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Research Article

Youth Delinquency: Self-Reported Rates and Risk Factors of Cambodian, Chinese, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese Youth

Thao N. Le and Judy L. Wallen

Abstract

General self-reported rates of violence and studies identifying risk factors for delinquency and serious violence have been limited for Asian, particularly Southeast Asian youth. Additionally, the role of psychosocial-cultural related factors such as individualism/collectivism, intergenerational/intercultural conflict, and ethnic identity in delinquency has largely been neglected. In a sample of 329 Cambodian, Chinese, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese youth, robust risk factors for serious violence (aggravated assault, robbery, gang fight, rape) included peer delinquency, prior arrest, and victimization. In addition, cultural factors such as second generation status, individualism, and intergenerational/intercultural conflict also significantly increased the odds of serious violence, whereas factors that decreased the odds included collectivism and school achievement. For family/partner violence (hit a family member or boyfriend/girlfriend), the strongest risk factors were victimization and parent discipline. Demographics, individual, and peer domains contributed more explanatory variance for serious violence, while individual and parental domains contributed more explanatory variance for family/partner violence. Consistent with official statistics, rates of serious violence among Southeast Asian youth were higher than for Chinese youth.

Introduction

Theoretical and empirical studies of youth delinquency, predominately with African American and European American youth, have identified a constellation of factors associated with youth violence including individual, family, community, and environmen-

tal characteristics (U.S. Department of Health 2001). Studies that include significant number of Asian American youth, however, remain limited. Researchers may have been reluctant to include Asian American youth in their study due to the model minority myth that the Asian American population fares well academically and economically. As such, whether the risk factors established in other groups are applicable and relevant for Asian American youth is unclear. But why would focusing on Asian American youth, and in particular, Asian American youth delinquency, be important for researchers, community planners, and policy makers?

We argue that the issue of Asian American delinquency is important for at least three reasons. First, Asian Americans represent one of the fastest growing populations in the United States (U.S. Census, n.d.). Indeed, it is expected that by the year 2030, Asian Americans will constitute about 12 to 14 percent of the United States' population (U.S. Census, n.d.). Immigration and immigrant population are topics that have recently gained extensive media and public policy attention. Recent immigration patterns reveal that immigrants including Asians are settling in cities and states that have not traditionally received immigrants. This may bring about issues of adjustment for both the receiving states and communities, and the immigrants themselves. This is a phenomenon that has been observed both in the United States as well as in Europe. As a result, issues related to Asian American population, including those related to adaptation by immigrant groups in general, are not something that can be easily ignored. Second, as we have argued elsewhere, data disaggregated by Asian ethnicities reveal that certain subgroups such as Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese are disproportionately represented in official arrest statistics (Le and Arifuku 2005), as well as in institutional placements (Arifuku 2006; Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg 2001). Whether this phenomenon is mirrored in self-reported data is unknown. Researchers and policy makers know that official statistics alone are limited, and do not sufficiently account for what occurs in the real world. Indeed, most delinquent and violent activities do not come to the attention of officials (e.g., Snyder and Sickmund 1999). Lastly, without a clear understanding of the magnitude, significance, or risk factors responsible for delinquency and violence for Asian American youth, program planners and policy makers may be missing an important issue that may, in fact, become much larger later on. The purpose

of prevention programs is to intervene early, before the problem escalates. But programs cannot be effectively developed without a clear understanding of the factors that need to be addressed or require intervention. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to examine the self-reported rates of violence, and the risk factors associated with serious and family/partner violence in a sample of Chinese, Cambodian, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese youth.

Risk Factors for Serious Violence

Previous research has consistently identified demographic factors of age, gender, and race to be among the most powerful predictors of violent offending. For instance, arrests for violent crime tend to increase with age and peak for youth around nineteen years old (Puzzanchera, Stahl, et al. 2003; U.S. Department of Justice 1988). Within each racial group, the violent offense rate for sixteen-year-olds is almost twice the rate for thirteen-year-olds (Puzzanchera et al. 2003). Studies have also consistently shown males to commit more violent offenses than females (e.g., Sickmund and Snyder 1999; Tatem-Kelley, Loeber, et al. 1997). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the male juvenile violent crime rate was at least four times more than that for females (Lynch 2002).

Race has been a strong factor associated with delinquency and violence with juvenile arrest rates for African American youth higher than for any other racial groups (Bridges and Weis 1989; Elliott and Ageton 1980; Hindelang 1978; Lynch 2002; Snyder and Sickmund 1999). Although official statistics show that Asian youth have the lowest arrest rates (Snyder and Sickmund 1999), data disaggregated by ethnicity reveal that certain subgroups within the Asia/Pacific Islander racial category are disproportionately represented. For example, in Alameda and San Francisco counties, Samoan and Southeast Asian youth have arrest rates higher than European American and East Asian youth (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) (Le, Arifuku, Louie, and Krisberg, 2001; Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg and Tang, 2001). This suggests that there are potential variations within racial and ethnic categories.

Studies have identified individual level characteristics associated with delinquency and violence including self-esteem, attitudes toward delinquency, prior arrest, drug use, and victimization. Researchers have proposed that low self-esteem presents a proclivity toward delinquency (Kaplan 1980). Some have even suggested

that low self-esteem underlies all deviant behavior (Steffenhagen and Burns 1987). On the other hand, recent arguments suggest that delinquency is not related to low self-esteem, and that high self-esteem does not lessen a tendency toward violence (Baumeister 2001). Attitudes toward delinquency (Elliott 1994; Maguin, Hawkins et al. 1995), substance use (Elliott 1994; Huizinga, Loeber et al. 1993; Tolan and Gorman-Smith 1998), and victimization experiences (Essbensen and Huizinga 1991; Shaffer and Ruback 2002; Wells and Rankin 1995) have also been empirically demonstrated to be related to deviant behavior. Research has also indicated that female delinquents are more likely to have been sexually or physically abused than male delinquents. Among female delinquents, an estimated 70 percent have a history of sex abuse (Calhoun, Jurgens, and Chen 1993). It is also well known that a history of prior delinquent offending is strongly associated with later delinquent activities (e.g., Moffitt 1993).

