

Predicting Hmong Male and Female Youth's Delinquent Behavior: An Exploratory Study¹

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Abstract

Asian Americans have been viewed as a “model” minority by mainstream Americans for decades. Contrary to the model minority stereotype, however, Asian youth, especially Hmong and other Southeast Asians, are increasingly involved in crimes and delinquent activities. Yet, little research has focused on them, particularly Hmong youth. The present study addressed this gap in the literature by exploring the relative importance of individual, peer, family, and school factors in explaining Hmong youth's delinquent behavior in both male and female. Two hundred and six Hmong youth (115 males and 91 females), ages ranged from 11 to 25 years old, from Minnesota participated in the survey. The survey results showed that antisocial attitudes, academic achievement, and the lack of the mother's monitoring were the three factors that significantly explained youth's chances of being involved in delinquent acts regardless of their gender. However, when the youth were examined separately by gender, the results showed significant variations. The study ends with a few strategies offered for parents and school officials to prevent and intervene with delinquent behavior in the Hmong community.

Keywords: Delinquency, delinquent behavior, Hmong youth delinquency, gender differences in delinquency, and Hmong families

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Predicting Hmong Male and Female Youth's Delinquent Behavior: An Exploratory Study

Asian Americans have been viewed as a “model minority” by mainstream Americans for decades (S. Lee, 2007; Mercado, 2000; Osajima, 2000; Suzuki, 1995). Contrary to the model minority stereotype, however, the newer Asian groups such as the Hmong and the other Southeast Asian groups are at increased risk to get involved in delinquent activities (Le, Arifuku, Louie, & Krisberg, 2001; S. Lee, 2001, 2005, 2007). For example, between 1980 and 2000 Asian youth³ arrest rates increased by 11.4% while African American youth arrest rates decreased by 47.3% (National Council for Crime and Delinquency [NCCD], 2001). Specifically, the crime rate of Southeast Asian youth, including Cambodian, Hmong, Lao/Mien, and Vietnamese, is disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system (NCCD, 2003).

In Minnesota, Hmong youth have been increasingly involved in delinquent and gang activities over the past two decades. Our frequency analysis of the contents of one major newspaper in the Twin Cities, Minnesota between 1988 and 2003 using keywords such as “Hmong crimes” and “Hmong gangs” found that approximately 20 newspaper articles were written per year during this period about the Hmong. During our stakeholder interviews, an experienced police officer who worked with the Minnesota Gang Strike Force reported that there were 2,590 Southeast Asian gang members in Minnesota, and 72% of them were Hmong. Of the Hmong gangs, about 8% were females at the time (Kevin Navara, Personal Communication, April 2007).

³ The term “Asian” is used here to include other Asian groups beside the Southeast Asians, and the term “Southeast Asian” were used to refer to Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Vietnamese.

Research on youth delinquency in the African American, White, and Latino communities has been well established in the literature (Kerr, Beck, Shattuck, Kattar, & Uriburu, 2003; Williams, Ayers, Abbott, Hawkins, & Catalano, 1999; Woods, 2005). However, the research on youth delinquency in the Asian American community in general and the Hmong in particular is still in its infancy stage. Our review of the literature found only a handful of studies that examined youth delinquency in the Southeast Asian communities (Bankston & Caldas, 1996; Go & Le, 2005; Kim & Goto, 2000; Le & Kato, 2006; Le, Monfared & Stockdale, 2005; Vigil & Yun, 1990; Zhou & Bankston, 1998), and among these studies, very few target Hmong (P. Lee, 2009; S. Lee, 2001, 2005, 2007; Lor & Chu, 2002; Thao, 1999). Despite the increasing scholarship on Southeast Asian delinquency, these studies cannot be generalized to Hmong, since there is a great deal of diversity within the Southeast Asian group in regards to history, religion, culture, education, and language (S. Lee, 2007; Rumbaut, 1995; Sakamoto & Woo, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to explore the relative importance of various predictors as they relate to Hmong youth's delinquent behavior. Specifically, we were curious to find answers to the following research questions:

(1) How much are Hmong youth's delinquent behaviors explained by individual, peer, family, and school factors?

(2) How much are these individual, peer, family, and school factors predicted delinquent behaviors differently for Hmong male and female youth?

Literature Review

Individual Factors and Delinquency

Much research has demonstrated significant relationships between delinquent behavior and antisocial attitudes, ethnic identity, and organized activity involvement. Ireland and Archer (2004) interviewed 291 youth offenders, ages ranged from 15 to 21, to determine the relationship between aggression and bullying behaviors and found that aggression was positively correlated with bullying behaviors. Similarly, Noffesinger (2007) investigated psychosocial and personality risk factors for imprisoned youth offenders and found that higher hostility was positively associated with institutional maladjustments. Although these studies were insightful, none of them focused on Southeast Asians, especially Hmong youth. Thus, the effect of antisocial attitudes on Hmong youth's delinquent behavior still needs to be examined.

