile delinquency, rarely are factors that may be specific to the AAPI population taken into consideration. The family delinquency theory incorporates both context and process variables of the family (Smith and Krohn 1995). Context variables consist of

family structural characteristics and process variables relate to the parent and child relationships. Racial and cultural factors within the family, which add to the complexity of juvenile delinquency, need to be acknowledged. Neglecting these causal factors increases the risk that delinquency rates will not only rise, but that current intervention programs will not adequately address the needs of the AAPI population. Few family-focused programs meet the unique needs of AAPI families, such as cultural and family expectations. In American culture, adolescence is a time in which autonomy is more pronounced and some adolescents may express their autonomy by engaging in delinquent behavior (Barrera and Li 1996). However, in many AAPI families, traditional cultural ideals are collectivist; hence, family solidarity and harmony are often valued over individual autonomy (Uba 1994). Paradoxically, it is that concept of group solidarity that often serves as a reason for AAPI youth to join gangs (Toy 1992a; Wang 1995). Acculturation often affects family functioning in AAPI families and may play a unique role in delinquency. Family conflict is likely to occur between adolescents who have developed Western ways of thinking and their parents who still adhere to traditional collectivist ideals. As adolescents feel less attached to and supported by their parents, there is an increased likelihood that they will engage in behavior problems, such as delinquency (Barrera and Li 1996; Caucé et al. 1996). Both collectivism and acculturation suggest that traditional theories may not apply to AAPI juvenile delinquency. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to examine the relationship between the family environment and delinquent behavior among AAPI adolescents and 2) to determine the fit of the family delinquency theory to the AAPI population. In the next section, an explanation of family delinquency theory will be presented followed by a discussion of AAPI cultural considerations.

### Family Delinquency Theory

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory clearly states the central role of family attachment in juvenile delinquency. This theory's premise is that individuals are naturally inclined toward social deviance. However, as a result of attachment to groups and individuals, individual behavior is regulated and conformity to social norms is attained. The bond between the family and the individual inhibits the individual from breaking the rules of social confor-

mity. The family delinquency theory, an outgrowth of Hirschi's seminal theory, differentiates family context and process variables and examines the dynamic relationship between the two. Process variables examine the parent and child interactions (e.g. cohesion and supervision), while context variables indirectly impact those interactions (e.g. income and family structure).

### **Family context**

Family income is one context variable that is frequently examined as adolescents from low-income households are over-represented among perpetrators of delinquent acts (Bracher 2000; DiLalla et al. 1988; Farnworth 1984; Simons et al. 1993; Smith and Krohn 1995). Not only does being at an economic disadvantage create distractions (e.g. work) that prevent parents from effectively monitoring their children or being involved in their children's activities, but it also creates tensions that may reduce the level of attachment between parent and child. Family structure is another context variable often considered when looking at juvenile delinquency. Research has consistently shown an association between single parenthood and delinquency (Anderson 2002; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Wright and Wright 1994). Family processes may be impeded (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). For example, adolescents in a single parent household are at greater risk of delinquency simply because there is one less person capable of supervision. With respect to Hirschi's control theory, since the parent is an important socialization agent, the child is exposed to less social control (Anderson 2002). The number of siblings is also associated with an increase in delinquent behavior as there is often less opportunity for individual parent-child interaction. There is also a greater chance of a delinquent sibling who is a poor role model and introduces the adolescent to delinquent behaviors (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Nye 1958).

### **Family Process**

The quality of family interactions is a crucial area to consider when looking at juvenile delinquency (Hirschi 1969; Nye 1958; Shields and Clark 1995). Parental attachment, which is defined as the emotional bond between parent(s) and children, is believed to insulate children from delinquent behavior by exerting control over their behavior (Shields and Clark 1995). Cohesion is a concept

that resembles attachment. However, while the latter describes the emotional bonding among family members, cohesion looks at the interaction between an individual's autonomy and emotional bonding of family members (Shields and Clark 1995). The bond between parent and child is expressed in a variety of areas, such as parental involvement and supervision (Smith and Krohn 1995), and is negatively correlated with delinquency. Parental involvement helps to solidify the parent-child bond and also allows the parent to monitor the child's behavior more closely. Adolescents who report having positive relationships and spending more time with their parents are less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Arbona et al. 1999; Nye 1958; Robinson 1978; Thornberry et al. 1995; Warr 1993).