At the family level, studies have demonstrated an association between parenting style and youth violence. Both poor supervision and harsh or inconsistent discipline have been found to predict both delinquency and substance use (Capaldi and Patterson 1996; Hawkins, Arthur, and Catalano 1995; McCord 1979). On the other hand, high level of parental involvement and engagement can function as a protective factor, while parental neglect increases the risk for violence (Farrington 1989; Williams 1994). Barnes and Farrell (1992) found that parental support was an important predictor of drug use, school misconduct, and delinquency regardless of age, gender, race, and socio-economic status. Weintraub and Gold (1991) concluded that delinquency tended to be lower when both parental supervision and affection were high. On the other hand, in a significant sample of East Asian youth, Jang (2002) showed that parenting structural variables (i.e., single vs. married household) were more important than parenting process variables (i.e., parental attachment, communication). This finding is consistent with others who argue that family influences begin to decrease as peer influences increase in adolescence, in both pro-social and maladaptive ways.

Peer factors have often been illustrated to be a strong and robust predictor of delinquency and violence, especially in adolescence. Lipsey and Derzon's (1998) meta-analysis revealed that social ties and anti-social peers were found to be the strongest predictors of serious delinquency for youth ages twelve to fourteen; in contrast,

antisocial peers was a very weak predictor for youth ages 6-11. For Asian youth, peer delinquency appears to be the strongest risk factor for delinquency and violence (Kim and Goto 2001; Le, Monfared et al. 2005). Similarly, in a longitudinal study of diverse factors, Herrenkohl and colleagues (forthcoming) found having delinquent peers at ages ten, fourteen and sixteen increased the risk for later violent delinquency. For instance, gang membership at age fourteen tripled the risk of serious violence at age eighteen, while gang membership at age sixteen more than quadrupled the risk of violent delinquency at age eighteen (Herrenkohl et al., forthcoming).

Jang (2002) also observed that school bonding variables were relevant among East Asian youth as an explanatory variance for delinquency. Across many studies, poor school performance and negative school attitudes have been consistent predictors of violent offending (Catalano and Hawkins 1996; Denno 1990; Farrington 1989; Herrenkohl et al, forthcoming; Manguin and Loeber 1996).

Research indicates a considerable level of interactions among these three levels—parents, school, and peers. Parenting practices may increase or decrease the risk of delinquency indirectly by its effect on peers and school risk factors. Simons, Robertson, and Downs (1989) found that parental neglect increases the likelihood that the child will associate with deviant juveniles due to the neglectful parents' failure to adequately monitor and supervise the child and to transmit values that make participation in deviancy costly and offensive. In fact, most studies that examined the joint effect of family factors and delinquent peer influence determined that family factors have little or no influence on the risk of serious delinquency in the presence of peer delinquency (Elliott, Huizinga et al. 1985; Kim and Goto 2001; Le et al. 2005). School performance and attachment may also affect delinquency through its effect on peer group involvement and self-esteem. Youth not receiving recognition through other activities such as academic performance may be seeking to obtain such validation through delinquent peer groups. Juveniles rejected by family, community, and /or school may be predisposed to denounce the norms and institutions that they perceive as frustrating their opportunities, and hence involve themselves in delinquent activities (Kaplan 1975; Yablonsky 1997).

Other research has pointed to the more distal influences such as community and environmental factors as being important in youth delinquency. Research has suggested that youth in low socio-eco-

conomic status neighborhoods are more likely than their counterparts in high socio-economic status neighborhoods to participate in serious delinquency (Loeber and Wikstrom 1993; Peeples and Loeber 1994; Sampson, Raudenbush et al. 1997). Low household income was a predictor of self-reported youth violence in several studies (Farrington 1989; Henry, Caspi et al. 1996; Hogh and Wolf 1983; Wikström 1985). Beyers, Loeber, Wikstrom, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2001) found that youth in lower socio-economic status neighborhoods had different risk factors than youth in higher socio-economic status neighborhoods. Factors such as poor parental communication and supervision, poor school motivation, and carrying weapons were significant factors for low but not for high socio-economic status neighborhood youth, suggesting that low socio-economic status or poverty itself is not so much a risk factor as are the attendant characteristics of lower socio-economic communities (Beyers, Loeber et al. 2001). Along similar lines, social/neighborhood disorganization has been shown to be an important risk factor (Maguin, Hawkins et al. 1995). There is a greater risk for serious delinquency in cities and in neighborhoods with high levels of neighborhood disorganization (Hawkins, Lishner et al. 1987; Yoshikawa 1994).

With respect to cultural factors and violence, research remains sparse. First, there is really no consensus among scholars about the definition of culture. Tylor (1871) defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (42). Given its limited consideration in the literature and its inherent complexity, both in definition and measurement, why should we include culture in the discussion of youth delinquency and violence? In other words, what could cultural factors contribute to our understanding of youth violence?

