

## Individualism, Collectivism, and Delinquency in Asian American Adolescents

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*Although the study of delinquency has previously focused on identifying individual, family, peer, and social risk and protective factors, little empirical research has studied cultural factors and their relations to delinquency. In a large community sample of 329 Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian/Mien, and Vietnamese youths, individualism was positively related to, and collectivism negatively related to, self-reported delinquency, with partial mediation through peer delinquency (PD). Although the percentage of variance in delinquency attributable to individualism–collectivism was small compared to PD, it cannot be discounted as trivial. The results also supported the measurement and structural invariance of these associations across the 4 ethnic groups.*

Immigrant youths, predominately comprised of Asian and Hispanic ethnic groups, are currently the fastest growing population in the United States; in fact, the immigration population is growing at a rate seven times faster than the native population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2050, Asians will comprise 10% and Hispanics 23% of the U.S. population. Whether immigrant groups experience greater risk of violence, either as perpetrators or victims, is an issue that continues to be explored and debated among social scientists, including criminologists, sociologists, and psychologists.

Although the United States has one of the highest rates of crime and delinquency among the industrialized nations (Blumstein, 1994; Hennes, 1998), rates do not manifest uniformly across different racial and ethnic groups. Most empirical studies of youth violence have tended to focus on European American and African American populations with few studies on Asian American groups, in part because of the model minority myth that Asians do well economically and academically. Although aggregated data do indicate that Asians have the lowest rates of juvenile arrests com-

pared to European American and African American racial groups (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), data disaggregated by ethnicity suggest that Southeast Asian groups, including Cambodian, Laotian/Mien, and Vietnamese youths, are disproportionately represented in arrest and crime statistics and have rates much higher than European American or East Asian youths (Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg, 2001; Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg, & Tang, 2001). These differences may be due to the sociohistorical context in which Southeast Asian groups immigrated to the United States. Whereas the majority of Southeast Asian families came to the United States because of war, persecution, and fleeing war-torn countries, the majority of East Asian (i.e., Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) families came to the United States to improve their economic and social situations (Zhou, 2003; Zhou & Bankston, 2000). The consequences of immigration and acculturation are likely to be different in these two groups, leading to different mental health outcomes (Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001) and rates of official and self-reported delinquency (SRD) and violence (Huang, Lee, & Arganza, 2004; Le, Arifuku, Louie, & Krisberg, 2001; Le, Arifuku, Louie, Krisberg, et al., 2001).

The literature on Asian youth violence has highlighted acculturation and immigration as contributing to delinquency and violence (Bankston & Caldas, 1996; Zhou & Bankston, 2000). Acculturation is the process of change as a result of contact between two different cultures (Berry, 1980). For Asian and Southeast Asian youths, this may entail changes in values,

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This article was supported by Grant R49/CCR918619–01 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely our responsibility and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

We are indebted to the assistance of Isami Arifuku, Mary Lai, Lila Booth, and the 18 field interviewers and interns in conducting this study. We also acknowledge Judy Wallen for providing statistical support.

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beliefs, and norms such as from a more collectivistic orientation to a more individualistic orientation. Although studies of Asian youth violence have not explored the relation between individualism–collectivism and youth violence, there are some suggestions that the acculturation–youth violence link may be attributed to changes in values and beliefs such as individualism–collectivism.

Individualism is the concept in which the person conceives him or herself as being separate, autonomous, and distinct from others. The orientation is toward oneself and internal attributes. Collectivism refers to a perception of self that is embedded within social roles and social relationships; separate selves are de-emphasized with an orientation toward others and the welfare of the group or community. Western cultures such as the United States tend to be more individualistic, whereas Asian cultures tend to be more collectivistic (e.g., Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). These two cultural orientations could influence the developmental process of individuation.

For adolescents, the process of individuation involves developing an identity that is separate and autonomous from the family. This process entails changes in the adolescent–parent relationship that are conceivably the most important social transitions during adolescence (Noack & Puschner, 1999). Individuation includes increasing autonomy, independence, and emotional separation from one’s parents, which is consistent with the individualist cultural orientation of distinguishing self from others. Developmentalists have proposed two processes of individuation, one that is adaptive related to differentiation (detachment from parents and peers) leading to prosocial development such as healthy self-reliance, and the other as a form of separation associated with rebelliousness or defiance with the primary objective of emancipation from parental control and dependency (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Although studies have suggested that the process of increasing emotional separation from parents operates in much the same way across different groups—at least for European American, African American, and Mexican American adolescents (Bray, Adams, Getz, & McQueen, 2003)—Fuhrman and Holmbeck (1995) suggested that separation may be more detrimental in cultural environments in which collectivism and interdependence is favored over self-reliance and autonomy. Given the central importance of the family in Asian cultures, an adolescent’s emotional distance from parents may present a risk factor for maladaptive outcomes. McQueen, Getz, and Bray (2003) illustrated in a longitudinal sample that separation and family conflict mediated the relation between acculturation and risk behaviors among Mexican American adolescents. For Mexican American culture that emphasizes familial relations, the association between acculturation and both separation and cultural conflict ac-

counted for increases in substance use and deviant behavior over time.