### **Cultural Considerations**

The optimal Western authoritative parenting style involves the ability to be warm and at the same time exert moderate levels of control that allow the child a sense of independence and developmentally appropriate autonomy (Kumpfer et al. 1996). However, it is important to take into consideration the role of culture in influencing optimal parenting styles. Generally speaking, AAPIs come from a more collectivist culture in which the group's needs are often placed over the needs of the individual. AAPI parents may expect an unquestioned obedience and filial piety that is culturally appropriate, and may not be detrimental for AAPI youths (Nguyen 1992). Furthermore, many AAPI parents tend to believe that obedience and self-discipline (which is seen as authoritarian), as opposed to Western authoritative qualities of intimacy, will advance their goals towards education and other aspirations valued according to cultural norms (Chao 1994). This collectivism also plays a role in adolescents' attitudes and values towards delinquency (Tyson and Hubert 2003).

### **Impact of Acculturation**

Acculturation plays a crucial role in AAPI family processes as it may increase inter-generational differences and conflict (Go 1999) and weaken social control (Wong 2001). As adolescents acculturate and develop Western ways of thinking while their less acculturated parent(s) still adheres to traditional collectivist ideals, there is an increased likelihood of family conflict, a decrease

in family cohesion (Kim and Goto 2000; Lung 2000; Sue 1981), and subsequent delinquency (Ascher 1985; Go 1999; Samaniego and Gonzales 1999). As adolescents acculturate, they may view their parents' high level of authoritarian discipline as being too harsh and inappropriate. In their study of AAPI youth, DeBaryshe et al. (2001) found authoritative parenting to be associated with better prosocial and school adjustment, while harsh parental discipline was correlated with an increase in antisocial behavior. Bhattacharya (1998) posits that intergenerational conflict regarding appropriate parenting styles polarizes the family and results in children engaging in deviant behaviors.

### **Purpose of Study**

The need for studying the role of the family in AAPI juvenile delinquency is evident. Utilizing the family delinquency theory, this study examines predictors of delinquent behavior among AAPI adolescents. Acculturation has been included in the model to account for cultural considerations. In addition to adding to the knowledge base of AAPI delinquency, this study will specifically seek to answer the following questions: 1) What is the relationship between family environment and delinquent behavior among AAPI adolescents? And 2) Can the family delinquency theory be applied to the AAPI population?

### **Methods**

#### **Survey and Sample**

The data for the present analysis are drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) Wave 1 (gathered in 1994-1995) and Wave 2 (gathered in 1996). Adolescents in grades seven through twelve were interviewed. The primary sampling frame included all high schools in the United States that had an eleventh grade and at least thirty enrollees in the school. From this, eighty schools were systematically randomly sampled and selected proportional to enrollment size, stratified by region, level of urbanization, school type, and percentage of white students. For each of the high schools, the largest feeder school (middle school or junior high) was also recruited when available.

Data analyzed for the purpose of this study are from the adolescent in-home assessment. To protect confidentiality, no paper questionnaires were used. Instead, all data were recorded on lap-

top computers. For less sensitive topics, interviewers used CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interview) in which they read the questions aloud and entered respondents' answers. More sensitive questions were administered using audio CASI (Computer-Assisted Self-Interview), which allowed adolescents to listen to pre-recorded questions and enter their answers directly into the computer et al. 1997). More specific information about the Add Health research design, sampling, and data instruments is available in Bearman et al. (1997).

The current study includes 1,015 AAPI adolescents, with appropriate sampling weights to estimate the approximately 770,000 AAPI adolescents in seventh to twelfth grade in the United States. There were three paths that led to being selected in the AAPI groups: 1) Asian or Pacific Islander in the race category when allowed to check as many races as apply; 2) checked off one or more Asian ethnicities; or, 3) checked off Asian or Pacific Islander when forced to choose only one racial category.