Understanding the role of culture in youth delinquency and violence is important for several reasons. First, cultural factors may in fact be the underlining forces of many of the other factors illuminated earlier. For instance, parenting practices, disciplining style, and types of engagement are influenced by culture—the values, norms, and beliefs endorsed by a group. It has been illustrated in the family literature that Asian parents are more likely to practice authoritarian parenting than authoritative parenting, and that this type of parenting, while negatively related to academic

achievement among European American youth, is positively related to academic achievement among Asian youth (Chao 2001). Understanding cultural values and norms are also important in that they help us to illuminate where and how youth and adolescents choose to spend their time and invest their energy (Larson and Verma 1999). For instance, European American youth are more likely to spend time with their peer groups and report friends as being close companions, as compared to Asian and Hispanic youth (Larson and Verma 1999). Asian youth, on the other hand, are more likely to report spending time with their parents and to engage in schoolwork. As such, some of the ethnic differences reported in the delinquency literature may also be a function of cultural differences. It thus behooves researchers to examine whether cultural factors themselves are independent predictors of behavior, or whether they channel these more proximal factors discussed earlier (e.g., parenting, peers, self-esteem). By extending the traditional delinquency research and investigation to include culture, this may lead to newer and richer understanding of the mechanisms and processes of behavior.

Highlighting the role of culture can also lead to new avenues and new insights for prevention and intervention, particularly with respect to developing culturally competent programs. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency recently highlighted several youth programs that appear to show promise in offering culturally competent youth violence prevention (Arifuku, Morris et al. 2003). Yet, it remains to be demonstrated empirically what cultural factors constitute cultural competency, and what cultural factors are important to address in prevention/intervention for youth delinquency and violence, and how these may differ or be similar across different ethnic groups.

Highlighting the role of culture in youth delinquency may also have public policy implications. For instance, the process of acculturation and adaptation for immigrants and refugees has been demonstrated to yield both positive (e.g., high academic achievement) and negative outcomes (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress). With respect to youth delinquency, research on immigrant populations is still in its nascent stage. Nevertheless, it would be important from a public policy perspective to understand how certain cultural factors foster or hinder successful adaptation, or how certain policies influence the developmental process of ethnic and im-

migrant youth by way of influencing salient cultural factors.

In this study, we explore four related cultural concepts as it affects youth development and violence: acculturation, ethnic identity, intergenerational/cultural conflict, and individualism/collectivism. Acculturation is a broad construct, encompassing a wide range of behaviors, attitudes, and values that change with contact between cultures (Berry 1990). Many studies have reported a relationship between high acculturation levels and deviant behavior including delinquency and violence (e.g., Balcazar, Peterson et al. 1996; Buriel, Calzada, et al. 1982; Rodriguez and Brindis 1995; Vega, Aldrette et al. 1998; Wong 1999). Samaniego and Gonzales (1999) showed that the relationship between acculturation and delinquency among Mexican American youth was mediated by negative peer relations, family conflict, and parental monitoring. Higher rates of family conflict may result because children typically acculturate more rapidly than parents and may adopt values and beliefs that are different from those of their parents (Falicov 1996; Szapocznik and Kurtines 1993).

Ethnic identity is the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture (Phinney 1990). Phinney and colleagues (e.g., Phinney and Alipuria 1990) suggested that minority adolescents' associations with the mainstream culture can take on a variety of forms. Adolescents can assimilate into the majority culture by rejecting their own culture (assimilation), can reject the majority culture and retain ethnic culture (separation), can maintain ties to both majority and minority cultures (biculturalism), or can identify with neither (marginalized). Research suggests that maintaining ties to both cultures, or biculturalism, or bicultural efficacy, is associated with better psychological adjustment (e.g., DeBerry, Scarr et al. 1996; Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997).

Acculturation processes may also result in intergenerational and cultural conflict, particularly when immigrant children's culture differs from that of their parents (e.g., see Aronowitz 1984). Nguyen and Williams (1989) noted a substantial gap between Vietnamese American adolescents and their parents with regard to views on traditional values such as respect for authority, with longer time in the U.S. resulting in a larger gap. The discrepancy in cultural values may exacerbate intergenerational conflict, which in turn weakens parental control and increases the likelihood of delinquency (Wong 1999).

Individualism is the cultural orientation in which the person perceives him/herself as being distinct, autonomous, and separate from others, whereas collectivism refers to the cultural orientation in which perception of self is linked with others, social roles, and relationships (Triandis 1995). Western cultures such as the United States tend to be more individualistic whereas Asian cultures tend to be more collectivistic (e.g., Singelis, Triandis et al. 1995). In one study, Tyson and Hubert (2002) noted that collectivistic adolescents tended to rate delinquent behavior as being a more serious form of behavior than individualistic adolescents. As such, one may hypothesize that individualism would be positively related to delinquency whereas collectivism would be negatively related to delinquency.

Risk Factors for Family/Partner Violence

In contrast to serious violence, research on family and partner violence is more limited. The available research that does exist indicates that the risk factors associated with partner/family violence is likely to be similar to those factors associated with other delinquent behaviors. For instance, adolescent males who commit family/partner violence are more likely to have experienced abuse and child neglect (McCloskey, Figueredo, and Koss 1995; Wolfe, Wekerle et al. 1998), and have used alcohol or drugs (Cate, Henton, et al. 1982). Juvenile perpetrators of family/partner violence are also more likely to have attitudes supporting male domination over females, and more likely to associate with peers sharing such beliefs (Himelein 1995; Koss and Dinero 1989; Roscoe and Callahan 1985). Research also indicates that females are more likely than males to commit relational violence (Chesney Lind and Sheldon 1998; Gilligan 2004), with victims of female delinquents more likely to be family or friends than victims of male delinquents (Loper 2000).