Many theories of socialization emphasize the importance of ethnic influences on family structure (e.g., the importance of the nuclear vs. extended family) and cultural orientation (e.g., collectivism vs. individualism; Chao, 1994; Jang, 2002; Wilkinson, 1993). Research has documented differences in family socialization practices and cultural values taught at home between Asian and non-Asian groups (Lin & Liu, 1993). For example, because of their beliefs in an Eastern worldview (e.g., Confucianism), Asian parents tend to instill in their children collectivism (following group norms, obeying authority) rather than the individualism (autonomy, self-reliance) of mainstream American culture (Chen, 2002).

Very few studies have investigated the relation between individualism–collectivism and violent behavior, with the primary focus concerning the perception of seriousness in delinquent behavior. For instance, Tyson and Hubert (2002, 2003) noted that collectivistic adolescents tended to rate delinquent behavior as being a more serious and egregious form of behavior than individualistic adolescents. Wong (1997) found that adherence to Chinese culture (practicing Chinese customs in particular) reduced the likelihood of delinquency involvement, although for minor offenses only. A logical extension is that individualistic adolescents who perceive delinquent behavior as being less serious would be more likely to engage in such behavior as compared to collectivistic adolescents. Because collectivistic adolescents may consider the possible consequences that such behavior may bear on their relationship with their parents and others, potentially creating social disharmony, they may be less inclined to commit delinquent acts. Collectivistic adolescents are also more likely to endorse conventional norms and appropriate conduct of behavior. Individualistic adolescents, on the other hand, may be particularly interested in engaging in risk-taking and antisocial activities to expand and explore their identity, to test boundaries and express themselves against societal constraints and conventions, and to assert themselves as distinct individuals, separate from their family. For particular ethnic groups, such as Asians and Southeast Asians, the process of individuation and adopting a more individualistic orientation may be particularly consequential in light of the importance of family cohesion stressed in collectivist cultures. Further, in a culture that emphasizes family and social relations, endorsing a more individualistic cultural orientation may negatively impact the quality of family relationships and communication, which can undermine the supportive nature of these relationships. As a result, Asian and Southeast Asian youths who adopt a more individualistic orientation may in turn seek support from peers, including delinquent ones.

Peer delinquency (PD) has consistently been shown to be a robust predictor of delinquency and violent offending in adolescence (Elliot, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). However, previous studies on immigrant youth violence have tended to examine the effects of acculturation without considering potential mediating factors, such as the influence of peers. The few studies of youth delinquency and violence for Asian youths have consistently identified two factors that increase the risk of delinquency and violence: lack of school attachment and PD (Kim & Goto, 2000; Le, Monfared, & Stockdale, 2005). Empirical findings have also suggested that acculturated youths tend to become more involved in social systems outside of the family, such as peer groups (Reuschenberg & Buriel, 1989). Wall, Power, and Arbona (1993) found that higher acculturation level was associated with greater degree of peer versus adult orientation and greater willingness to defy authority and tolerate deviancy among Hispanic youths. Similarly, the acculturation process for Asian immigrant youths may weaken traditional, hierarchical parent-child relations and result in an increase in a youth's associations with deviant peers. As Asian youths acculturate to mainstream U.S. cultures and adopt a more individualistic orientation, they may be more likely to engage with delinquent peers, which places them at greater risk for deviant behavior.

Because of the potential consequences of endorsing the cultural syndromes of individualism-collectivism with respect to delinquent behavior, we examined this relation in a multiethnic sample of Asian adolescents. In a previous study using this same sample of Chinese and Southeast Asian youths (Le et al., 2005), we reported that delinquent peer affiliation was a strong predictor of youth delinquency. However, factors that may predict delinquent peer affiliation in this sample of immigrant youths were not explored. As has been suggested earlier, the process of acculturation may lead to Asian youths adopting cultural values and beliefs reflective of more mainstream U.S. culture such as individualism. Such cultural orientation, particularly in Western cultures, is also supportive of the developmental process of individuation. Although individuation is a developmental process that exists in all cultures, studies show that it is moderated by cultural context and varies by ethnicity (Bray, Getz, & Baer, 1999; Silverberg & Gondoli, 1996). Considering that cultural elements such as individualism-collectivism more likely represent a distal factor, we tested whether a proximal and robust factor such as PD would serve as a mediator between individualism-collectivism and delinquency.