The relationship between ethnic identity and delinquent behavior has also been well researched in the literature (Go & Le, 2005). In general, studies found a negative relationship between ethnic identity and delinquency among ethnic minority youth (Bruce, 2005; Go & Le, 2005; Woods, 2005). That is, youth who report a strong sense of ethnic identity tend to report lower level of delinquent activities. Ethnic identity therefore serves as a protective factor shielding youth from delinquent activities (Bennett, 2005; Mccubbin, 2004; Thomas, 2005). Wong (2000), for example, found that a stronger sense of ethnic identity significantly predicted less deviant behavior for Asian American and Latino American youth. However, Wong's study did not examine gender. Go and Le (2005) studied gender differences in Cambodian adolescents' self-reported delinquency and ethnic identity and found that the relationship between the two variables differed significantly by gender. Specifically, they found that ethnic identity was a significant predictor of

delinquent behavior but only for Cambodian male youth. In other words, male youth participants who scored higher on the ethnic identity scale tended to display more delinquent behaviors. This similar relationship was not true for Cambodian female youth however.

Involvement in organized activities and youth's delinquency has been carefully examined in the literature; however, the results tend to be mixed. For instance, a study comparing Vietnamese delinquent and non-delinquent youth found that delinquent youth tended to dislike participating in school clubs, while non-delinquent youth favored it. Further, the authors also found that delinquent youth were more likely to spend more time with their friends and participate in activities without adult supervision compared to non-delinquent youth (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, and Dintcheff (2007) examined the relationship between youth's time use and problem behaviors and found that involvement in extracurricular activity was negatively associated with sexual activity, and involvement in sports was negatively associated with substance abuse. Conversely, Paetsch and Bertrand (1997) compared delinquent and non-delinquent youth and found that delinquent youth reported a higher level of involvement in sports and commercial/entertainment activities compared to non-delinquent youth; non-delinquent youth, on the other hand, reported a higher level of involvement in cultural and artistic activities. Similarly, Faulkner, Adlaf, Irving, Allison, Dwyer, and Goodman (2007) found that vigorous physical activity was positively related to delinquency for male youth. Again, little is known about the relationship between organized activities and delinquency in the Hmong youth population, except for a few studies on domestic responsibilities and the pursuit of education (S. Lee, 2001; Ngo, 2002).

Peer Factors and Delinquency

The association between peers and delinquency has been well researched in the literature (Banachowski-Fuller, 1997; Toy, 1992; Wong, 1998, 1999). Research demonstrates that peer delinquency plays a significant role in predicting delinquent behavior in youth. Studies also show that delinquent youth are more likely to be affiliated with delinquent friends compared to non-delinquent youth (Le, Monfared & Stockdale, 2005; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Instead of providing a comprehensive review of the extant literature, we present a few studies on peer pressure to make the case for this study. Peer pressure refers to the youth's subjective evaluation of peer influence, and this variable has been found to be positively correlated with delinquency. Sullivan (2006), for example, found that peer pressure was the most robust predictor of delinquency compared to family factors and childhood emotional and behavioral problems. This similar finding has also been found in studies that sampled Asian youth (Kim & Goto, 2000; Wong, 1998, 1999). These scholars found that parental social support has no influence on Asian American delinquent behavior when peer delinquency was included in the model (Wong, 1998, 1999). Squire's (1997) study with 25 juvenile delinquents found that peer pressure was perceived differently by the two genders however. For example, Pleydon and Schner (2001) found that delinquent female youth reported higher perceived peer pressure than non-delinquent females and perceived peer pressure was significantly related to the delinquency of female youth. Understanding the role peer pressure plays in Hmong youth's delinquent behaviors can be helpful in the planning and implementation of prevention and intervention programs in the Hmong community since qualitative studies with Hmong youth have discovered that peer delinquency is linked to larger social contexts such as race and class (S. Lee, 2001, 2005; Ngo, 2002).

Family Factors and Delinquency

Two family variables that have been found to link to delinquency in the literature are the youth's relationship with their parents and the lack of parental monitoring. These two variables are significant to be included in this study since immigrant families with youth are vulnerable to parent-adolescent conflicts and are less likely to monitor their children, especially male youth (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; S. Lee, 2007; Thao, 1999; Xiong, Rettig, & Tuicomepee, 2006).

Research over the past decade has shown that the closer the parent-child relationship the less likelihood the youth would report being involved in delinquent activities (Dornbusch, Erickson, Laird, & Wong, 2001; Williams, Ayers, Abbott, Hawkins, & Catalano, 1999). For instance, Cota-Robles and Gamble (2005) found in their study that mother-adolescent attachment was related to a reduced risk for delinquent behavior for Mexican boys. Ousey and Wilcox's study (2007) also yielded a similar result: level of mother's attachment was negatively associated with delinquent behavior. In another study with Latino youth's delinquency, family connectedness was found to be negatively related to delinquency (Kerr, Beck, Shattuck, Kattar, & Uriburu, 2003). Although the literature on parent-youth relationships and delinquency is well documented, little is known about Hmong.