Present Study

Given the lack of information about risk/protective factors for delinquency and violence among Asian and Southeast Asian youth, this study was intended to provide self-reported rates of serious violence and family/partner violent behavior in a community sample of Chinese, Cambodian, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese youth. In addition, factors at different levels and domains—in-

dividual, family, peer, school, environment, and culture were examined with respect to their odds of serious violence and family/partner violence. We also explored the contributing variance of each domain to serious and family/partner violence, from more proximal (individual, peer, family) to more distal (school, environment, culture) factors.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The multiethnic sample included 112 Cambodian, 64 Chinese, 67 Lao/Mien, and 85 Vietnamese youth (see Le et al. 2005). Chinese youth were on average fourteen years old ($SD = 2.12$), Cambodian fifteen years old ($SD = 2.22$), Lao/Mien fifteen years old ($SD = 2.02$), and Vietnamese fourteen years old ($SD = 2.09$). Sex was fairly equally distributed, with slightly more females in the Lao/Mien group, and more males in the Cambodian and Chinese groups.

Researchers recruited youth from two schools and five community-based organizations serving the Asian Pacific Islander population in Oakland, California. Youth were interviewed in a structured face-to-face format lasting about an hour, and were compensated \$25 for participating. Participation was completely voluntary and youth were informed of their rights as research participants. One parent/caretaker for each youth was also interviewed separately, and compensated \$25 for their participation. For this study, all measures except socio-economic status, family structure, and neighborhood disorganization were taken from the youth interview.

All forms and protocols were approved by the Committee on Human Subjects of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Measures

Demographics

Age was calculated as the difference between date of interview and self-reported date of birth.

Sex was coded 1 for male and 2 for female.

Ethnicity was self-identified. In the 10% of cases in which youth identified no primary ethnicity, the ethnicity of the mother was used.

Immigration status was coded as 1=first generation, 2=second generation, 3=third generation, 4=fourth generation, 5=fifth generation, 6=don't know, and 7=indigenous.

Individual

Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory (Rosenberg 1965). Participants responded to these items on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Examples of items include: "I feel that I am a person of worth," "I feel that I have a number of good qualities," and "I am inclined to feel I am a failure" (reverse coded). The internal reliability of the scale was .78 in the sample.

Arrest history was captured by six items. These items included if respondent had been arrested (0=no, 1=yes), number of times respondent was arrested, whether respondent has ever been on probation (0=never arrested, 1=arrested and has never been on probation, 2=arrested and has been on probation), whether respondent has been stopped by police (1=never, 2=1-2 times, 3=3-5 times, 4=6-9, 5=10+), and number of times respondent has been sent to the California Youth Authority (maximum security institutional placement). The internal reliability of this scale was .78 in the sample.

Delinquent attitudes were measured by asking respondents whether they considered the following activities to be wrong: cutting school, damaging property, stealing (<\$5, \$5 to \$100, >\$100), joyriding, hitting, attacking, using weapons (to attack or get money/things), using drugs (alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, ecstasy, hard drugs), gambling, and going to juvenile hall. For each item, respondent answered using the following response categories: not wrong at all (1), don't know (2), a little bit wrong (3), wrong (4), or very wrong (5). The scale had an internal reliability of .85 in the sample.

Substance use was measured by a fourteen-item scale as used in Thornberry and Smith (1997). Respondents were asked if they had ever used cigarettes, beer, hard liquor, marijuana, ecstasy, heroin, ice, cocaine, LSD, painkillers, steroids, inhalants, tranquilizers, or other drug. Each item was coded as 1 if respondent never used substances and 2 if respondent had ever (in one's life) used substances. The internal reliability was .69 in the sample.

Physical victimization was assessed using two items: "been shot or stabbed at by non-family member," and "been physically harmed by a non-family member." Respondent answered whether they had ever experienced this ever in their life, and how long ago it was. The responses were coded as 0 for never, 1 for longer than

a year ago, 2 for within one year, and 3 for within the last three months.

Emotional victimization was assessed using two items: "been yelled at in a way that scared you by a non-family member," and "been threatened by a non-family member with harm." Respondent answered whether they had ever experienced this ever in their life, and how long ago it was. The responses were coded as 0 for never, 1 for longer than a year ago, 2 for within one year, and 3 for within the last three months.

Peer

Peer delinquency consisted of sixteen items as used in Thornberry and colleagues (1994). Participant was asked how many of their friends engaged in various delinquent activities (e.g., joyriding, cutting school, damaging property, stealing, using weapons, using drugs) in the last six months. Responses ranged from none (0), few (1), half (2), most (3), to all (4). Internal reliability was .93 in the sample.

Gang Membership was measured with the item, "are you in a gang?" with "no" coded 0 and "yes" coded 1.

Dating abuse was assessed by a single self-reported item, "Have you dated someone who has been verbally or emotionally abusive?" No was coded 0, and yes as 1.

Parent

Parental engagement was a 10-item scale based on Hirschi's (1969) concept of parental attachment that included affective relations, close communication, and parental supervision.

Examples of items included how often participant knows how to contact parents/guardian when parent/guardian not home, parent/guardian knows who participant is with, participant does fun things with parent/guardian, and parent/guardian talks about what is going on in participant's life. Response categories ranged from never (1), sometimes (2) or often (3). The scale has an internal reliability of .68 in this sample.

Parental discipline was measured by six items. Respondents were asked for wrongdoing, how often does parents/guardians punish, take activities away, send participant to room, yell or scold, slap or spank, or make the youth feel shameful. Response categories ranged from never (1), sometimes (2), or often (3), and had an internal reliability of .59 in the sample.

