

DELINQUENCY AMONG ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDERS: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

THAO LE

National Council on Crime and Delinquency, Oakland, California

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This article reviews 34 studies of juvenile delinquency among Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs) published in referred journals, book chapters, masters theses, and doctoral dissertations since 1970. The author discusses which API ethnic groups have been studied, the ways in which researchers have studied delinquent behavior among APIs and the theoretical models proposed to explain this relationship, as well as empirical findings. Researchers vary widely in their conceptual and methodological perspectives which have resulted in limited and conflicting findings. Researchers are also only beginning to explore and understand important inter- and intra-API differences related to delinquency. The author summarizes the research to date, examining commonly identified risk and protective factors related to delinquency among APIs, and recommends a theoretical orientation for more precise and in-depth research.

Keywords: Delinquency; Asian/Pacific Islanders; API ethnicity; Psychological factors; Low self-perception; Low self-esteem

Asians, Asian Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs) are socially constructed categories, commonly used to reflect national and ethnic origins of individuals from the continent and islands of Asia and the Pacific. In this article, we use the term APIs to refer to both immigrant and American-born APIs. As a population, APIs currently comprise 4 percent of the United States population (US Census, 2000),¹ and have disproportionately low arrest rates, lower than that of other racial and ethnic groups in the US such as Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians (Marshall, 1997).

Both empirical and qualitative data indicate that involvement of API youths in every stage of the legal/juvenile justice process is proportionately lower than their presence in the population (Poe-Yamagata, 2000; Conley, 1994). Official statistics, however, can provide a misleading picture, especially when they are not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, because they often do not fully depict involvement of API groups in the justice system. Despite their historically limited presence as indicated by official data, this group is gaining attention because of their increasingly visible presence in the legal system. Indeed, within the last 20 years, the flow of API youths in the juvenile justice system has increased dramatically, while national arrest trends in general and for Black and White youths in particular have decreased substantially (FBI, 1993–1997; California Department of Justice, 2000; Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg and Tang, 2001).

¹The US Census Bureau classification of Asians includes Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Other Asian. The primary Pacific Islander classification includes Chamorro, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Micronesian, Polynesian, Samoan, and Tongan (US Census STF-1, 2000).

The picture is even more revealing and compelling when data is disaggregated by API ethnicity. With more than 32 distinct ethnic populations (Wong, 1982), there are notable differences and important variations expressed by groups in terms of criminality and the attention received by law enforcement. Socioeconomic status and class, immigration status, politics and culture of country of origin, place of settlement, entrenchment in US society, among others, are variables that shape intra-API differences and similarities (Espiritu, 1992). These factors may have an effect on delinquency or propensity to commit crime. For instance, Japanese Americans have had consistently lower crime rates than Chinese Americans (Mann, 1993); both groups share a similar historical presence in the US, but differ in their social structures, assimilation patterns and experiences. Arrest rates for the Southeast Asian population, the more recently arrived group, are highest within the API population on the mainland, and in some cases, higher than their racial counterparts. For example, in Alameda County, California, the arrest rate for Samoan and Vietnamese youths far outstripped Whites, Hispanics, and all other API groups in 2000 (Le *et al.*, 2001). Other groups like the Hawaiians who are native to their own land are disproportionately overrepresented in juvenile arrest statistics (Kassebaum *et al.*, 1995). LaFromboise (1988) argues that native population can also be placed in a minority status resulting in serious ramifications because their land, culture and strengths have been systematically decimated throughout the history of their relations with those in the dominant culture.

Thus, the growing proportion of APIs in delinquency statistics and their visibility has resulted in an increasing concern with issues related to APIs and delinquent behavior. Unfortunately, empirical research on this topic is scant due in part to the “model minority” myth which relegates this issue to nonexistence.² The majority of studies that do exist tend to focus on gangs, often blurring the distinction between organized crime syndicates and youth delinquent behavior.

Juvenile delinquency is certainly not a new issue. Although there has been considerable research on youth violence and on risk/protective factors as they relate to juvenile delinquency in general (Lipsey and Derzon, 1998), studies of specific ethnic groups have not been studied uniformly. Attention to the API juvenile population is especially nascent. Thus far, delinquency research on APIs has been undefined, undifferentiated, and minimal. Researchers have worked independently with specific ethnic groups, and within narrowly defined parameters. Small sample sizes and limited measures have also restricted the generalizability of their results. And although certainly important, the few theoretical writings that do exist far outweigh empirical research. The majority of the literature and research to date has been exploratory, with neither strong empirical findings nor clear conceptual frameworks. In order for research to provide meaningful results and illuminate the topic under study, conceptual and methodological clarity is needed. The objective of this paper is to provide such clarity. The author examines the ways different researchers have sought to understand APIs and delinquent behavior, and provide recommendations for future research.