### **Dependent Variables**

The two dependent variables, delinquent acts against property and persons, were taken from the in-home assessment at Wave 2 (Wave 1 Delinquency variables are kept in as control variables). Initial analyses were conducted to determine how the subscales should be collapsed; due to the large percentage of adolescents who committed zero acts, each subscale was dichotomized to never (0) and once or more (1) (see Table 1 for SD, Mean and Percentages).

*Delinquent acts against property* subscale included 4 items: In the past 12 months, how often did you 1) take paint signs or graffiti on someone else's property or in public place?; 2) deliberately damage property that did not belong to you?; 3) steal something worth more than \$50?; and 4) steal something worth less than \$50? The Cronbach's alpha was 0.67.

*Delinquent acts against persons* subscale included 4 items: In the past 12 months, how often did you: 1) get into a serious physical fight?; 2) hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or care from a doctor or nurse?; 3) use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone?; and 4) take part in a fight where a group of your friends was against another group? The Cronbach's alpha was 0.75.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Variable	N=1,015
Weighted N	770,000
Ethnic Background*	
Asian Indian	2.5% (n=77)
Chinese	26.0% (n=264)
Filipino	44.3% (n=449)
Japanese	6.9% (n=70)
Korean	7.6% (n=77)
Vietnamese	5.0% (n=51)
Other	17.2% (n=175)
Sex (%)	
Male	51.1
Female	48.9
Age (Mean)	16.2 (SD=1.64)
Level of Acculturation (Mean)	1.60 (SD=0.61)
Family Structure (%)	
Bio. Parents	69.6
1 Bio. Parent Only	16.8
1 Bio. Parent/ 1 Other	6.49
Other	7.14
Enough Money to Pay Bills – Yes (%)	86.2
Property at Time 2 (Mean)	0.29 (SD=0.45)
Zero Acts (%)	71.0
One + Acts (%)	29.0
Persons at Time 2 (Mean)	0.24(SD=0.42)
Zero Acts (%)	76.5
One + Acts (%)	23.5

\*percentages equal more than 100% because adolescents were asked to check off as many ethnicities as apply.

## Independent Variables

The Add Health data contain specific measures that tap both family context and process variables from family delinquency theory. All measures were taken from Wave 1. Family context is composed of three variables. *Family structure* was measured as: 1) an intact household which indicates both biological parents in the home; 2) a single biological parent and no other adult parental figure; 3) a reconstituted household with one biological parent and another parental figure; and 4) other (including kinship care). *Siblings* measured the number of brothers and sisters currently residing in the home. While there was a question measuring income, there was a great deal of missing data; therefore, *family income* was measured by whether the family was on public assistance. This was the only question taken from the parent questionnaire.

Most theoretical work emphasizes the importance of close and secure parent-child relationships and its relationship to delinquency (Shields and Clark 1995). Family process is made up of five variables. These variables measure affective ties between parents and children and parental involvement, both of which have been found to be negatively correlated with delinquency (Arbona et al. 1999; Nye 1958; Robinson 1978; Thornberry et al. 1995; Warr 1993). In order to compare adolescents from single versus two parent households, in two parent households, the higher score (e.g. greater family cohesion) of the two was used. *Parental attachment* was measured with four questions about the adolescent's affectional relationship with his/her mother and father: 1) Most of the time, your mother/father is warm and loving toward you; 2) You are satisfied with the way your mother/father and you communicate with each other; 3) Overall, you are satisfied with your relationship with your mother/father; and, 4) How close do you feel to your mother/father? The answers for the first three questions consisted of a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5) while the fourth question consisted of a Likert scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5). The first three items were reversed scored with higher scores representing the adolescent strongly agreed with the statements and thus, had a more positive relationship with the parent. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was 0.88. *Family cohesion* was a three-item scale that looked at the adolescent's affectional bond to the family: 1)