Socio-economic status was constructed using parent's income level and education from the interview with the primary parent/caretaker. Parent selected their income level from six categories: <\$12000, \$12,000 to \$20,000, \$21,000 to \$30,000, \$31,000 to \$40,000, \$41,000 to 50,000, and \$50,001 and higher. Parent reported their education level based on the following categories (or equivalent years in school): elementary school, high school, associate degree, bachelor degree, master's degree, and PhD/MD/JD. Missing values for education and income were replaced using the means of each ethnicity. Internal reliability for socio-economic status was .55.

Single Parent Household was defined as either yes with a value of 1, or no with a value of 0. Single parent household was coded yes if one of the following three conditions applied: 1) if youth indicated that his/her mother lived with youth without a father or stepfather; or 2) if youth indicated that his/her father lived with youth without a mother or stepmother, or 3) if youth indicated that he/she lived with another non-married relative (who was not the mother or father).

School

School GPA was self-reported by the youth.

School attitude scale was measured by fifteen items that included attitudes about school (e.g., "getting good grades is very important to me," "homework is a waste of time" (reverse coded), importance of going to college, and likelihood of graduating from high school, going to college, and graduating from college. Items were coded such that a higher score indicated a more positive attitude toward school. The internal reliability in this sample was .80.

Environment

An indication of neighborhood organization was taken from the interviews with the parents/caretakers. For seventeen different types of social disorganization (e.g., vandalism, burglaries, chronic drug use and alcoholism), questions asked whether this was a problem in their neighborhood. Respondents selected their responses using categories ranging from "not a problem," "somewhat of a problem," to "a big problem". This scale is similar to the one used in Thornberry and Smith's study (1997). Internal reliability in this sample was .97.

Culture

Acculturation was accessed using thirteen items adapted from Ethnocultural Identity Behavior Index (Marsella and Horvath 1998). Each item involved how often (not at all, a little, somewhat, or a lot) the respondent engages in a particular activity (e.g., watching movies or tv shows, speaking, writing, reading, listening to music, dating) in mainstream American culture. Items were scaled such that a higher score indicated a greater participation in mainstream American culture. The internal reliability was .73 in the sample.

Intergenerational/Intercultural conflict was assessed using six items: youth experience conflict between values learned at home and American values, youth agree with parents' values but do not always act that way, parents criticize American values, youth behave differently with friends than what parents say, youth has felt a sense of loss and confusion being in America, youth can deal with expectations of different cultural demands (American and Asian) (reverse scored). Youth selected their responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The internal reliability was .60 in the sample.

Ethnic identity was measured using a nine-item modified version of the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney 1993). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement as either strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) to a series of statements regarding ethnic identity search and ethnic identity belonging. Examples of items included "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group," "I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly my own ethnic group," "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me," and "I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me." A higher score indicates having a stronger sense of ethnic identity. The internal reliability in this sample was .70.

Individualism/Collectivism was measured with the 32-item INDCOL scale (Singelis, Triandis, et al. 1995). The individualism (IND) scale emphasizes a view of the self as autonomous and distinct from others, emphasizing both equality (e.g., "I often do my own things") and inequality (e.g., "competition is the law of nature"). The collectivism (COL) scale stresses a self that is part of a group or belonging to a collective, with acceptance of hierarchy (e.g., "I respect the majority's wishes in groups of which I am a

member”) and equality (e.g., “I feel good when I cooperate with others”). All items are answered on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). The internal reliability for IND was .81 and .83 for COL in the sample.

Serious Violence/Family Partner Violence

The serious violence measure was constructed based on the Denver Youth Survey’s measure of serious violence (Kelly, Huizinga et al. 1997). This self-reported serious violence measure included five items: aggravated assault (attacked someone with a weapon or with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them), two robbery items (robbed someone and used a weapon or force to get money or things from people), rape (physically hurt or threatened to hurt someone to get them to have sex with you), and gang fights (been involved in gang fights). Questions queried whether the respondent committed these offenses, and how often within the last six months. If respondent’s answer was greater than 0, this item was coded as 1, otherwise the item was coded as 0. The serious violence measure was coded as 1 if any of the five items was coded as 1, otherwise a score of 0 was recorded.

Family/partner violence was assessed using a single item that asked whether respondent had hit a family member or boyfriend/girlfriend within the last six months. The item was coded 0 for none and 1 for at least once.

Data Analysis

Initial descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and intercorrelation among all the measures were computed (these are available upon request). T-tests and one-way ANOVAs with post hoc Scheffe contrasts were utilized to examine differences in the prevalence of serious and family/partner violence by sex and ethnicity. Next, to determine the association between each of the independent variables with the individual dichotomous violent delinquency and family/partner violence measure, bivariate logistic regression analyses were conducted to generate odds ratios. The independent variables were converted to dichotomous variables using medians or binary outcomes, where appropriate. Finally, to ascertain the relative explanatory power of the various risk factors, grouped by domains and levels, hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted regressing serious violence and family/partner violence on risk factors.