METHOD

In order to review the literature, an extensive search was carried out to locate journal articles from sociology, criminology, psychology, and allied social sciences, published since 1970

²Model minority characteristics include superior academic ability, economic self-sufficiency, being hardworking, and thus requiring less special support to become independent and successful in US society. This view, held by the mainstream society, may both enhance and hinder the possibilities for development and fulfillment (Lee and Zhan, 1998).

with the exception of two earlier studies that dealt empirically with APIs and delinquent behavior or violent activity. All of the articles reviewed focus on the dimensions of delinquent behavior which include arrests (official and self-reported), violent and assaultive behavior, gang-related activities, truancy, and other problem behaviors for APIs. The material review was limited to peer reviewed, published articles, conceptual articles, book chapters, masters theses, and doctoral dissertations. Articles that only dealt with proxy or issues related commonly to delinquent behavior per se (*e.g.*, substance abuse, mental health issues, and risky sexual behavior) were excluded. Also excluded were articles that focused exclusively on gangs; API gang violence is reviewed elsewhere (Jan, 1993; Huston, 1995; McCurrie, 1999). Only English-language articles were examined.

The articles represented research from diverse fields and were published in fifteen different journals. The majority were from criminal justice or interdisciplinary journals, but some were from sociology, psychology, ethnic studies, and public health publications. Among the chosen studies, there were some duplication of effort due to researchers developing new measures independently and conflicting findings due to researchers examining issues from slightly different premises.

Within the delinquency literature, the largest group of studies dealt with Vietnamese and an aggregate of Asian Americans. The largest Asian American subgroup was Chinese, in keeping with its proportion of the US population. The second largest group of studies included those that dealt with Cambodians specifically and others that were multiethnic in nature (*e.g.*, a combination of Laotians, Chinese, Filipinos, or Hispanics). Few studies focused on Filipinos and Southeast Asians as a separate and distinct group. Only one study centered on Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, one on Laotians and one on Koreans. Although Asian Indians represent the third largest group in the United States (US Census, 2000), there was not a single study on them, nor were there any studies on the more recently arrived Asian immigrant groups such as Thais, Pakistans, or Bangladeshis.

The review is organized around common typologies – theoretical and conceptual models currently in use by researchers studying APIs and delinquency. Particular attention is paid to how elements from varying perspectives may interrelate.

DISCUSSION

The myth of the model minority pervades the social consciousness and research arena such that most national studies on risk/protective factors for violence and delinquent behavior either exclude APIs or do not oversample for APIs, thus yielding too small a number of subjects to generate any conclusive or generalizable findings. As a result, there are limited empirical studies focusing on factors associated with maladaptive behavior for Asians.

Psychological Factors

In general, research and discussions on delinquency have previously concentrated on psychological determinants and individual constitutions, such as personality traits, attitudes, cognition, self-esteem, moral development, and atavistic anomalies. With the recent development of the Human Genome Project and DNA testing, there has been a surge of renewed interest in the genetic and physiological substrates of crime and behavior. However, with regard to APIs and delinquency, the research within this domain still remains extremely minimal.

Even among the limited studies that do exist, the findings have not revealed any unique differences between APIs and other racial/ethnic populations. For instance, in a study with 31 Filipino female detainees, Carlota (1982–83) showed that delinquents had signifi-

cantly lower intelligence scores and that they were less moralistic, more inclined to disregard rules, more critical of people, and more aloof in their interpersonal interactions compared to those of their nondelinquent counterparts. Lower levels of psychological and cognitive skills have been suggested by Wang (1995) to be related to Asian gang affiliation. Studies of mainstream population have similarly identified these risk factors for delinquent behavior (Lipsey and Derzon, 1998).