Much research has demonstrated that the lack of parental monitoring serves as one of the most robust predictors in youth's delinquent behavior (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Bogenschneider, Wu, Raffaelli, & Tsay, 1998; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004). For instance, Caldwell, Beutler, Rossand, and Silver (2005) studied 95 delinquent Mexican American male youth and found that the more the youth reported being monitored by their parents, the lower they scored on the

delinquent scale. Rumbaut (1995) studied Southeast Asian youth, including Hmong, in California and found that youth who were highly acculturated tended to be disconnected with their parents and therefore were more at risk to what he called “subtractive” forms of acculturation. This similar observation has also been found with Vietnamese youth by Zhou and Bankston (1998).

School Factors and Delinquency

School factors have been found to correlate with delinquency in the extant literature, include academic performance, educational aspirations, and school commitment. Using a meta-analysis, Maguin and Loeber (1996) found that youth who performed poorly in school were more likely to report some forms of delinquent behavior. This similar finding has been found to be consistent with other studies in the extant literature (Hart, O’Toole, Price-Sharp, & Shaffer, 2007; Shek, Siu, & S. Lee, 2007). Contrary to this line of research, however, Pih and Mao (2005) investigated Taiwanese gang members in Southern California and found that these youth were very successful academically. Anecdotal stories in the Hmong community also suggest that Hmong who are involved in delinquent activities tend to do “very well” academically. Thus, our goal was to examine the role academic performance plays in Hmong youth’s delinquent behavior.

In regards to educational aspirations, studies show that Asian youth in general tend to have high educational aspirations compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Asakawa, 2001; Mau & Bikos, 2000; Song, 2006). This high aspiration for education however cannot be generalized to every Asian youth. For example, studies found that Hmong youth, especially a segment of the second-generation youth, were unable to live up to this expectation. For example, Stacey Lee (2001, 2005, 2007) studied high school Hmong youth in Wisconsin and found that the youth in her study were alienated from school and had low educational aspirations. This similar

observation has also been found in other studies with Hmong youth in different parts of the country (Root, Rudawski, Taylor, & Rochon, 2003; DePouw, 2006; Thao, 2003).

School commitment and delinquency is another relationship that has been well researched in the literature (Maddox, 2006; Maddox, & Prinz, 2003; Williams et al., 1999). Some researchers strongly argued that the effect of school commitment on delinquency cut across ethnicity, race, gender and social classes (Dornbusch et al., 2001; Williams et al., 1999). In their longitudinal study, for example, Dornbusch and her colleagues (2001) found that school connectedness predicted lower levels of initiation of delinquency. In other studies that examined female youth's delinquency, school commitment was also found to be one of the strongest predictors (Kelsey, 2000; Lee & Smith-Adcock, 2005). On the contrary, the effect of school commitment on Southeast Asian youth's delinquency seems to be varied. Le, Monfared, and Stockdale (2005), for instance, found that for Chinese and Vietnamese youth, school attachment was negatively associated with delinquency; however, they did not find the same relationship for Cambodian and Laotian youth. Therefore, the current study attempts to clarify the effect of school commitment on Hmong youth's delinquent behavior.

Methods

Procedures

Data used for this paper came from a larger project called the Hmong Youth Delinquency Project where youth were recruited from several sites in Minnesota in order to obtain diverse representations of and perspectives from the youth population. Specifically, youth were recruited from two correctional facilities, one aftercare program, four non-profit programs serving "at-risk" youth, and two

local public schools. These sites were selected for the study because of the high concentration of Hmong youth. For example, the two correctional facilities consisted of 20% or more Hmong delinquent youth at the time of the study and the aftercare program was the only service in the area available to help re-integrate delinquent youth after serving their time in the correctional facility into the community.

For each site, the program coordinator or school teacher was contacted to explain the intent of the study and asked to distribute the bilingual recruitment flier to the youth they served. In a few instances, the researcher was invited by the program coordinators or teachers to attend their regular youth group meetings, family sessions, and classrooms to explain the purpose of the study, risks, benefits, and what the youth and parents were expected to do in the study. All individuals were offered \$10 for participating.

Interested participants responded directly to the researcher or to the designated staff person who was assigned to assist the research project. After agreeing to participate, an appointment was scheduled to administer the face-to-face survey. Prior to the survey, signed consent forms were obtained from the youth respondents and their parents. All surveys took between 30 to 60 minutes, depending on participant reading level.