This study thus extends previous findings by examining whether the process of acculturation measured as endorsement of individualism-collectivism is related to delinquency and mediated by PD. Our previous study found that Chinese youths scored the lowest on PD and SRD, whereas Cambodian youths scored the highest

(Le et al., 2005). In this study, we did not expect the four ethnic groups (Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian/Mien, Vietnamese) to differ on individualism-collectivism, as they all represent collectivistic cultures. Additionally, the sample of youths in these four ethnic groups was fairly similar in generation status. Rather, we hypothesized that at the individual level, individualism would be positively related to, and collectivism negatively related to, PD and youth delinquency. Because the study involves four different ethnic groups, we also tested whether the associations among constructs was equivalent across the ethnic groups.

## Methods

### Participants

The sample consisted of Cambodian ( $n = 112$ ), Chinese ( $n = 64$ ), Laotian/Mien ( $n = 67$ ), and Vietnamese ( $n = 86$ ) adolescents. The average age for Chinese and Vietnamese youths was 14 years old, and for Cambodian and Laotian/Mien youths, 15 years ( $SD = 2$ ; range = 10–18 for all groups). Sex was equally distributed in the Vietnamese group, but Laotian/Mien had slightly more girls (55%), and the Cambodian and Chinese groups had slightly more boys (54% and 53%, respectively). With respect to generation status, 81% of Chinese, 88% of Cambodian, and 72% of Laotian/Mien youths identified as being second generation (i.e., born in the United States). For Vietnamese youths, generation status was fairly split between first generation (47%) and second generation (53%).

### Procedure

Data for this study were taken from a larger project on the risk and protective factors for delinquency (see Le et al., 2005, for details). Youths were recruited from two public schools and five community-based organizations serving Asian or Pacific Islander youths in Oakland, California, for a 1-hr, structured face-to-face interview. They all resided in the same geographical area and were not different in terms of socioeconomic status. Parent permission for youth participation was obtained with a signature on the parent consent and permission form that was translated and back-translated into the five different languages (Cambodia, Chinese, Laotian, Mien, Vietnamese). This was obtained prior to youth assent. Youth assent was obtained with a signature on the youth assent form prior to the interview. Both parent and youth consent forms contained language describing the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the research. Youths were compensated \$25 for participating, and all forms and protocols were approved by the Committee on Human Subjects of the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

## Measures

**Ethnicity.** Respondents selected the ethnic group that they identified with the most from a list that included African American, American Indian, Cambodian, Caucasian, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Hispanic, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Mien, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Samoan, Tongan, and Vietnamese. In cases in which more than one ethnic group was selected and no primary ethnicity was indicated, the ethnicity of the mother was used. About 10% of cases fell into this circumstance.

**Generation status.** Generation status was based on the youth's self-report and coded as 1 (*first generation*; youth born outside the United States), 2 (*second generation*; youth born in the United States and at least one parent born outside the United States), 3 (*third generation*; youth and both parents born in the United States), 4 (*fourth generation*), 5 (*fifth generation*), 6 (*don't know*), or 7 (*indigenous*).

**Individualism–collectivism (Singelis et al., 1995).** This 32-item scale contains the cultural orientation of individualism (IND) and collectivism (COL). The 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 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*) and have proven to form internally consistent scales (coefficient  $\alpha = .67-.74$ ) with past samples of adolescent and adult population (Singelis et al., 1995). In this study, IND was composed of 15 items (1 item was not used as it correlated essentially zero with other IND items). COL was composed of 16 items.

**PD.** A 16-item scale used in Thornberry, Lizotte, Krohn, Farnworth, and Jang (1994) assessed level of PD. For various delinquent activities such as damaging property, stealing, joyriding, hitting, and so on, participants were asked how many of their friends engaged in such activities during the past 6 months. Items were rated on a 5-point scale of 1 (*none*), 2 (*few*), 3 (*half*), 4 (*most*), or 5 (*all*). Higher scores indicated greater levels of PD.

**SRD.** SRD was assessed using the 37 items on a commonly used measure of delinquency (e.g., Elliott et al., 1985; Huizinga, Esbensen, & Weiher, 1991). Sixteen items constituted a Minor Delinquency scale and 21 items composed a Serious Delinquency scale.

Examples of items for Minor Delinquency included skipping classes; cheating on tests; being drunk in public places; using cigarettes, marijuana, or liquor; making threatening or nasty phone calls; running away from home; copying software programs; or stealing something worth less than \$50. Examples of items for Serious Delinquency included committing aggravated assault, stealing, committing check fraud, committing arson, committing robbery, carrying weapons, selling drugs, or damaging property. Each item was scored as 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*) based on participant's report of engagement within the past 6 months.