Studies of low self-perception and self-esteem, and aspects of cognition and ego development, while extensive in the general delinquency literature, are few for APIs. One researcher who has explored these issues, Sheu (1983, 1986), discusses how Chinatown delinquents in New York City engage in delinquent acts largely to negate their failures, and to uphold and maintain a positive self-image and self-value. He claims that this can be achieved by individuals resorting to several defense mechanisms that are developed throughout the life experience and which makes the commission of delinquent acts easier. This idea is reflective of the moral disengagement argument of Bandura (1996).

Victimization

Several national and longitudinal studies on victimization reveal that youths who were victimized, especially those who experienced violent victimization, are at greater risk for becoming offenders (Acoca and Dedel, 1998; Widom, 1989; Widom and Ames, 1994). Unfortunately, victimization data for the API youth community is almost nonexistent. What little information is available on this topic tends to focus on the traumatic experiences and aftermath of war or massive social violence (Hubbard, 1997). Kiss's dissertation study (1999) of 145 Asian American youths in Los Angeles County concerning the relation between exposure to violence and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reveals a significant dose response connection between being directly, indirectly, or vicariously exposed to violence and having some form of PTSD; in other words, greater exposure to violence results in greater psychological consequences.

In a review of 12 studies focusing on the effects of violence on the mental health and adjustment of Southeast Asian refugee children, Fox (1994) found that premigration experiences, especially violence, play an important role in health status and adaptation after those children settled in the US. The effect of and other family support systems seem to positively influence the adaptation of children who had survived extreme violence and trauma.

Contrarily, Berthold's dissertation study (1998) concerning 144 Khmer refugee adolescents and their parents or guardians reveal a different picture than Fox's. Berthold found that exposure to community violence in the United States significantly predicts PTSD and personal risk behaviors, but exposure to war traumas overseas do not, and that social support and family factors do not moderate this relationship. Kang's masters thesis (1999) on a sample of Cambodian males between the ages of 18 and 23 revealed that violent victimization, racism, and harassment (by others and law enforcement) were major causes for Cambodians to join gangs. The contradictory nature of these studies stem in part from the differences in the population of interest as well as differences in violence and social support measures. While all relied on self-report measures of violence, each differ in capturing the degree, levels and timing of the experience, as well as the effect of moderating or mediating variables. Moreover, there was little attention paid to the different effects of exposure relative to developmental stages (*i.e.*, possibly different effects if exposed to violence as a toddler versus as a young adolescent).

Acculturation and Cultural Conflict

Becker (1974) defines culture as a moral design for social order, a mechanism to guide human behavior. Through categories of symbols given to individuals by their respective

cultures, and through acceptance and commitment to cultural values and beliefs, members of social groups are involved in a "meaning making". It is through this process that they translate their values and beliefs into certain behavioral scripts. Cultural traits that characterize a group depend not only on how the group selects these traits, but also on how the larger society responds to them. People living together moderate and recreate their culture every day.

It is within this human environment of symbolic interaction that individuals develop and derive their behavioral patterns and sense of self. Culture then is an important factor in the etiological explanation for crime; culture is necessary to explain the varying crime rates evidenced by different ethnic and racial groups. Hawkins (1993) asserts that culture, rather than poverty, constitutes the primary cause of racial/ethnic group differences in rates of crime. The results of Sommers *et al.*'s (1993) study with Puerto Rican male adolescents suggest that the specific cultural context of ethnic groups (*e.g.*, machismo) may be necessary to explain participation in delinquent behavior. A 1938 study of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino offenders suggests that the low rate of criminality for Japanese youths is explained by the clear definitions and moral discipline of the transplanted patriarchal family, whereas weaker family life, weaker ties to community organization, and disorganizing contacts with Americans accounted for the higher rates among Chinese and Filipinos (Hayner, 1938).

Researchers who have included the cultural variance perspective in their examination of APIs and delinquency have, for the most part, looked at the parameters of culture conflict and acculturation as possible explanations. Acculturation refers to individual or group changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors as a result of contact between two distinct cultures (Berry, 1980). It has been hypothesized that acculturation may have a direct impact on delinquency through mediation of socialization characteristics of family, school, peer, and belief systems. For example, Lim, Levenson, and Go (1998) found, in a sample of 29 adult-adolescent Cambodian refugee pairs, that adolescents who were less acculturated, despite their entry into the United States, tended to have delinquent behaviors, but not parent-child differences in acculturation. In contrast, Bankston and Zhou (1997) find that Vietnamese adolescents who are less acculturated to US values and practices and who retain more Vietnamese values are less likely to be delinquent. Again, these conflicting findings stem in part from the different definitions and measures that researchers use to assess acculturation and delinquency, and from different target populations and sample sizes. With regard to measures of acculturation, Zane and Mak (in press) discuss how researchers vary widely on the emphasis of particular domains of psychosocial functioning (*e.g.*, social affiliations, cultural values), and on the assumptions made with regard to change parameters (*e.g.*, bipolar type of adaptation vs. orthogonal model of adaptation). In a review of 19 acculturation scales, they found that the majority assessed differences in acculturation by language capability, whereas only 5 considered cultural values. As a result and with regard to delinquency, conflicting findings for the effect of acculturation abound.