Participants

The sample consisted of 206 Hmong youths (115 males and 91 females) and ages ranged from 11 to 25 years old⁴ (mean = 15.90; SD =2.11) (Table 1 at end of paper). The average age for the male participants was 15.85 (SD =2.28), and the average age for the female participants was 15.96 (SD =1.89). All participants resided in the Twin Cities, Minnesota at the time of the study. Most of the participants were in the 9th grade (21.8%) and 10th grade (27.7%), while a small group of the participants were not attending school or had dropped out (4.4%). In terms of birth order, the majority of the participants (62.1) ranged from first to fourth child in their families of origin. Furthermore, the majority of the participants (53.4%) were born in the U.S., 35.9% were born in Thailand, and 8.3% were born in Laos (see Table 1). Although we did not measure generation, we calculated the second-generation using a criterion developed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001)⁵ and estimated that 89.8% of our sample met the second-generation criterion. None of the participants was from the last wave of the Hmong refugee resettlement in the United States, especially those were from Wat Tham Krabok, Thailand (Grigoleit, 2006), since the data used for this paper were collected the same year the Wat Tham Krabok refugees arrived to Minnesota.

⁴ Note that the sample consisted of 8 youths who were 20 to 25 years old and 1 who was 11 years old at the time of the study. To control for the potential confound of age, we ran analyses with and without these 9 youth in the models and found no significant differences between the models. Therefore, we kept the 9 youth in the final models to increase statistical power.

⁵ Second-generation children must either be born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent or be born outside of the U.S. and immigrated to America before the age of 7.

Measures

Antisocial attitudes scale. The antisocial attitudes scale is a one-factor measure consisting of seven items which we adopted from Velicer, Govia, Cherico, and Corriveau's (1985) modification of the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (Conger & Elder, 1994). Sample items include "If someone hits me first, I let him/her have it," "When someone makes a rule, I want to break it," or "When someone is bossy, I do the opposite of what he or she asks". The participants gauged the similarity between the questions and their own attitudes from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 4 (*exactly like me*), or 0 (*don't know*). The mean score for the antisocial attitudes scale was 13.82 with a standard deviation of 3.65 and a range from zero to 27. Higher scores on this scale indicate more antisocial attitudes or hostility. The Cronbach alpha for the seven items was sufficient ($\alpha = .74$).

Ethnic identity scale. The ethnic identity scale (Phinney, 1993) is a one-component measure which composed of five items that measure a sense of belonging to an ethnic group. Sample items include "I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to," "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group", "I feel a strong attachment toward my own ethnic group". Youth were asked to rate their levels of agreement to each item from a four-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*. A higher score indicates a stronger sense of belonging to their ethnic group whereas a lower score suggests a weaker sense of belonging to their ethnic group. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .89, with a mean of 17.23 and a standard deviation of 2.72. Although this scale has never been used with the Hmong population, it has been used in a study focused on Cambodian youth's delinquency (Go & Le, 2005).

Organized activity involvement scale. The organized activity involvement scale contains six items which we adapted from the Iowa Youth and Families Project (*IYFP*; Conger & Elder, 1994). It is used to assess the extent to which the youth spent time on sports, hobbies, artistic activities, household chores, and school activities. Sample items include “How much time you spend with organized sports like swimming, baseball, football, soccer, etc?”, “How much time you spend with hobbies like collecting stamps, building models, computer programming, etc?”, and “How much time you spend with artistic activities like playing a musical instrument, painting, singing, dancing, etc?” Youth were asked to respond to a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*less than most kids*) to 3 (*more than most kids*). A higher score in the organized activity involvement scale indicates more time spent in organized activities compared to their peers. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .65 with a mean of 10.84, and standard deviation of 2.36.

Peer pressure scale. The one-factor scale composed of three dichotomous items extracted from the Multicultural Events Schedule for Adolescent (*MESA*; Gonzales, Gunnoe, Samaniego & Jackson, 1995). This scale was used to measure if the youth were pressured by their peers to participate in delinquent activities. Sample items included in the scale were: “You were pressured to do drugs, smoke, or drink alcohol;” “You were pressured against your will to join a gang;” and “Your close friends got drunk or high.” Youth were asked to answer each item by either *Yes* or *No*. A *yes* was assigned a value of one and a *no* was assigned a zero in the SPSS program. Since the scale was based on dichotomous items, K-R 20 analysis was used to determine the internal reliability for the scale. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was low ($\alpha = .40$) with a mean of .39, and standard deviation of .65. This low alpha score was expected since the scale included only three items and all items were based on dichotomous scores.

Relationship with parents scale. This one-factor scale included two items measuring the youth's satisfaction with their relationship with each of their parents (Conger & Elder, 1994). The two items were: "How satisfied are you with your relationship with your dad (and mom)?" and "How happy are you with the way things are between you and your dad (and mom)?" Youth were asked to indicate their responses using a Likert-type scale of *don't know, never, rarely, sometimes, and often*. Responses were coded zero = "never" to 4 = "often" in the SPSS software program. Thus, a higher score means more satisfaction with their relationship with their father or mother. The internal reliability for the relationship with the father scale was .82 and the internal reliability for the relationship with the mother scale was .76.