## Data Analysis

From these measures, four latent variables were defined using item parcels with three parcels per variable: IND, COL, PD, and SRD (Kishton & Widaman, 1994). Scale items were randomly assigned to each parcel under the constraint that each parcel within a scale maintained the same number of items, where possible. Internal consistency reliabilities of the three parcels for each scale for the total sample were as follows: IND = .86, COL = .85, PD = .94, SRD = .86.

Item parcels have two distinct advantages over single total-scale score representations of latent variables in statistical analysis. First, if total scores are used as a single indicator of a latent variable, the unreliability resulting from both measurement error and specific variance compromises (usually attenuates) the relations among the latent variables. Multiple indicators (parcels) correct the relations within and among the latent variables for this unreliability. Second, and most important, where invariance across groups is of concern, item parcels allow for testing invariance as each latent variable has multiple indicators that can be freely estimated or fixed to invariance across groups. With a single indicator per latent variable (i.e., total scale score), invariance can be imposed but is not testable in measurement models because two of the three parameter estimates—factor variance, factor loading, and specific variance—must be fixed. After forming these latent constructs, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the hypothesized relations among variables of interest and to test factorial invariance and measurement models using Mplus 3.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2003).

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations on the four manifest scales for the four ethnic groups and the total sample are shown in Table 1. On the manifest variable level, there were no significant differences across ethnic groups on

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviations on Manifest Scales by Ethnic Group and Total Sample

Ethnic Group	Individualism		Collectivism		Peer Delinquency		Self-Reported Delinquency	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cambodian <sup>a</sup>	7.00 <sub>a</sub>	1.16	7.90 <sub>a</sub>	0.95	12.54 <sub>b</sub>	11.73	4.70 <sub>b</sub>	4.31
Chinese <sup>b</sup>	6.58 <sub>a</sub>	1.36	7.67 <sub>a</sub>	1.15	6.00 <sub>a</sub>	6.69	2.66 <sub>a</sub>	3.32
Laotian/Mien <sup>c</sup>	6.95 <sub>a</sub>	1.25	7.77 <sub>a</sub>	1.03	10.93 <sub>b</sub>	11.08	4.85 <sub>b</sub>	4.74
Vietnamese <sup>d</sup>	6.52 <sub>a</sub>	1.25	7.69 <sub>a</sub>	1.14	8.35 <sub>a,b</sub>	9.43	4.02 <sub>a,b</sub>	4.42
Total Sample	6.78	1.27	7.77	1.06	9.76	10.40	4.16	4.32

Note: Means within a column with the same subscript are not significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) using Scheffé's procedure for pairwise comparisons. <sup>a</sup> $n = 112$ . <sup>b</sup> $n = 64$ . <sup>c</sup> $n = 67$ . <sup>d</sup> $n = 86$ .

**Table 2.** Intercorrelations and Internal Consistency Reliability Among Manifest Scales for the Total Sample

	1	2	3	4
Individualism	(.807)			
Collectivism	.326*	(.833)		
Peer Delinquency	.217*	-.069	(.931)	
Self-Reported Delinquency	.227*	-.069	.677*	(.846)

Note:  $N = 329$ . Internal consistency reliability listed on the main diagonal. \*Denotes correlation significantly different from 0,  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

IND or COL. In contrast, Chinese scored significantly lower on the PD and SRD variables. Correlations and internal consistency reliability among the scales are given in Table 2 for the total sample and in the appendix for the ethnic groups separately. Internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) were all above or near .80, a value more than adequate to support a single-construct representation for each scale and ensuing research purposes. Correlations significantly different from zero are indicated in Table 2 and in the appendix; however, the interest in our research is whether correlations among groups (e.g., Chinese and Vietnamese) are different from each other, not different from zero. These types of comparisons were made using SEM, discussed next.

**Factorial (Measurement) and Structural Invariance**

**Ethnic groups.** Table 3 presents the fit indexes for various levels of measurement factorial invariance for the four ethnic groups. Although there was some

minor slippage on several of the fit index values going from the baseline model to strong factorial invariance (e.g., the comparative fit index eroded from .978 to .975), there were several findings supporting invariance. First, the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio (1.28), of the strong invariance model was as low as the baseline model with no invariance restrictions. Second, the root mean square error of approximation of the strong invariance model (.059) was lower than that of the baseline model (.060), although not significantly so. Third, both the Tucker-Lewis Index and the comparative fit index were above .970 in the strong invariance model, essentially no different than those found for the baseline model that were .970 and .978, respectively. Thus, direct relations among the path coefficients in the ensuing structural models, as well as direct mean comparisons on both the latent and manifest levels (Table 1), may be made with confidence that observed differences among ethnic groups are based on the same measurement model.