Culture conflict, as originally coined by Sellin (1938), occurs when the cultural values of one group are in conflict with the cultural values of another in the context of intersubjective encounters. The conflict usually occurs among immigrant groups attempting to assimilate into the mainstream host culture, and between generations, as they acculturate differently (Huh-Kim, 1998). Immigrant groups are confronted with new experiences and ways of life that strain them and their families (Waters, 1999). Kang (1999) identifies a host of stressors related to the process of immigration including but not limited to learning new language and values, finding employment and housing, developing relationships, and learning new coping and social skills.

Baba (2000) examines culture conflict and bonds to parents and schools to see whether these factors differentiate gang affiliators from delinquent youths, and finds none. Culture

conflict and social control variables are similar for the two groups. However, because there is no control group (*i.e.*, nondelinquent youths) in the sample, the conclusion is somewhat limited and nondiscriminatory.

Related to cultural conflict is sociocultural dissonance, which entails the stress and strain produced by the incongruence between the demands and expectations of two cultural environments (Chau, 1992; Nguyen, Messe, and Stollak, 1999). Other investigators exploring the dimensions of cultural conflict find that certain cultural values of an ethnic group may actually lead to behaviors that meet the demands of the mainstream society and provide favorable outcomes of adaptation, despite incongruency. The mechanism for how this might work is unclear, and the factors which mediate or moderate culture conflict is a topic that needs to be examined closely.

Peer and Family Relations

Other theorists argue that it is not necessarily the congruency in values that causes favorable adaptation, but rather the social relations that exist among individuals, that is, relationships between family and peers (Go, 1998; Kim and Goto, 2000). For instance, if children maintain close ties to their ethnic communities through their parents, they are likely to be supported or constrained by systems of social relations such as codes of conduct and behavioral standards.

Mai's masters thesis (1999) on 109 first- and second-generation Vietnamese Americans examines differential acculturation of parents and children and family conflict. Her results indicate an inverse relationship between American acculturation and Vietnamese values; in other words, the more an individual is acculturated, the less he/she adheres to Vietnamese values, and the greater the potential is for conflict between parents and children. However, her findings also suggest that a sense of family connectedness overrides a disparity in values between parents and children, and this leads to less conflict.

Failures in parent-child relationships are considered by both Laotians and service providers to be the root cause of gang and other youth problems (Waters and Cohen, 1993; Ima, 1991), as well as negative peer associations and legal beliefs (Maxwell, 1999). The influence of peer culture and peer relations is also stressed in Kim and Goto's study (2000) with Chinese, Korean, and Japanese American adolescents. In fact, they find high association with delinquent peers to be the greatest predictor for delinquency.

Psychocultural Elements

On a psychocultural level, Markus and Kitayama (1991) discuss how independent versus interdependent orientation have consequences to cognition, emotion, and behavioral responses. Individuals with an interdependent orientation such as those coming from Asia, view themselves as being connected and existing in relations to others. As such, there is much emphasis on maintaining harmony, conforming to the group, and being inconspicuous. In contrast, individuals with an independent orientation view themselves as being different and unique from others; emphasis is placed on attending to one's internal psychological processes rather than relational dynamics. Such construal of self, influenced by culture, has possible ramifications to whether individuals are more likely to express themselves externally such as engaging in delinquent behavior, or internally resulting in greater likelihood for depression. In this regard, the relationship between the cultural programming of an individual's values and perception of self, sociological factors, and delinquency becomes important. Few studies have actually mapped cultural factors unto social and psychological dimensions to explain delinquency, and no study thus far concerning API youths.