Parental monitoring scale. The one-factor scale (Conger & Elder, 1994) composed of five items which measure the degree to which the youth's parents actually monitor the youth's behaviors. Sample items include "In the course of a day, how often does your dad (mom) know where are you?", "How often does your dad (mom) talk with you about what is going on in your life?", and "How often does your dad (mom) know if you come home or were in bed by the set time?" Youth rated each parent separately using a Likert-type scale where 0 = *never* to 5 = *always*. A higher score indicates a higher degree of monitoring from each parent. The Cronbach's alpha for the father's scale was .79 and for the mother's scale was .73.

Academic performance. Academic performance was measured using the youth's self-reported grade point average (GPA). Youth reported their grades in terms of A-F grading scale where A and A- = 4; B+, B, and B- = 3; C+, C, and C- = 2; D+ and D = 1; and F = 0. A higher score indicates a better academic performance at school.

School commitment scale. The school commitment scale consisted of 15 items (Conger & Elder, 1994) designed to assess youth's attitudes toward school, homework and teachers. Sample items include "I try hard at school;" "I feel very close to at least one of my teachers;" "I get along well with my teachers;" or "I do well in school, even in hard subjects." Youth were asked to evaluate each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicates a higher school commitment. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .89.

Educational aspirations scale. The educational aspirations scale included two items measuring youth's expectations and self-evaluation of their future educational achievement (Rumbaut, 1995). Items were "What is the highest level of education that you would like to achieve?" and "Realistically speaking, what is the highest level of education that you think you will get?" Youth were asked to rate each item based on the following response options: *less than high school, finish high school, finish some college, finish college, and finish a graduate degree*. Responses were coded from zero to five and a higher score indicates higher aspirations for future educational accomplishment. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .65.

Delinquent behavior. Delinquent behavior was assessed with 10 items concerning whether the youth had engaged in one or more delinquent behaviors over the past 12 months (Conger & Elder, 1994; Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Elliot, Huizinga, & Mernard, 1989). Sample items of the delinquent behavior include "cut classes," "beat up someone," "ran away from home," "stole a car," "broke into a building," "attacked people with weapons, or robbed people with force." Youth self reported whether they had been engaged in one or more of the delinquent behaviors over the past twelve months by answering either "yes" or "no." All responses

were coded 1= yes and 0 = no and summed all items into a composite delinquent scale with values ranging from 0 - 9 (mean = 1.44, SD = 2.10). The scale has good internal reliability with $\alpha = .83$.

Results

Correlation Analyses

Two correlation analyses were performed separately by gender to test the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as well as the relationships among the independent variables. Bivariate results (see Table 2 at end of paper) showed sufficient correlations among the variables, except the correlation between the father's monitoring and mother's monitoring scores ($r = .84$). Therefore, we ran a multicollinearity test using the variance inflation factor (VIF) to determine the extent of the problem of overlapping of the two variables. According to O'Brien (2007), A VIF value that is above 5 suggests a problem with multicollinearity. The VIF value for the two variables for this study was lower than 2.0, which indicates that there was no multicollinearity detected. Thus, the two variables were treated independently from each other in later analyses.

Table 2 shows the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable for both gender. Specifically, the results showed that for Hmong male youth delinquent behavior was positively related to antisocial attitudes ($r = .29$) but negatively related to organized activity involvement ($r = -.25$), relationship with the father ($r = -.26$), father's monitoring ($r = -.24$), mother's monitoring ($r = -.26$), school commitment ($r = -.45$), and GPA ($r = -.29$). For the female youth, delinquent behavior was positively related to antisocial attitudes ($r = .43$) and peer pressure ($r = .33$), but negatively related to educational aspirations ($r = -.28$), relationship with the mother ($r = -.25$), father's monitoring ($r = -.29$), mother's monitoring ($r = -.43$), and GPA ($r = -.34$). The only

variable that was not significantly related to either male or female youth's delinquent behavior was ethnic identity. Therefore, this variable was excluded in the regression models.

Regression Models for All Participants

To address our first research question, we ran a series of stepwise multiple regression analyses on the youth's delinquent behavior score using scores from the individual, peer, family, and school factors. The overall stepwise regression analysis for all participants generated three significant findings (see Table 3 at end of paper). Specifically, the result of the analysis indicated that antisocial attitudes score accounted for 13% ($R^2 = .13$) of the variance in the dependent variable (or delinquent behavior) score. The GPA score explained an additional 8% of the variance, and the mother's monitoring score accounted for another 5% of the variance. Other factors included in the model were not statistically significant in explaining the youth's delinquent behavior. In sum, antisocial attitudes, GPA, and mother's monitoring factors together explained 24% ($R^2 = .24$) of the variance in Hmong youth's delinquent behavior regardless of gender.