How much do you feel that people in your family understand you?; 2) How much do you feel that you and your family have fun together?; and, 3) How much do you feel that your family pays attention to you? The items were scored on a Likert scale with response categories ranging from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5). A higher score on the scale indicates a greater degree of perceived family cohesion. The internal consistency for the scale was 0.79. *Parent involvement* measured the degree to which parents were involved in activities, ranging from a movie to working on a school project, with the adolescent. There were four dichotomous questions that asked about the following activities in the past four weeks: shopping, sports, a movie, play, museum or concert, or sports event; and, worked on a school project. The scale was the sum of the four activities and had a possible score ranged from 0-4, with a higher score representing more parental involvement. The internal consistency for the scale was 0.90. Other family correlates included in family process variables are parental discipline styles, which include control and monitoring. *Parental control* consisted of seven dichotomous items and measured the adolescent’s perception of how much control he/she has about various decision-making activities, such as curfew and friends. Possible scores ranged from 0-7, with a higher score indicating less parental control and more adolescent autonomy. The Cronbach’s alpha was 0.61. *Parental monitoring* was measured with three questions that asked how often the parents were home when adolescent woke up, came home from school, and went to sleep. The answers consisted of a Likert scale ranging from “always” (1) to “never” (5). All items were reversed scored with higher scores representing the adolescent was always supervised by a parent.

In addition to age and gender, the third individual variable was *acculturation*, which was measured through two items: 1) What language is usually spoken in your home? (1=English, 0=Other) and 2) Were you born in the United States? (1=Yes/0=No). This was coded as a continuous variable of 0-2, with a higher score representing a greater degree of acculturation.

### **Analysis**

For socio-demographic variables, percentages and prevalence estimates (weighted N) are reported. A logistic regression for complex survey data was carried out. For logistic regressions, the coef-

efficient indicates the log odds change in committing a delinquent act against property or persons based on a one-unit change in the predictor variable being considered. As this is often difficult to interpret, the odds ratios (unadjusted OR and adjusted aOR) are presented. An odds ratio expresses the degree of increased risk of the event (e.g. delinquent acts against persons) associated with the presence of a risk factor. An odds ratio of “1” indicates no difference between the two groups. Precision in the variables is indicated by a confidence interval that does not include “1” (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1989). Odds ratios greater than 1.0 indicate increased likelihood of the event (e.g. delinquent acts against persons) occurring, while odds ratios less than 1.0 indicate a decreased likelihood.

All estimates were calculated using the sampling weights. The sampling weights and design effects were used to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection and to account for non-responses. Failure to incorporate the appropriate sampling weights and design effects leads to an increased probability of type 1 errors.

## Results

### **Socio-demographic characteristics**

There were 1, 015 AAPI adolescents, representing approximately 770,000 adolescents; (see Table 1 for sample characteristics). The largest ethnic makeup for the adolescents was Filipino at almost half of the sample (44.31%), followed by Chinese (26.04%), and then “Other” (17.20%). It can be assumed that Pacific Islanders are included in this “Other” due to the wording of the original questionnaire. Adolescents who marked “Asian or Pacific Islander” as a racial category were asked to check off one or more Asian ethnicities; however, there were no Pacific Islander choices (e.g. Samoan or Hawaiian), only “Other.” The range of participant ages was 12-21; it is important to note that all participants were still attending high school and living at home at the time of the interview. The majority of adolescents lived in intact households (69.6%). The mean acts of delinquent acts against property and persons were 0.41 (SD = 0.85) and 0.49 (SD = 0.98), respectively.

### **Univariate Results**

Table 2 presents the results for a univariate regression analysis for delinquent acts against property and persons.