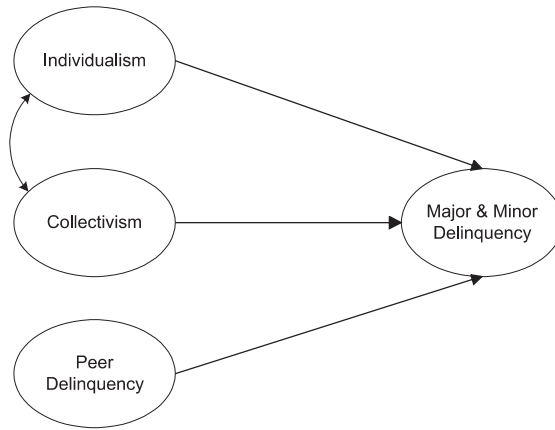
Based on the aforementioned results of measurement invariance, structural invariance was next investigated whereby three structural models were compared with strong factorial measurement invariance constraints maintained. That is, for all factors, each factor (parcel) loading and intercept was constrained to equality across the four ethnic groups and the fit indexes of three different structural models were compared. In the first model, Model 1A (see Figure 1), IND, COL, and PD were each separate predictors of SRD with IND and COL allowed to correlate. Thus, there was no mediation in Model 1A. In Model 1B, IND and COL (allowed to correlate) were predictors of

**Table 3.** Fit Indexes of Factorial Invariance Measurement Models

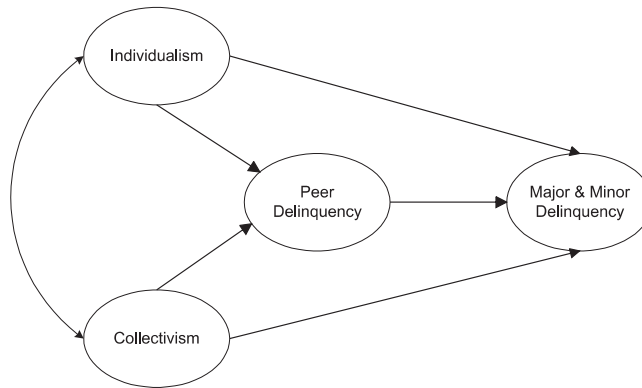
Measurement Model	$\chi^2$	df	p	$\chi^2:df$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$\Delta\chi^2:\Delta df$	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
00. Baseline (Configural Invariance)	248.0	192	.004	1.29				.060	.970	.978
01. Model 00 + $\Lambda$ Invariant (Weak Factorial Invariance)	275.9	216	.004	1.28	27.9	24	1.16	.058	.972	.977
02. Model 01 + $\tau$ Invariant (Strong Factorial Invariance)	308.2	240	.002	1.28	32.3	24	1.35	.059	.971	.974
03. Model 02 + $\Theta_\epsilon$ Invariant (Strict Factorial Invariance)	418.2	276	<.001	1.52	110.0	36	3.06	.079	.947	.945

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = comparative fit index.

Model 1A: No Mediation through Peer Delinquency



Model 1B: Partial Mediation through Peer Delinquency



Model 1C: Full Mediation through Peer Delinquency

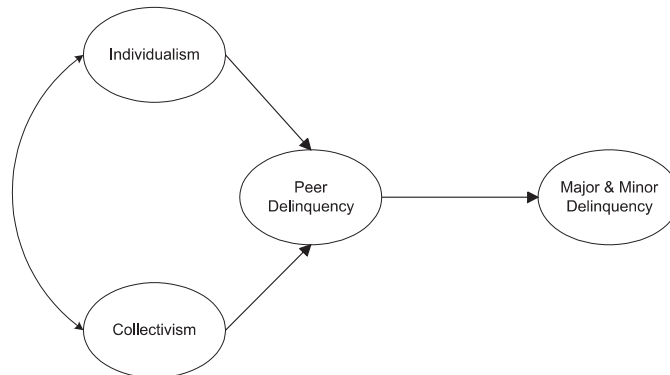


Figure 1. Mediation models of peer delinquency.

both PD and SRD, and PD, in turn, was a predictor of SRD. Model 1B represented partial mediation of IND and COL through PD. In Model 1C, the paths from IND and COL to SRD were constrained to zero, representing full mediation of IND and COL through PD. The fit index values for the three structural models are listed in Table 4. Here it is readily apparent that the partial mediation model, Model 1B, is the best-fitting model because this model had the lowest  $\chi^2$  to *df* ratio (1.28), as well as the lowest root mean square error of

approximation (.059) and highest comparative fit index and Tucker–Lewis Index values (.974 and .971, respectively). The estimated path coefficients for all three structural models are shown in Table 4. Standardized path coefficients in SEM were interpreted in the same manner as standardized regression coefficients in multiple regression. Thus, a one standard deviation increase in the predictor results in the path estimated value standard deviation increase in the criterion. For indirect effects (i.e., those of partial mediation), the