Regression Models for Boys and Girls

To address the second research question, we ran two separate stepwise regression models for the two gender. As can be seen in Table 4 (at end of paper), school commitment was the only factor in the regression model that was significant for the male youth. It accounted for 20% of the variance in the youth's delinquent behavior. Surprisingly, none of the other factors included in the model was significant. This suggests that the independent variables included in the model might have been too overlapped, especially with the school commitment variable (see explanation under the discussion section).

Conversely, the results for the stepwise regression model for the female youth were more complex (see Table 5 at end of paper). For instance, results showed that the lack of mother's monitoring by itself accounted for 19% of the variance in the girls' delinquent behavior. Antisocial attitudes explained an additional 8% of the variance, GPA and school commitment each explained an additional 6% of the variance, and peer pressure accounted for approximately another 5% of the variance. Together, these factors explained 44% of the extent to which female youth would commit a delinquent act. In other words, the variables included in this study were more suitable to explain female youth's delinquent behavior than male youth's delinquent behavior.

Discussion

This is an exploratory study that tries to tease out which variable or a combination of variables best predict Hmong youth's delinquent behavior, especially between male and female youth. Overall, the results showed three variables or factors that best explained Hmong youth's delinquent behavior. First, we found that youth who were more likely to endorse what Buss-Durkee called a hostile style of interaction or what Conger and Elder (1994) referred to as "antisocial attitudes" tended to be more at-risk of getting involved in delinquent activities. This finding is consistent with what has been found in the extant literature, including Hmong studies (Ireland & Archer, 2004; S. Lee, 2001, 2005; Noffesinger, 2007). For example, Stacey Lee, a respected scholar in the field, has studied Hmong youth living in Wisconsin for decades, especially the second-generation youth, and found that "over-Americanized" youth tended to distance themselves from other Hmong youth and school. These youth have often been labeled by other youth as "bad" kids. And "bad" kids have been found to be more vulnerable to fail school, commit crimes, and delinquent activities (Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Second, the second factor we found that explained Hmong youth's delinquent behavior was GPA or grade point average. Specifically, we found that youth who reported a lower GPA were more likely to report more delinquent acts compared to those who reported a higher GPA. This finding adds to the accumulated knowledge that poor school performance increases youth's risks to engage in delinquent behavior (Hart, O'Toole, Price-Sharp, & Shaffer, 2007; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Shek, Siu, & Lee, 2007), including work conducted with Hmong youth (S. Lee, 2001, 2005; Thao, 1999). Finally, the third significant predictor of Hmong youth's delinquent behavior was the lack of mother's monitoring of the youth's whereabouts. Although the contribution of the lack of mother's monitoring in the youth's delinquent behavior has been found in many studies (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Dornbusch et al., 2001; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004; Williams et al., 1999) and discussed in many parenting programs (Xiong, Detzner, Keuster, Eliason, & Allen, 2006), this study is among the few to empirically establish this relationship.

When looking at gender and delinquency, it has been acknowledged in the literature that what influences male and female youth to be involved in delinquent activities is not exactly the same (Faulkner et al., 2007; Go & Le, 2005; Squire, 1997), and this has been the case for this study as well. However, what accounts for the variation between the two genders is completely another story. For example, we were surprised to find that the male youth's lack of school commitment was the only factor that was significant in explaining their delinquent behavior. Factors that have been demonstrated to link to delinquent behavior in the literature, such as antisocial attitudes, relationships with parents, parents' monitoring, peer pressure, and school performance (Caldwell et al., 2005; Ireland & Archer, 2004; Maguin & Loeber, 1996; Paetsch & Bertrand, 1997; Wong, 1998, 1999), came up to be non-significant.

Therefore, the question is why is the lack of school commitment the only variable in the model to come up as significant while other variables were insignificant?

Statistically, a more likely explanation for this is multicollinearity. Typically, when a first-order correlation (X correlated with Y) shows an effect for X but a partial correlation (X and Z correlated with Y) does not, it is because X and Z are correlated. Thus, whatever effect X had is really due to whatever X has in common with Z, so only Z's effect comes through. For example, among the boys, GPA and school commitment have $r = .65$ while the same correlation for girls is $.42$. In almost all cases for the boys, school commitment is more strongly correlated with the other independent variables than for the girls. Practically, what this means is that the male youth tend to respond to all the measures in a similar way (i.e., circle a few number on the measures over and over again across measures), while the female youth are more likely to respond to the measures in a variety of ways (i.e., circle different response options to different items across measures in the survey). So, why is it that the female youth we studied would be more likely to distinguish between our measures while the male youth seem to have answered all the measures similarly? Is there something different about the two genders? The answer is yes. Most of the youth recruited from the correctional facilities and the aftercare program for this study were males and delinquents, while the female youth were recruited from schools and the community. Coupled with this difference is the length of the survey (i.e., over 300 items) we used and the time we had with the youth from different settings.