**Table 2.** Univariate Model Results

	Delinquent Acts Against Property				Delinquent Acts Against Persons			
	OR	t	P> t	[95% CI]	OR	t	P> t	[95% CI]
Prior level of delinquency	2.565***	7.10	0.000	1.973 - 3.335	2.830**	8.41	0.000	2.216 - 3.616
Age	0.942	-0.90	0.370	0.827 - 1.074	0.909	-1.41	0.162	0.794 - 1.040
Gender								
Female	1.000				1.000			
Male	1.267	1.17	0.245	0.848 - 1.893	1.695*	2.38	0.019	1.093 - 2.630
Acculturation	1.149	1.00	0.317	0.873 - 1.511	1.745**	3.43	0.001	1.266 - 2.406
Family Structure								
Intact	1.000				1.000			
1 Bio. Parent	0.862	-0.49	0.624	0.474 - 1.567	2.150*	2.31	0.022	1.116 - 4.143
1 Bio. / 1 Other	1.027	0.07	0.943	0.497 - 2.119	0.482	-1.93	0.056	0.228 - 1.020
Other	0.677	-0.95	0.344	0.300 - 1.528	1.700	1.15	0.252	0.684 - 4.205
Siblings	1.054	0.60	0.548	0.887 - 1.253	0.968	-0.32	0.746	0.792 - 1.182
On Public Assistance	1.823	1.39	0.168	0.774 - 4.300	1.003	0.01	0.995	0.442 - 2.272
Parental Attachment	1.119	1.94	0.055	1.000 - 1.256	1.107	1.95	0.053	0.999 - 1.228
Parental Control	0.979	-0.36	0.722	0.867 - 1.104	1.040	0.51	0.611	0.893 - 1.211
Family Cohesion	0.858***	-3.58	0.000	0.789 - 0.934	0.860***	-3.57	0.000	0.792 - 0.935
Parent Involvement	1.026	0.19	0.852	0.780 - 1.349	1.183	-1.32	0.189	0.919 - 1.522
Parent Monitoring	0.934	-1.58	0.117	0.858 - 1.017	0.961	-0.57	0.569	0.838 - 1.103

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

### **Delinquent Acts against Property**

Prior level of delinquency was a significant predictor of committing a delinquent act against property at time 2 (OR = 2.565,  $p < 0.001$ ). The only other variable that had an individual effect on delinquent acts against property was family cohesion. Adolescents with greater levels of family cohesion (OR = 0.858,  $p < 0.001$ ) were less likely to commit delinquent acts against property. None of the psychosocial variables or family context variables (e.g. family structure, income) was significant.

### **Delinquent Act against Persons**

As with delinquent acts against property, prior level of delinquency was a significant predictor of committing a delinquent act against persons at time 2 (OR = 2.830,  $p < 0.001$ ). Two of the psychosocial variables served as predictors for delinquent acts against persons. Males were significantly more likely (OR = 1.695,  $p < 0.05$ ) to commit delinquent acts against persons than females, as were those who were more acculturated (OR = 1.745,  $p < 0.01$ ). With respect to family context, adolescents who lived with only one biological parent, as opposed to intact families, were twice (OR = 2.150,  $p < 0.05$ ) as likely to commit delinquent acts against persons. And, one of the family process variables was significant. Similar to delinquent acts against property, those who had greater family cohesion (OR = 0.860,  $p < 0.001$ ) were at less risk for committing delinquent acts against persons.

### **Full Model**

Following univariate tests, a logistic regression analysis was performed for each dependent variable (Table 3). Dummy codes were used to represent all categorical variables; the reference group for each categorical variable does not have parameter estimates (odds ratios or confidence intervals).

### **Delinquent Acts against Property**

The full model was significant ( $F(14, 115) = 6.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Prior acts of delinquency remained significant (aOR=2.489,  $p < 0.001$ ). Gender became significant; males were almost twice as likely (OR = 1.941,  $p < 0.05$ ) to commit delinquent acts against property than females. Family context variables remained as not predictive of delinquent acts against property in the full model. Family cohe-