**Table 4.** Fit Indexes of Structural Invariance Models

Structural Model	$\chi^2$	df	p	$\chi^2:df$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	$\Delta\chi^2:\Delta df$	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
01A. (No Peer Delinquency Mediation)	341.1	248	<.001	1.38				.068	.962	.964
01B. (Partial Peer Delinquency Mediation)	308.2	240	.002	1.28				.059	.971	.974
01C. (Full Peer Delinquency Mediation)	329.8	248	<.001	1.33	21.6	8	2.70	.063	.966	.968

Note: RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; CFI = comparative fit index. All ethnic group structural models are based on strong factorial invariance. Model 01B is nested within Model 01C ( $\Delta$  values compared) and Model 02A, but Model 01A is not nested within Model 01C.

**Table 5.** Standardized Estimated Path Coefficients of Alternate Structural Models for Predicting Delinquency From Individualism, Collectivism, and Peer Delinquency

Ethnic Group	Criterion = Peer Delinquency		Criterion = Self-Reported Delinquency		
	Individualism	Collectivism	Individualism	Collectivism	Peer Delinquency
Model 01A: No Mediation Through Peer Delinquency					
Cambodian			0.10 (0.97)	0.13 (1.24)	0.73* (6.13)
Chinese			0.23 (1.86)	-0.20 (-1.59)	0.60* (4.53)
Laotian/Mien			0.18 (1.46)	-0.05 (-0.43)	0.87* (6.53)
Vietnamese			-0.03 (-0.32)	-0.29* (-2.91)	0.65* (5.45)
Model 01B: Partial Mediation Through Peer Delinquency					
Cambodian	0.18 (1.37)	-0.17 (-1.23)	0.09 (0.90)	0.14 (1.26)	0.73* (6.06)
Chinese	0.15 (1.06)	-0.32* (-2.18)	0.22 (1.79)	-0.18 (-1.44)	0.58* (4.30)
Laotian/Mien	0.53* (2.71)	-0.45* (-2.22)	0.15 (1.16)	-0.04 (-0.28)	0.84* (6.10)
Vietnamese	0.47* (3.89)	-0.14 (-1.33)	-0.05 (-0.48)	-0.28* (-2.81)	0.66* (5.00)
Model 01C: Full Mediation Through Peer Delinquency					
Cambodian	0.19 (1.41)	-0.16 (-1.18)			0.74* (6.16)
Chinese	0.17 (1.16)	-0.33* (-2.25)			0.64* (4.74)
Laotian/Mien	0.55* (2.78)	-0.46* (-2.24)			0.88* (6.68)
Vietnamese	0.46* (3.87)	-0.16 (-1.50)			0.67* (5.40)

Note: *t* values listed in parentheses. A cell with no values entered denotes that the parameter is fixed at 0.

\*Denotes a statistically significant predictor,  $p < .05$ .

path value from the predictor to the mediator was multiplied by the path value from the mediator to the criterion to determine the (indirect) effect of the predictor on the criterion. Of particular interest are the estimated path coefficients for Model 1B involving partial mediation through PD that showed the best fit in this sample. For all ethnic groups in Model 1B (Table 5), the strongest predictor of SRD was PD with Chinese youths maintaining the lowest estimate (0.58). Also, IND was a positive predictor of both PD and SRD, and COL was a negative predictor of both PD and SRD for all groups. This was true for both the direct and indirect effects of COL and IND.

Turning to differences among the ethnic groups, it was found that for Cambodian youths, both COL and IND were nonsignificant predictors of PD and SRD. For Chinese youths, the only significant predictor was COL (indirect effect of  $-.32 \times .58 = -.19$ ) This result well may partially account for both (a) the lower estimated value of PD as a predictor of SRD (.58 for Chinese youths vs. .66, .73, and .84 for the other three ethnic groups) and (b) the significantly lower manifest

mean on SRD for Chinese youths (see Table 1). For Laotian/Mien youths, both COL (negative indirect effect of  $-.45 \times .84 = -.38$ ) and IND (positive indirect effect of  $.53 \times .84 = 0.45$ ) were significant predictors, and these two antagonistic forces probably canceled each other, such that the resulting effect on SRD was near zero. This result could partially account for the large predictive value for PD on SRD, .84. For Vietnamese youths, there was a positive significant indirect effect of IND ( $.47 \times .66 = .31$ ) and a negative significant direct effect of COL ( $-.28$ ) on SRD, the total effects being essentially no different in absolute magnitude. As with Laotian/Mien youths, these two antagonistic forces probably canceled each other such that there was no combined ultimate effect of IND and COL on SRD.