Theoretically, however, we speculate that the lack of school commitment perhaps serves as the last resort for boys in this study to engage in delinquent activities. In other words, when the youth no longer want to be in the school the only other option besides home is in the street. This speculation is based in the context of what other researchers have observed studying Hmong male youth in

the school setting. For example, Stacey Lee (2001, 2005, 2007) and Thao (1999) noted in their studies that non-Hmong teachers often singled out Hmong youth, especially those who tend to be over-Americanized, treated them as foreigners and at-risk students, and labeled them as 'gang bangers'. As a result, Hmong male youth eventually selected themselves out from the school system and formed their own peer group outside of the school (see the work of P. Lee, 2009).

Selectively being in a peer group that shares similar norms and values may have also impacted how the youth responded to our peer pressure scale as well. We speculate that since the delinquent male youth are more cohesive and share similar expectations (i.e., we are here together as a family), their daily behaviors such as smoking, joining the group, or getting drunk may have become part of the norm, and therefore peer pressure may have becomes less obvious to them. For the female youth, however, this may not be the case since they are monitored closely by their mother (G. Lee, 1994; S. Lee, 2005) and may not have an established female group outside of the school and family; therefore, smoking, joining a group, or getting drunk may not be the norm so they may be more likely to feel pressured from their peers to engage in these acts. We believe this may be one of the reasons why peer pressure is significantly related to the female youth's delinquency and not related to male youth's delinquency.

Implications for practice

Given what has been found in this study, we suggest several strategies to prevent and intervene in delinquent behavior in the Hmong community. First, parents, especially the mother, needs to pay close attention to their children's antisocial attitudes and school performance early before children get into trouble. We suggest that parents learn to recognize the difference between occasional outbursts from a pattern of highly assertive (antisocial and aggressive) behavior from their children (Meier et al, 2008; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001). Studies show that these attitudes are connected directly to parent-child interactions and relationships. Thus, without positive parent-child relationships and parental monitoring, we worry that many more Hmong youth will become at-risk in the future, since studies have consistently shown that the lack of a close relationship with parents serves as the greatest risk for youth to engage in all types of delinquent behavior (Dornbusch et al., 2001; Kerr et al., 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 1995). Additionally, parents also need to pay close attention to their children's school performance by checking on children's homework, attendance, attitude toward school and teachers. This is especially true for boys since school commitment serves as one of the most robust predictors in boys' delinquency in this study. Further, we suggest that when all the strategies at home are no longer effective parents need to seek help from others (i.e., mental health professionals, school personnel, or non-profit organization staff) to address their problems. This proactive, service utilization approach, we believe, will make a difference in the reduction of the proportion of Hmong youth who are engaging in delinquent activities.

Second, parents need to be empowered to advocate for their children's behalf. In St. Paul and Minneapolis where the youth in this study were recruited, the schools we worked with have a number of Hmong educational assistants and liaisons whose role is to

connect the school with Hmong families. Parents need to connect with these staff to engage school officials to ensure teachers treat every student fairly and support struggling students to stay in school, especially those who are at risk of being disconnected from the school system.

Finally, school officials need to create a climate where Hmong students are welcomed, praised, and encouraged to be part of the school culture. Beyond the school climate, we also suggest that schools find ways to support the learning of Hmong boys, especially those who are failing and/or at risk to fail, without having to wait for parents to pressure them. Too often children in general, and Hmong in particular, are being neglected by school systems. By the time parents know their children are in trouble, they have reached a point of irreversible harm without intensive intervention. This systemic neglect truly marginalizes Hmong parents since they do not have the resources, capacity, and connection to get their children the appropriate help to reverse the failure the school system has perpetuated for years.

Limitations

Despite the contributions this study has made to the Hmong studies literature; we need to point out several limitations that should be addressed in future studies. First, we combined all the youth regardless of their age into the same regression model in order to increase the model's power. This approach however may have masked the different predictors for different age groups since developmental psychologists point out that youth who are in their early, middle, and late adolescence function and think differently. Second, we included youth from two very different life experiences in one study and this might have confounded our study results. For example, most of the female youth had little experience committing delinquent activities since they were recruited from the

community and schools, while many boys were recruited from the correctional system, aftercare program, and at-risk programs. This recruiting strategy might have biased our results.

Third, we included too many measures in the survey. Though our goal was to include as many variables as possible in the study so we could select the most significant predictors for future studies, this actually caused us problems. We knew from looking at the data that asking youth to sit for a long time to complete the survey was not a good idea, especially for the male youth who were classified as delinquents. A short survey with only the most essential questions could have improved the results of the study. Finally, we employed only a cross-sectional design and used only a quantitative method to collect the data. Therefore, the results were based on a snapshot of the youth's perceptions at the time of the study, and this snapshot approach limits our ability to explain what really influences youth to engage in delinquent acts in the beginning, how these influences work together to increase the youth's risk to get involved, and under what conditions or contexts are youth more likely to engage in these behaviors. To be able to answer these questions, a longitudinal design using a mixed method approach is necessary.