Table 3. Full Model Results

	Delinquent Acts Against Property					Delinquent Acts Against Persons				
	aOR	t	P> t	95% CI]		aOR	t	P> t	95% CI]	
	N=604 F(14, 115)=6.94 Prop>F=0.0000					N=596 F(13, 116)=3.69 Prop>F=0.0001				
Prior level of delinquency	2.489**	5.76	0.000	1.820 - 3.405		3.052**	6.62	0.000	2.187 - 4.259	
Age	0.891	-1.19	0.236	0.735 - 1.080		0.909	-0.92	0.360	0.740 - 1.116	
Gender										
Female	1.000					1.000				
Male	1.941*	2.51	0.011	1.170 - 3.220		1.331	0.77	0.444	0.637 - 2.783	
Acculturation	0.865	-0.62	0.537	0.544 - 1.376		1.725	1.96	0.052	0.994 - 2.991	
Family Structure										
Intact	1.000					1.000				
1 Bio. Parent	0.959	-0.09	0.926	0.387 - 2.371		2.726*	2.05	0.042	1.036 - 7.175	
1 Bio./1 Other	1.107	0.20	0.842	0.405 - 3.026		0.287	-2.02	0.046	0.085 - 0.975	
Other	0.905	-0.16	0.874	0.263 - 3.121		1.487	0.69	0.490	0.479 - 4.620	
Siblings	1.093	0.74	0.459	0.862 - 1.386		1.035	0.38	0.701	0.865 - 1.234	
On Public Assistance	1.549	0.91	0.366	0.597 - 4.024		0.863	-0.31	0.757	0.338 - 2.204	
Parental Attachment	0.982	-0.22	0.825	0.831 - 1.159		1.136	1.27	0.208	0.930 - 1.388	
Parental Control	1.050	0.46	0.643	0.854 - 1.290		1.119	0.85	0.398	0.861 - 1.454	
Family Cohesion	0.899	-1.88	0.063	0.803 - 1.006		0.931	-0.88	0.380	0.792 - 1.094	
Parent Involvement	1.162	0.80	0.427	0.801 - 1.687		1.111	0.81	0.420	0.859 - 1.437	
Parent Monitoring	0.891*	-2.28	0.024	0.807 - 0.985		0.920	-1.49	0.139	0.823 - 1.028	

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

sion was no longer significant; however, parental monitoring became significant (OR=0.891,  $p<0.05$ ).

### **Delinquent Acts against Persons**

When all of the variables were placed into the model, several changes occurred with regard to the predictive power and relationship of the factors as a whole. The model was significant ( $F(14, 115) = 10.01, p<0.001$ ). The variance contributed by gender and acculturation was attenuated by the inclusion of the other variables. Family structure, the only significant univariate family context variable, remained predictive. However, in the univariate model, only those with only one biological parent versus those in an intact family structure were significant. In the full model, adolescents in families with only one biological parent were almost three times (OR=2.726,  $p<0.05$ ) more likely to commit delinquent acts against persons compared to those in intact families. The odds increased from the univariate model (OR=2.150,  $p<0.05$ ). Adolescents in reconstituted homes were slightly (aOR = 0.287,  $p<0.05$ ) less likely to commit delinquent acts against persons than those in intact families. With respect to family process variables, family cohesion was no longer significant in the full model.

### **Discussion**

The primary objective of this study was to explore the relationship between the family environment and delinquent behavior and in doing so, determining if the family delinquency theory is culturally appropriate for the AAPI population. While AAPI delinquency and the rates of arrest are on the rise (Kim and Goto 2000; Lai 2005; Le et al. 2001), the majority of AAPI adolescents in this study reported engaging in no delinquent acts (property - 70.96% and persons - 76.48%). This is consistent with other prevalence reports (DeBaryshe, Yuen, and Rodriguez-Stern, 2001; Grunbaum et al. 2000; Valois et al. 1995). It is important to reiterate the fact that survey included Filipino adolescents (44.31%), followed by Chinese (26.04%), and Others (17.20%), which could include Pacific Islanders, an ethnic distribution that does not necessarily mirror the total AAPI youth population.

There is partial support for the family delinquency theory, though the family and context variables did not prove to be significant predictors of delinquent acts against property and persons