SEM algorithms gave estimated values of explained variance (pseudo- $R^2$ ) for endogenous variables (criteria), and these estimates are listed in Table 6. As there was only one significant direct effect of either IND or COL on SRD, the  $R^2$  values for SRD were essentially due to a single direct effect predictor, PD, although

**Table 6.** *Estimated R<sup>2</sup> Values for Peer Delinquency and Self-Reported Delinquency*

Ethnic Group	Peer Delinquency	Self-Reported Delinquency
Cambodian	.03	.58
Chinese	.09	.45
Laotian/Mien	.19	.80
Vietnamese	.23	.52

*Note:* Predictors of peer delinquency were individualism and collectivism. Predictors of self-reported delinquency were individualism, collectivism, and peer delinquency.

there was some minor influence on the  $R^2$  values from the indirect effects of IND and COL through PD. As these  $R^2$  values for SRD ranged from .52 to .80 for the ethnic groups, it is apparent that a large contributor of SRD was PD. For PD, there were two predictors, IND and COL. Although the  $R^2$  values for PD were low, implying that forces other than IND or COL lead to association with delinquent peers, neither IND nor COL can be discounted as an ultimate contributor to SRD for Chinese, Laotian/Mien, and Vietnamese youths because there were significant indirect effects of IND and COL on SRD through PD. For Cambodian youths, neither IND nor COL was a significant predictor of PD or SRD.

### Discussion

Past research on delinquency and violence has focused primarily on identifying risk and protective factors with little attention to cultural features, aside from a few studies on ethnic identity and acculturation (e.g., Sommers, Fagan, & Baskin, 1993; Vega, Gil, Warheit, & Zimmerman, 1993; Zhou, 2003). One process by which acculturation may lead to increase in risk for delinquency and violence is through shifts on a number of dimensions, including gradual incorporation of language, cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors of the dominant society.

Indeed, research has shown that more acculturated Hispanic and Asian adolescents are at increased risk for delinquent behavior as compared to their less acculturated counterparts (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Vega et al., 1993; Wall et al., 1993; Zhou & Bankston, 2000). First-generation youths are more likely to retain the traditional values of collectivism or maintain strong family ties that appear to protect against delinquency. Studies with Mexican American youths suggest that acculturated adolescents tend to have higher rates of delinquency because they spend more time with friends and peers and are more susceptible to negative peer influences (Samaniego & Gonzales, 1999; Wall et al., 1993).

This study extends previous empirical findings that PD is a robust predictor of delinquency for Asian

youths (Kim & Goto, 2000; Le et al., 2005) by examining whether the process of acculturation, as indicated by endorsement of individualism–collectivism, influences PD, which in turn predicts deviant behavior. In light of the importance of family cohesion among Asian cultures (Chao, 1994; Wilkinson, 1993), it was predicted that individualism would be positively related and collectivism negatively related to youth delinquency. The findings were consistent with this prediction. Further, this relation was observed to be partially mediated through PD and found to be invariant across the four Asian ethnic groups. Hence, to the extent that youths endorse ideas, beliefs, and values of individualism, they are more likely to engage in antisocial behavior and affiliate with delinquent peers. In contrast, orientation toward the welfare of one's larger group, respect for authority, concern for interpersonal harmony, and placing other needs before one's own was negatively predictive of delinquent activities. Notably, the variance explained by individualism–collectivism with respect to youth delinquency in this sample was weak. Nevertheless, the significant paths suggest that they cannot be completely discounted.

The results also revealed interesting variations among the ethnic groups in terms of the relative importance of individualism–collectivism. For Cambodian youths, the explanatory variance contributed by individualism–collectivism to delinquency was minimal, whereas for Laotian/Mien and Vietnamese youths, its contribution was more substantial, especially as it facilitated or hindered delinquent peer affiliation. For Chinese youths, who scored the lowest on SRD, the variance attributed by individualism–collectivism and PD was also the lowest of all groups. It is, however, puzzling why individualism–collectivism was less influential for Cambodian youths as all the groups were recruited from the same geographical area, were similar in acculturation status, and represented collectivistic cultures. Replication studies are certainly needed to determine whether this finding may be unique to this particular sample.

These findings also suggest that the previously reported relation between acculturation and violence for immigrant youths may also require consideration of the developmental processes associated with individuation. Studies suggest that although individuation is a developmental process that occurs across all ethnic groups (Bray et al., 2003), cultural and social contexts may moderate this process (Boykin McElhaney & Allen, 2001; Fuhrman & Hombeck, 1995). Fuhrman and Holmbeck, for instance, suggested that emotional autonomy is associated with less positive adjustment in family environments that are supportive. In cultural groups that emphasize family relations and collectivism, adaptive functioning for youths may require that the process of individuation involves elaborations of their self–other conceptions (i.e., independence, auton-

omy) while maintaining cohesive and harmonious family bonds and ties (Silverberg & Gondoli, 1996). As such, for an immigrant population such as Chinese and Southeast Asian youths, the developmental process of individuation may be further complicated by the acculturation process.