Results

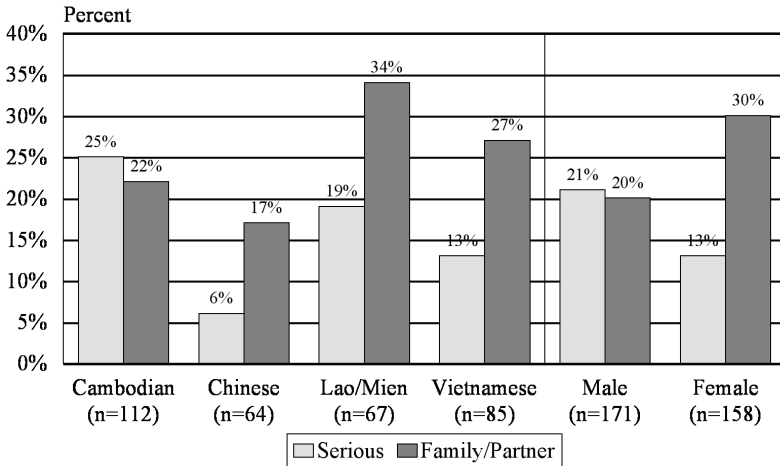
Figure 1 shows the prevalence by ethnicity and sex for serious violence and family/partner violence. Overall, males report engaging in serious violence at significantly higher rates than females, $t = 2.20, p < .05$, whereas females reported engaging in family/partner violence at significantly lower rates than males, $t = 2.22, p < .05$. There were significant differences among ethnic groups with respect to serious violence, $F(3, 325) = 3.98, p < .05$, but not for family/partner violence, $F(3, 325) = 1.93, n.s.$ Chinese reported lowest account on both serious (6%) and family/partner violence (17%), and were significantly lower on serious violence as compared to Cambodians (25%) and Lao/Mien (19%) (differences reported are significant at $p < .05$). Cambodian youth reported engaging in serious violence highest of all groups, and Lao/Mien youth, the highest for family/partner violence.

Table 1 shows the bivariate logistic regression results for serious violence and family/partner violence. Odds ratios and confidence intervals for all risk factors are displayed. The results illustrate that the strongest risk factors for serious violence are delinquent peers, prior arrest, gang membership, substance use, and victimization (dating abuse, emotional, physical). All of these risk factors increased the risk of serious violence more than four times. Other significant risk factors, from strongest to weakest, included ethnicity (Cambodian and Lao/Mien), age (older), second generation status, individualism, being more acculturated, and experiencing intergenerational/intercultural conflict. On the other hand, school attachment, parental engagement, self-esteem, having a higher GPA (3.0), and sex (being female) reduced the likelihood of serious violent behavior.

There were fewer risk factors for family/partner violence. The risk factors for family/partner violence included being female, Lao/Mien ethnicity, having high levels of parental discipline, peer delinquency, emotional victimization, and intergenerational/intercultural conflict. These risk factors increased the risk of family/partner violence by at least two-fold. No factors decreased the odds of family/partner violence.

Table 2 provides the results from the hierarchical multiple regression analyses. In total, all the risk factors accounted for 50 percent of the variance for serious violence, and only 7 percent of the

Figure 1. Self-Reported Rates of Serious and Family/Partner Violence by Ethnicity and Sex



variance for family/partner violence. Demographics, individual factors, and peers contributed significant explanatory variance for serious violence, while parental and more distal influences (school, environment, culture) were less consequential. For instance, individual factors uniquely accounted for 37 percent of the serious violence variance, while peers explained an additional 10 percent of variance beyond demographics and individual factors. For family/partner violence, individual factors, particularly physical victimization, were also significant, accounting for 7% of unique variance; demographic and peer domains were less important, but parental factors provided an additional 3% of unique variance.

Discussion

The findings with a sample of Chinese and Southeast Asian youth were partially consistent with previous research regarding risk factors for serious violent behavior. With the exception of parental discipline, independent risk factors for family/partner violence were also risk factors for serious violence, yet the strength of the association appears to be much weaker for family/partner violence. The behaviors strongly associated with and often co-occurring with serious delinquency—substance use, arrest history—were not risk factors for family/partner violence, nor were school, self-esteem, and family engagement factors. The strongest, inde-

Table 1. Predictors of Serious and Family/Partner Violence

Measure	Value	Serious Violence		Family/Partner Violence	
		OR (95% CI)		OR (95% CI)	
Demographics					
Age	<=13	1.00		1.00	
	14-15	4.06*	(1.80,9.13)	0.73	(0.40,1.36)
	>=16	3.12*	(1.36,7.16)	0.87	(0.48,1.60)
Sex	Male	1.00		1.00	
	Female	0.54*	(0.30,0.99)	1.76*	(1.06,2.92)
Ethnicity	Chinese	1.00		1.00	
	Cambodian	5.00*	(1.67,15)	1.38	(0.63,3.04)
	Lao/Mien	3.61*	(1.11,11.75)	2.52*	(1.11,5.73)
	Vietnamese	2.20	(0.67,7.26)	1.75	(0.79,3.94)
Immigration Status	1st gen	1.00		1.00	
	2nd gen	2.63*	(1.19,5.82)	0.98	(0.56,1.71)
Individual Factors					
Self-Esteem	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.35*	(0.19,0.63)	0.72	(0.44,1.20)
Arrest History	0	1.00		1.00	
	>0	10.05*	(5.03,20.07)	1.22	(0.73,2.04)
Attitudes to Delinquency ¹	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.14*	(0.07,0.3)	0.80	(0.49,1.32)
Substance Use	0	1.00		1.00	
	>0	7.74*	(3.64,16.43)	1.56	(0.95,2.59)
Physical Victimization	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	12.50*	(6.45,24.20)	1.77	(0.97,3.23)
Emotional Victimization	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	4.14*	(2.28,7.53)	2.09*	(1.24,3.51)
Peer					
Peer Delinquency	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	31.04*	(7.42,129.86)	1.70*	(1.01,2.85)
Gang Membership	No	1.00		1.00	
	Yes	13.71*	(4.54,41.4)	1.88	(0.66,5.37)
Dating Abuse	No	1.00		1.00	
	Yes	4.38*	(1.94,9.89)	1.47	(0.64,3.41)
Parent					
Parental Engagement	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.33*	(0.18,0.60)	0.62	(0.38,1.03)
Parental Discipline	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.48	(0.83,2.66)	1.71*	(1.03,2.84)
Socio-economic Status	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.00	(0.56,1.79)	0.94	(0.57,1.56)
Single Parent Household	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.15	(0.63,2.10)	1.23	(.73,2.07)
School					
School GPA	<3.0	1.00		1.00	
	>=3.0	0.36*	(0.20,0.65)	0.62	(0.38,1.03)
School Attitude	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.28*	(0.14,0.55)	0.73	(0.44,1.22)
Environment					
Neighborhood Organization	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.59	(0.33,1.06)	0.76	(0.46,1.26)
Culture					
Acculturation	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.95*	(1.07,3.55)	1.48	(0.89,2.45)
Culture Conflict	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.86*	(1.04,3.33)	1.70*	(1.03,2.81)
Ethnic Identity	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	0.90	(0.5,1.62)	1.00	(0.6,1.67)
Individualism	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	2.34*	(1.28,4.28)	1.29	(.78,2.13)
Collectivism	Low	1.00		1.00	
	High	1.27	(0.71,2.26)	1.23	(.74,2.03)