in AAPI adolescents. Significant effects were noted for some variables. In the univariate model, adolescents who identified having greater family cohesion were less likely to participate in delinquent acts against property. This supports Hirschi's (1969) social control theory, which laid the foundation for the family delinquency theory, and stated that adolescents with a strong attachment to others are more likely to adhere to conventional societal norms. This also supports Nye's (1958) seminal theory which argues the quality of family interactions is a crucial predictor of juvenile delinquency. Greater attachment to the family insulates adolescents from delinquent behavior by exerting a great deal of control over their behavior. However, in the full model, family cohesion is no longer significant; parental monitoring becomes a significant predictor for delinquent acts against property. Parental monitoring is negatively correlated with delinquency (Smith and Krohn 1995). Jacob and Lefgren (2003) found that adolescents who are not closely supervised are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors that manifest as delinquent acts against property. One explanation for family cohesion no longer being significant may have to do with cultural factors within the AAPI family. While Western families may place an emphasis on the affectional bond between parent and child, this may be less of a concern in AAPI families. It may be that the control that AAPI parents exert over their children is primarily through direct monitoring as opposed to indirect control through affectional attachment. AAPI parents' belief in obedience and self-discipline, as opposed to Western authoritative qualities of intimacy, plays a role in adolescents' attitudes and values against delinquency (Chao 1994; Tyson and Hubert 2003). Tyson and Hubert (2003) point out that the collectivist nature of AAPI families underscores the serious nature of delinquent acts because of the emphasis on group norms and obeying authority.

With respect to delinquent acts against persons, in the univariate model, individual factors, such as gender and acculturation, family structure, and family cohesion were significant. When looked at individually, acculturation played a significant role for delinquent acts against persons. Acculturation affects intergenerational conflict, which can polarize the family and result in children engaging in deviant behaviors that oppose AAPI cultural norms (Bhattacharya 1998). As adolescents acculturate from a more collectivist orientation to a more individualistic one, they may turn to

seek support from peers, including delinquent ones (Le and Stockdale 2005). In the full model, only family structure, which is a family context variable, remained significant. Research has consistently shown an association between single parenthood and delinquency (Anderson 2002; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Wright and Wright 1994). With respect to Hirshi's control theory, since the parent is an important socialization agent, the child is exposed to less social control (Andersen 2002). Because adolescence is a period typically thought of as a time of separation from parents and of peers taking on more importance, peer influence and attachment may play a greater role in more serious acts of delinquency and thus, cohesion to family no longer serves as a protective factor. One surprise finding is that adolescents who lived in reconstituted homes were slightly less likely to commit delinquent acts against persons than those who lived with both biological parents. One possible consideration is the quality of the marriage. Children who are in high-conflict marriages fare worse than those in low-conflict marriages et al. 1995). It is possible that adolescents may be living with both biological parents, but the marriage is strained. Another cultural consideration is the phenomenon of divorce, which is deemed unacceptable in traditional AAPI families and, as Pinhey and Perez (2000) note, a sin with heightened feelings of guilt. Thus, AAPI parents who would get divorced and remarried may be more acculturated and have less conflict with their adolescents. Another explanation could be the small sample size, only 6.49% of adolescents are in reconstituted; this compared to 69.60% in intact homes and 16.77% in homes with only one biological parent.

Overall, in determining the applicability of the family delinquency theory to the AAPI population, the theory is limited and may not be culturally appropriate. The findings do suggest that delinquent acts against property and persons are clearly two distinct types of delinquency with different predictors (Rolf et al. 1985; Terrell and Taylor 1980). Family process variables identify the interaction within the family and few were significant predictors and for different outcome variables. Parental control, attachment, and involvement, three process variables, were not significant in any model. This may be associated with the cultural style of parenting. While AAPI parents are involved in their children's lives, it is in a manner different from Western's cultural style of involvement, such as going to social activities together (e.g. movies,

shopping), and is not captured in this study. AAPI parents are often more involved in their children's school activities (Chao 1994). Hence, the lack of significance may have to do with the construct validity of the variables. Parental control may not be a predictive factor because many AAPI parents expect an unquestioned obedience and filial piety, and thus, it may not be a factor for Asian American youths (Nguyen 1992). Moreover, family processes, process and context, may operate differently within the AAPI ethnic groups, depending on the differences in sociohistorical context and immigration patterns. For instance, most East Asians (i.e. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) voluntarily immigrated to the United States to improve their social situation, whereas most Southeast Asians (i.e. Vietnamese, and Cambodian) left their war torn country to flee persecution (Le and Stockdale 2005). This may affect level of acculturation, economic status, and consequently, family relationships. It is important to take these factors into consideration and distinguish which ones might be of significance for the AAPI population.