Integration Failure

Durkheim's (1953) classical theory of social integration maintained that individual behavior should be seen as the product of the degree of integration of individuals into their society. Social integration involves not only participation, but also socialization into shared beliefs, values, and norms. Thus, the greater the integration of the individual into the social group, the greater the control of the group over the individual. The socialization process, as prescribed by Asian cultures, stresses the continuity of family relationships throughout one's life.

Bankston and Caldas (1996) argue, using the sociological literature for deviancy, that Vietnamese American youth delinquency is primarily a problem of social integration, where individuals are not successfully integrated into family systems, into a community through their family systems, and into the larger American society through their ethnic community. Furthermore, once young people are identified as delinquent, they are labeled by their communities, which reinforces and perpetuates their deviant status and prevents them from integrating into their native communities.

In a similar vein, Lee's study (1998) among Korean American youths does not support the idea put forth in other research findings that immigrants are prone to delinquency because of acculturation stress or assimilation into American culture; rather, delinquency among these youths is better explained by the mechanisms of control (*i.e.*, social control, social learning, and strain) related to integration.

Ecology and Social Structure

In the early half of the 20th century, sociologists working at the University of Chicago explored the relationship between juvenile delinquency and social ecology including immigration patterns. These sociologists associated high rates of juvenile delinquency with the poor neighborhoods into which immigrants had settled. This perspective led to the theory of social disorganization. Shaw and McKay's (1942) seminal work systematically investigated whether immigration itself leads to high rates of youth crimes. They concluded that it did not; instead, they associated high rates of youth crime with areas of the city where there were high rates of economic dependence, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility.

The social disorganization theory also points out that in high delinquency areas, there are likely to be conflicting sets of values, making the family impotent as a means of transmitting conventional cultural values. Lack of social control and the increase of social strain (*e.g.*, lack of legitimate means to goods and advancement) are limited or thwarted because of internal and external forces (*e.g.*, racism, lack of skills, educational opportunities). High rates of delinquency tend to correlate with residence in poor and disorganized immigrant neighborhoods. In those areas, the subcultural norms of delinquency become attractive when old and new values conflict. Discontinuity in social and personal development ensues, leading to high delinquency rates.

Recent studies of APIs and delinquency exploring this theory reveal that it is not necessarily a failure to commit to either the host or the original culture or a cultural conflict that leads to delinquent behavior, but instead, it is the individual acculturation to the marginalized environmental culture (Bankston and Zhou, 1997; Sheu, 1983; Wang, 1996). The importance of environmental factors superceding acculturation/assimilation was also supported by a study involving 270 Vietnamese youth-parent dyads in Westminster, California (Kent and Felkenes, 1998). The researchers found that exposure to gangs in the neighborhood and pro-gang attitudes predicted Vietnamese youth gang involvement, and not aspects of ethnic identity tied to culture.

The perspective on social disorganization described above resulted in a shift in emphasis from traditional psychological variables to issues of race and class. In this regard, researchers develop economic deprivation and inequality theories which attribute higher rates of crime for certain ethnic/racial groups to their marginal socioeconomic status and their social and political subordination (Marshall, 1997). If a socially defined racial minority group wishes to assimilate but finds that normal paths of integration are blocked, they may be forced to use alternative survival strategies. According to this model, ethnicity and race are treated as “proxies or near proxies for social class status” (Hawkins, 1993, p. 93). The historical past interacts with structural factors of poverty, inadequate education, disorganized and deprived environments, unemployment, and social ills to decrease social integration of minorities. Historical sociological factors, such as changes in immigration rates and in immigration laws (more restrictive or more liberal), may also result in institutional and cultural disorganization in ethnic neighborhoods, and in the ability of the ethnic social agencies to exercise control within the community. These factors contribute to delinquency (Sheu, 1986).

Immigration Process

While Shay and McKay found more compelling evidence that social disorganization and social ecology rather than the immigration process leads to delinquency, Waters (1999), on other hand, argues for the importance of immigration factors. His study of five California immigrant groups, including Laotians and Koreans, found that youth crime waves emerge out of the interaction between the unusual birth cohort demographics (overrepresentation of males) and the conflict that emerges between parents and youths during the process of migration. Relevant to the process of migration is the region of residency—some groups tend to settle in urban areas, while others settle in rural or suburban areas. Some groups have a disproportionately large number of upper- and middle-class professionals in arriving cohorts, while others are dominated by working-class peasants. Water argues that the historical occurrences of these factors help to explain trends in youth crime among different immigrant groups.