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Descriptive Statistics

Characteristic	Total (n=206)			Female (n=91)			Male (n=115)		
	n	%	M	n	%	M	n	%	M
Age	206	100	15.90	91	44	15.96	115	56	15.85
Country born at:									
USA	110	53.4		50	54.9		60	52.2	
Laos	17	8.3		7	7.7		10	8.7	
Thailand	74	35.9		31	34.1		43	37.4	
France	1	0.5		1	1.1		0	0.0	
Missing	4	1.9		2	2.2		2	1.7	
Years in the U.S.									
Less than 5 years	2	1.0		0	0.0		2	1.7	
5-9 years	68	10.2		9	9.9		12	10.4	
10 or more years	113	33.0		29	31.9		39	33.9	
All my life	204	54.9		52	57.1		61	53.0	
Missing	2	1.0		1	1.1		1	0.9	
Grade			8.88			9.02			8.77
Not attending school	9	4.4		3	3.3		6	5.2	
6th grade	4	1.9		0	0.0		4	3.5	
7th grade	17	8.3		6	6.6		11	9.6	
8th grade	19	9.2		9	9.9		10	8.7	
9th grade	45	21.8		17	18.7		28	24.3	
10th grade	57	27.7		32	35.2		25	21.7	
11th grade	24	11.7		10	11.0		14	12.2	
12th grade	24	11.7		10	11.0		12	12.2	
College	7	3.4		4	4.4		3	2.6	

Table 2. Intercorrelational Matrix for All Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Antisocial attitudes	1.00	-.12	-.03	-.15	-.12	-.18	-.14	-.18	-.35**	.23*	-.12	.29**
2. Ethnic identity	.04		.35**	-.16	.38**	.36**	.02	-.01	.22*	-.18	.07	-.10
3. Educational aspirations	-.25*	-.01		-.00	.20*	.21*	.27**	.30**	.39**	-.13	.21*	-.20
4. Org. activity involvement	-.03	.10	.19		.11	.03	.27**	.30**	.30**	.05	.21*	-.25**
5. Father's relationship	-.38**	-.02	.08	.11		.56**	.51**	.36**	.44**	-.25	.27**	-.26**
6. Mother's relationship	-.38	-.17	.25*	.15	.61**		.26**	.36**	.27**	-.27	.06	-.10
7. Father's monitoring	-.28**	-.09	.06	.07	.24**	.16		.84**	.37**	-.21	.21*	-.24*
8. Mother's monitoring	-.39**	-.02	.21**	.15	.24*	.49**	.69**		.42**	-.25**	.21*	-.26**
9. School commitment	-.35**	.21*	.47*	.20	.25*	.26*	.23*	.33*		-.29**	.65**	-.45**
10. Peer pressure	.16	.07	-.06	.22*	-.16	-.34**	-.15	-.28**	-.05		-.21*	.18
11. GPA	-.16	-.15	.44**	.10	.01	.00	.15	.15	.42*	.06		-.29**
12. Delinquency	.43**	-.10	-.28**	.02	-.03	-.25*	-.29**	-.43**	-.10	.33**	-.34**	1.00

Note. Two-tailed significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$. Upper columns for male youth (n=115); lower columns for female youth (n=91).

Table 3. Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Reported Delinquency (All Participants)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² change
Step 1				.128	.128
Antisocial attitudes	.206	.038	.358**		
Step 2				.203	.075
Antisocial attitudes	.180	.037	.312**		
GPA	-.700	.161	-.277**		
Step 3				.236	.044
Antisocial attitudes	.149	.037	.259**		
GPA	-.609	.159	-.241**		
Monitoring of mother	-.073	.021	-.222**		

p*<.05, *p*<.01

Table 4. Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Reported Delinquency (Males)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²
Model 1				.204
School commitment	-.099	.018	-.451**	

p*<.05, *p*<.01

Table 5. Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Reported Delinquency (Females)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² change
Step 1				.189	.189
Monitoring of mother	-.135	.030	-.434**		
Step 2				.272	.083
Monitoring of mother	-.908	.031	-.314**		
Antisocial attitudes	.188	.059	.313**		
Step 3				.331	.059
Monitoring of mother	-.090	.030	-.288**		
Antisocial attitudes	.017	.057	.282**		
GPA	-.679	.244	-.248**		
Step 4				.392	.060
Monitoring of mother	-.107	.029	-.344**		
Antisocial attitudes	.208	.057	.347**		
GPA	-.960	.253	-.351**		
School commitment	.078	.027	.291**		
Step 5				.440	.049
Monitoring of mother	-.087	.029	-.281**		
Antisocial attitudes	.197	.055	.327**		
GPA	-1.028	.246	-.376**		
School commitment	.077	.026	.285**		
Peer pressure	.770	.283	.232**		

p*<.05, *p*<.01