These findings are important for researchers, clinicians and policymakers for they present a richer picture of AAPI juvenile delinquency. Interventions should focus on culturally sensitive parenting skills and what constitutes optimal parenting styles for particular cultures (Nguyen 1992). The poor fit of the family delinquency theory in this study highlights the importance of considering cultural family processes, including traditional values and experiences. Traditional measures of parental involvement and parenting practices must be re-evaluated to include culturally appropriate questions. Another necessary component is the determination of whether family context plays a role. When working with AAPI youth, the definition of family context must extend beyond that of the nuclear family to include extended family members.

Future research needs to capture the unique characteristics present within the AAPI community, such as developing a more accurate measure of acculturation. There also needs to be an emphasis on the disaggregation of Asian ethnic groups (e.g. Japanese, Filipino). AAPI groups differ in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, including migration patterns, level of integration, and political experiences. Understanding these factors will help further educate practitioners when working with this growing and diverse population. The family plays a proximal role in the main-

tenance of adolescent behavior and it is crucial that researchers and practitioners alike understand the inherent familial cultural factors which inevitably influence individual behaviors. This study emphasizes the need for theoretical frameworks that are culturally appropriate as traditional theories do not take the unique cultural characteristics of the AAPI population into consideration and hence, are inappropriate in capturing predictive factors.

### **Limitations**

One of the first limitations is the amount of missing data affecting the sample size in the full model, in which one third of the sample is lost. In cases of missing data, listwise data deletion was used and the entire case was omitted. In the full model for delinquent acts against persons, the sample size was 604, compared to 1,015 in the univariate model. This impacts the findings as a larger sample size allows for greater likelihood that significant relationships will be found; in other words, more significant predictors would emerge in larger samples where there is greater statistical power. The inclusion of sampling weights do compensate for the nonrespondents by increasing the survey weights of respondents. Besides the statistical ramifications, the substantive implications are important to discuss. One variable that has a significant amount of missing data is the variable for income, which asked if the family had enough money to pay the bills. While this had less missing data than the continuous variable (i.e. what is your monthly income?), it is still a personal issue and some may feel uncomfortable answering this question. AAPIs are more likely to restrict disclosure of personal information than other ethnic groups (Barry 2003). With respect to sample bias, it is possible that this did not completely capture low-income families. Self-reporting may have biased the responses as adolescents may have felt uncomfortable sharing information on delinquent behavior and parental relationships; this may be especially true for AAPIs who feel shame in dishonoring the family and believe that it is important to keep family dynamics and problems within the family (Barry 2003; Uba 1994). This concern was minimized as the more sensitive questions were administered using audio CASI, in which adolescents entered their responses into a computer rather than reporting to the interviewer (Bearman et al. 1997). However, the willingness of self-disclosure among AAPIs is an important issue to take into consideration for

research findings and further research designs. Nonetheless, with respect to this study, the weighted data of Add Health allows for estimating national prevalence and increases the findings' level of generalizability.

Similar to many large survey studies, the Add Health Data relies exclusively on information from children regarding their own and their parents' behavior. This weakens the conclusiveness of the findings since children's perceptions of their own behavior may color their descriptions of their parents' behavior (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber 1986; Snyder and Sickmund 1999). It may also be argued that it is exactly the children's perceptions of parental behavior, and not the actual behavior, which influences juvenile delinquency. For example, how involved adolescents feel their parents are may be much more important than how involved the parents truly are.

Although language and generation status are two of the most commonly measured dimensions used to estimate the level of acculturation (Rogler et al. 1991; Samaniego and Gonzales 1999), this study is limited by its reliance on the use of those proxies. Acculturation is a multidimensional process that is dynamic and this complex concept cannot be adequately captured by the measurement of two single variables at a single point in time (Berry 1997). A final limitation of this data set, particularly with a population that has not been studied much, is that it does not allow for the in-depth questioning and exploration that is often necessary with such a group (Kerwin et al. 1993; Root 1990). Open-ended questions allow researchers to uncover important variables of influence and dynamics that may not be identified in a survey format. Despite these limitations, however, the Add Health Data offered a unique opportunity to look at the AAPI adolescent population on a national level.

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