Resiliency and Protection

Risk factors are those characteristics of an individual or of an environment that increase the probability of maladaptive developmental outcomes; protective factors are those elements that interact with sources of risk in a way that they reduce the probability of negative outcomes (Compas, Hinden, and Gerhardt, 1995). Huang (1998) found that children who departed with families from their native country adapted better to the new environment, compared to children who fled without family members or significant adults.

Similarly, Fox, Muennich, and Montgomery (1994) argue that having support systems, including family, is key in the successful adaptation of children who have survived extreme violence and trauma. Interestingly, Rousseau *et al.* (1999) found that a family’s trauma history, including their departure from their homeland, had a protective role at various times for adolescents specifically regarding risk behavior and academic achievement in boys, and positive social adjustment in girls. They theorized that these positive behaviors may be understood as overcompensation by the children who had internalized an implicit duty to succeed. The dual nature of trauma as both an inhibitor and a source of strength will need to be examined more closely.

Since little attention has been paid to the influence of culture in delinquency research, it is not surprising to find even fewer research studies on the protective function of ethnic cultures and values. Hill *et al.* (1994) theorize how ethnic culture may provide protection against

violence by binding groups together, by promoting the formation of positive groups and development of individual identity, by encouraging bonds with community agents, and by facilitating proactive socialization. For instance, traditional Asian ideals are collectivist; that is, one gives priority to the goals and welfare of groups, such as family. A family that provides a high level of support to its children may help buffer them against stressors. Because Western ideals stress an individualistic orientation, they may define and provide social support differently which may result in different behavioral outcomes. Hill *et al.* (1994) also discuss how ethnic culture may fail to protect against risk factors. Issues associated with acculturation, cultural conflict, adaptation, and disengagement may impede or hinder the prosocial and bonding mechanisms of ethnic culture. Indeed, cultural values may serve as both risk and protective factors.

In the one seminal longitudinal study thus far that concerns the multiracial API population in Kauai, Hawaii, Werner (1990) traces the developmental paths from childhood through adulthood of 103 adolescents with delinquency records and 70 youths with mental health problems. She found that protective factors that differentiated significantly between youths whose deviant behavior persisted, and those whose life trajectories shifted from high risk to successful adult adaptation, grouped themselves into several clusters. Among them were temperamental characteristics that elicited positive responses; parental competence and caregiving style; and a variety of sources of support in the family, neighborhood, school, and community (Werner, 1990; Werner and Smith, 1977; Werner and Smith, 1982).

Perhaps one key element that could have contributed to the study but was not fully explored was the influence of culture on these individuals. It seems that we also need to understand the essential features of the culture under study to understand the possible ways in which individuals have learned to cope and adapt to the environment. Sheu (1986), for instance, show that Chinese youths in American Chinatowns who are able to overcome the cultural and structural barriers in both cultures are less likely to be delinquent.

Current Research Limitations

The main factor limiting our understanding of API delinquency thus far is the inadvertent and indirect ways that research models miss important details about the nature and differences of the API experience because of epistemology assumptions and research premises. For instance, researchers may explore dimensions of psychological development without considering the influences of social/cultural or ecological factors. They may not give due attention to important elements such as circumstances of immigration or the varying socioeconomic situations and celerity of upward mobility experienced by different API groups, as they explain why youths in a particular ethnic group fail to integrate.

Bankston and Zhou (1997) argue that Vietnamese youths who gravitate toward the mainstream (albeit disenfranchised) youth culture are at greater risk for delinquency, yet they fail to consider why the majority of youths who do in fact acculturate toward the mainstream culture, or who are bicultural, are not delinquent. No study has considered how part of the "model minority" myth could be related to the capacity of some groups to retain cultural practices and adapt better. What values and ideals, for instance, are less resistant to decay as Asian Americans become more acculturated to life in the US, since they may represent less culturally specific beliefs?

Studies of APIs and delinquency thus far have also been limited to few specific API ethnic groups. For the most part, studies on APIs have predominately focused on Chinese and Southeast Asians (mostly Vietnamese and Cambodians). Filipinos and Samoans, although similarly visible in the juvenile justice system, have received less attention from researchers.

There is a dearth of studies concerning Japanese, Koreans, and Asian Indians, populations that have been consistently underrepresented in juvenile justice statistics. Exploration into possible reasons for their lower delinquency rates has been minimal. As such, there has been little discussion or exploration of heterogeneity among different API groups.