Note: Scales divided into low/high using the median. **p* < .05

¹In this scale, a higher value indicates a more negative attitude towards delinquency.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Results of Serious Violence and Family/Partner Violence

Serious Violence	R2 Change	F Change	Family/Partner Violence	R2 Change	F Change
Step 1: Demographics	5.6%	3.03*	Step 1: Demographics	2.9%	1.52
Step 2: Individual	36.7%	32.13*	Step 2: Individual	7.3%	4.09*
Step 3: Peers	9.5%	19.60*	Step 3: Peers	0.3%	0.37
Step 4: Parent	0.9%	1.48	Step 4: Parent	2.5%	2.09
Step 5: School	0.1%	0.40	Step 5: School	0.1%	0.20
Step 6: Environment	0.0%	0.01	Step 6: Environment	0.7%	2.43
Step 7: Culture	1.1%	1.34	Step 7: Culture	1.6%	1.05
R2=.54, Adjusted R2=.50, F(27,288)=12.46*			R2=.15, Adjusted R2=.07, F(27,288)=1.93*		
Factor	B	t-statistic	Factor	β	t-statistic
Step 1:			Step 1:		
Cambodian	-0.01	-0.17	Cambodian	0.00	0.00
Lao/Mien	0.04	0.69	Lao/Mien	0.04	0.54
Vietnamese	0.01	0.09	Vietnamese	0.03	0.34
Age	-0.09	-1.78	Age	-0.07	-1.05
Sex	-0.02	-0.47	Sex*	0.15	2.56
Immigration Status	0.04	0.97	Immigration Status	-0.05	-0.81
Step 2:			Step 2:		
Self-Esteem	-0.05	-1.08	Self-Esteem	-0.07	-1.10
Arrest History	0.03	0.54	Arrest History	0.04	0.59
Attitudes toward Dfq*	-0.10	-2.03	Attitudes towards Dfq	-0.05	-0.76
Substance Use	-0.05	-0.87	Substance Use	-0.02	-0.30
Physical Victimization*	0.40	8.62	Physical Victimization*	0.15	2.36
Emotional Victimization*	-0.11	-2.30	Emotional Victimization	0.07	1.07
Step 3:			Step 3:		
Peer Delinquency*	0.36	5.97	Peer Delinquency	-0.03	-0.30
Date Abuse	0.04	0.83	Date Abuse	-0.05	-0.75
Gang Membership*	0.16	3.37	Gang Membership	0.04	0.69
Step 4:			Step 4:		
Parental Discipline	0.02	0.52	Parental Discipline*	0.14	2.40
Parental Engagement	-0.07	-1.40	Parental Engagement*	-0.15	-2.23
SES	-0.06	-1.29	SES	-0.04	-0.61
Single Parent Household	0.03	0.72	Single Parent Household	0.04	0.60
Step 5:			Step 5:		
School Attitude	-0.08	-1.38	School Attitude	-0.05	-0.12
School GPA	0.04	0.70	School GPA	-0.01	-0.61
Step 6:			Step 6:		
Neighborhood Org	0.01	0.19	Neighborhood Org	-0.08	-1.31
Step 7:			Step 7:		
Culture Conflict	0.01	0.15	Culture Conflict	-0.04	-0.55
Acculturation	0.07	1.45	Acculturation	0.04	0.58
Ethnic Identity	-0.07	-1.44	Ethnic Identity	0.05	0.75
Individualism	0.00	0.08	Individualism	-0.08	-1.23
Collectivism	0.09	1.89	Collectivism	0.11	1.61

* p < .05

pendent risk factors for family/partner violence were emotional victimization and parent discipline.

In the multiple regression analyses, the domains that contributed significant variance to serious violence were demographics, individual and peer. For family/partner violence, in addition to the individual domain, parental engagement and discipline remained significant factors. Further, while emotional victimization was a significant risk factor as an independent factor, physical victimization was a significant risk factor in the multivariate analyses for family/partner violence. This suggests that the non-significance of some of the factors (partial regression weights) generated by the multivariate analyses may be due to their shared variance with other predictors. This also implies that the risk factors associated with family/partner violence are different from the risk factors associated with serious violence. That being female is a strong risk factor for family/partner violence while being male is a risk factor for serious violence also highlights important differences between the two types of behavior. Overall, the findings are consistent with research over the past decade that suggest that parental influences, peer relations, and school experiences are particularly strong in adolescence, whereas environmental factors such as socio-economic class and neighborhood quality appear less influential (e.g., McGue, Sharma et al. 1996; Pike, McGuire et al. 1996).