API groups differ in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, including political/economic experiences, migration patterns, attention from law enforcement, level of integration into the mainstream US, and beliefs and practices. How do these factors contribute to or hinder positive youth development and protection against delinquency? Expanding research to include other API groups, and increasing understanding of essential distinctions and commonalities among and between the different groups, would be fruitful. It is also important to keep in mind that generalization to APIs as a whole based on a single comparative study with few sampled API ethnic subgroups is not only erroneous, but dangerous. There are, of course, logistical challenges in doing studies across ethnic groups since conceptual, linguistic, and measurement equivalents need to be established, but these factors should not hinder interested researchers from conducting such research. Methodological approaches for conducting research with rare population and rare outcomes, and establishing equivalency in measures and instruments, are available.

Epistemological differences (*e.g.*, bias toward certain disciplines or theoretical models, and researchers' assumptions about APIs) result in dependent and independent variables that are measured and examined differently in different studies. Results from studies using different measures are not directly comparable to one another and may account for some of the conflicting findings. Small sample sizes and the lack of comparative populations (delinquent *vs.* nondelinquent) in several of the studies mentioned also makes it hard to draw clear-cut conclusions. In summary, the current discourse on APIs and delinquency is based on limited typologies and models, and an understanding anchored on limited research and empirical findings. Both conceptual and methodological differences have hindered progress toward a broad and deep understanding of API delinquency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Becker (1974) states that disciplinary boundaries are organizing structures to help us interpret the world. They may be useful, and even necessary, but we should keep them from becoming barriers to a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of human behavior (Becker, 1974). From an anthropological perspective, all behavior has meaning and in many cases serves an adaptive function. Culture provides the symbolic set of rules and norms to which individuals submit themselves to maintain harmony and stability within the society. There are wide ethnic variations in behavioral manifestation and symbolic meaning, and in the ways in which society control its members.

Yet as pervasive and variable as culture is, there has been virtually no research ascertaining the scope and effectiveness of a particular culture's capacity for promoting positive or negative adaptation. In other words, we need to understand how culture or social contexts interact with individual factors to foster or impede an individual's development and highest potential.

From a sociological perspective, understanding behavior requires a better understanding of the strength of social and internal regulatory mechanisms that oppose violence compared to the environmental and external conditions facilitating it. Designed with more precision and insight, research is also needed to uncover the values that are beyond societal and cultural manipulation. From a psychological perspective, research should explore what leads to an individual's ability and capacity to examine critically and choose consciously, rather than adopt blindly, the cultural values embedded in his/her socialization process.

Unfortunately, the dimensions of culture and the relationship between culture and delinquent behavior have thus far been minimally considered in delinquency research. What we do know about the sociocultural aspects of delinquency is mostly based on findings from research conducted on White, African American, and some Hispanic youths. In fact, in three of the largest longitudinal studies on risk/protective factors related to delinquency (Denver Youth Study, Rochester Youth Study, and Pittsburgh Youth Study) not only was culture egregiously omitted, but APIs were not even considered in the sample pool.

The few studies that have examined aspects of culture and API delinquency have focused on more external signs such as cultural conflict, cultural practices, and interpersonal relations. Fewer still center on the less visible core elements such as attitudes, beliefs and attachments, and integrating a psychological dimension to the sociocultural perspective.

Researchers may be hesitant to explore influences of cultural factors to behavior because of its seemingly inherent complexity or the idea that it's a race or class issue. However, methodological strategies to examine culture, apart from race and class, are offered by researchers such as Bentacourt and Lopez (1993).

As American society becomes increasingly multicultural, the importance of culture and cultural factors will have to be considered in the equation for delinquency, as well as its relationship to individual, social, and structural factors.

The review of the current literature and research findings on APIs and delinquency suggests that we have only begun. Many questions remain unanswered: Why are some groups more prone to engage in delinquent behavior than others? What is the trajectory of development based on the influences of culture and epistemology? How do individual strengths and limitations interact with specific contextual supports? What are the system responses (juvenile justice and legal systems) to particular API ethnic groups, and how do they contribute to the varying crime rates? We will need empirical findings based on an integrated approach and research if we are to further our understanding of API youths and delinquent behavior. It is hoped that this review of the literature brings some conceptual clarity and stimulates more insightful and nontraditional exploration.

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