The study also illuminated several cultural factors that have been not considered in traditional research of youth delinquency. Granted that the explanatory variance contributed by cultural factors was minimal, and probably due to their shared variance with more proximal factors, the fact that there was a significant association between intergenerational/intercultural conflict, individualism, acculturation, and immigration status with serious violence points to the need for researchers to consider culture in future studies of youth delinquency. Indeed, the few studies that do exist have shown, similar to the findings in this study, that second generation youth are more at risk for delinquency and violence than their first generation counterparts (e.g., Vega et al. 1998; Wall, Power, et al. 1993). Likewise, issues associated with acculturation such as intergenerational/intercultural conflict, ethnic identity, and changes in values have also been argued to be risk factors for delinquency and violence (Aronowitz 1984; Balcazar, Peterson et al. 1996; Szapocznik and Kurtines 1993).

As such, caution is suggested here for dismissing the role of these more distal influences (environment, culture). These more distal factors may in fact channel the influence of these more proximal factors (peers, parents). For instance, intergenerational/intercultural conflict between parents and youth may predispose youth to seek support and be involved with delinquent peers, or with gangs. Cultural values such as collectivism/individualism may influence certain parenting style, such that Asian parents are more likely to endorse authoritarian parenting. Authoritarian parenting may be related to less parental engagement but stronger disciplining style, which in turn may be related to youth delinquency. How the larger influence of socio-cultural context or cultural factors interacts with and influences these more proximal predictors is an area that needs further exploration. Further, additional studies are needed that illustrate the developmental processes by which cultural factors increase or protect youth against deviant behavior. For instance, does the process of acculturation in which immigrant youth adopt the U.S. mainstream values of individualism lead youth to associate with delinquent peers and engage in delinquent behavior? What is the mechanism by which incongruent or conflicting values between the youth and parents result in youth deviant behavior? As with any research, attention certainly needs to be paid to operationalizing the construct, and in establishing measurement and structural equivalence across groups. Given that the exploration of cultural factors is relatively new in delinquency research, it is hoped that this study prompts other researchers to consider cultural factors in studying youth behavior.

One notable consistency observed in this study is the higher percentage of violence reported by Southeast Asian youth as compared to Chinese. This is also consistent with official arrest statistics. For instance, in Alameda County, Cambodian, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese youth have higher rates of arrests than East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) and European American youth (Le et al. 2001). Some argue that developmental outcomes evidenced by different groups are due to differences in the historical context and immigration patterns by which different group come to the U.S (Ogbu 1983). For Southeast Asian groups, stressors and circumstances associated with war (Vietnam War), political persecution (Khmer Rouge), and being a refugee can certainly impact parent-child relations and socialization practices which influence youth

development and behavior. Again, this suggests the need to consider the role of culture and immigration experience for ethnic and minority groups.

Adolescence represents a time of developing competencies. From childhood to adolescence, individuals begin to develop abstract characterizations about themselves and others, and these concepts become more differentiated. For youth violence prevention and intervention programs to effect change, it is important that they address the relevant risk factors for the intended population. As illustrated in this study, for Chinese and Southeast Asian youth, the factors that appear most important to address for intervention are in the domains of peers and family. This does not imply, however, that other domains (environment, cultural) are not important. As articulated earlier, these more distal factors may influence youth behavior through the more proximal factors. Future research is needed that explore the pathways and mechanisms by which these various levels and domains interact and influence each another, as well as whether addressing these more salient factors is most amenable and effective. This would have both programmatic and public policy implications.

Limitations

Despite these interesting findings, several limitations are acknowledged. First, because the study is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, causality cannot be determined. We do not know for instance, at least using this data, whether engaging with delinquent peers leads to deviant behavior, or whether deviant behavior leads to more affiliation with delinquent peers. Second, there is a problem of sample selection bias. Because the sample is non-probabilistic, it is not representative of the larger Chinese and Southeast Asian population but reflects Asian youth from a defined geographical region; moreover, the sample only reflects those youth who were willing to participate in the study, and who were present at a particular day in school. Most likely, youth who are at higher risk (e.g., truant youth, probation youth and youth whose parents are reluctant to disclose personal information are less likely to be represented. As a result, the results have limited generalizability, and certainty cannot be generalized to other ethnic groups such as European American or African American youth. The sample was also limited by small sample sizes which hinders more refined within group analyses,

or complex path models. Third, as with any self-report measures, there are inherent biases in recall and disclosure, especially for sensitive questions such as violence. In fact, youth often tend to over-report incidents of violence in self-report measures (Elliott and Huizinga 1989). Further, for ethnic minority groups, there are reasons to suspect that cultural factors such as shame and modesty may influence the reporting of personal or sensitive events which may also serve to skew rates of actual events.

Despite these limitations, this study is one of the few studies to present general self-report data on youth delinquency / violence for Chinese and Southeast Asian youth, and to examine an extensive array of risk factors for serious violence and family / partner violence in a multiethnic sample of Asian youth. Given the growing immigrant population in the U.S., especially Asians and Hispanics, it would behoove researchers and policy makers to extend the discourse on youth violence to these two populations.

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