As the individuation and acculturation process for immigrant youths also entails increasing detachment and separation from family, they may also lead to family and intergenerational conflict. Bray et al. (1999) discussed how separation in the individuation process results in increased alcohol use among adolescents, particularly in family-conflict environments. It has also been documented that intergenerational conflict may arise due to differences in rates of acculturation, with youths adopting more American values and lifestyles while their parents retain more traditional values (Szapocznik & Hernandez, 1988). Nguyen and Williams (1989), for instance, noted a substantial gap between Vietnamese American adolescents and their parents with regard to views on traditional values such as obedience and respect for authority. Moreover, the longer the families were in the United States, the wider the value gap grew. Consequently, one possible future direction for research is to explore the disparity between individualism–collectivism of youths and their parents and to investigate whether it is a source of conflict predisposing youths to affiliate with delinquent peers.

Given that Asian cultures are more collectivistic than individualistic in general, there are important implications with respect to prevention programs for delinquency. Programs that highlight the cultural values of respecting and considering interpersonal dynamics and importance of group cohesiveness may be more culturally relevant and effective for Asian youths and their families. Generic interventions and prevention programs deemed effective for a particular group (e.g., European American) may not necessarily translate to similar effectiveness in another group (e.g., Asian), and in fact may result in unintended side effects and consequences. For instance, programs that stress and highlight developing uniqueness and personal competencies without attending to certain cultural values and nuances may result in conflict at home for certain Asian groups and increase reliance on peers, some of whom may be delinquent. To date, there are only few culturally relevant violence prevention programs that have been empirically evaluated.

In considering the results and implications of this study, several limitations should be noted. First, the sample was limited to four distinct Asian ethnic groups. Replication of these findings to other groups and in other geographical locations is needed. Another limitation of the study concerns the use of self-report measures. It is possible that some youths may endorse items that do not reflect their actual attitudes or behaviors. Moreover, self-report by collectivistic individuals

are likely to be different from individualistic individuals. As such, establishing measurement invariance such as conducted in this study is important to ensure that any difference among groups is due to true variance rather than method variance. Other data sources (e.g., peers or parents and official records) would be helpful to corroborate the findings.

Another major limitation concerns the cross-sectional design of this study in which causality cannot be determined. We do not know, for instance, whether youths who are individualistic engage in delinquent activities or whether engaging in delinquent activities foster individualistic thinking, although we formed our models with culture influencing behavior rather than vice versa. We suspect that culture and behavior is a reciprocal process as highlighted by Li (2003). In addition, we do not know whether the role of individualism–collectivism observed during adolescence would have different or similar effects throughout the life course. No study to date has explored how individualism–collectivism may evolve and change over individual lives. Perhaps it is not so much a matter of degree and intensity of individualism or collectivism, but the degree or absence of a healthy balance between the two. The implication of such changes with respect to behavioral outcome such as aggression or altruism is an interesting question for future considerations.

Finally, the individualism–collectivism construct may be a limitation as some other factors could account for it. It may be that individualism is a proxy for something else apart from cultural orientation such as alienation and detachment from society, which is commonly observed among delinquent youth. However, the measure of individualism–collectivism used in this study (Singelis et al., 1995) was specifically developed to tap differences associated with the values, beliefs, and attitudes of individualism and collectivism in a cultural framework. It is a reliable, valid, and widely used measure for assessing cultural and ethnic differences at the individual level. On the other hand, there remains the issue of the third variable phenomena whereby some other factor(s) may be driving both individualism and delinquency. Indeed, no model or construct is a perfect representation of reality, and these limitations should be considered.

Despite these limitations, this study highlights one possible mechanism for the noted acculturation–delinquency link by examining the role of individualism–collectivism in self-reported delinquent behavior. Further, the study advances research on delinquency in Asian youths by exploring PD as a mediating factor between individualism–collectivism and delinquency. Indeed, understanding the role of culture and cultural forces is a crucial consideration in the understanding of adolescent delinquency, which has thus far been largely overlooked or relegated to a minor role. It is hoped that this study prompts other researchers to con-

sider the role of culture, both at the social and individual level, in adolescent delinquency. As noted previously, this could be important not only for advancing theory on the causes of delinquency but for also guiding more culturally sensitive interventions to prevent delinquency.

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**Appendix**  
**Intercorrelations Between Manifest Scales for Ethnic Groups**

	1	2	3	4
<b>Cambodian<sup>a</sup></b>				
Individualism	(.79)			
Collectivism	.416**	(.79)		
Peer Delinquency	.084	-.075	(.94)	
Self-Reported Delinquency	.199*	.122	.643**	(.83)
<b>Chinese<sup>b</sup></b>				
Individualism	(.86)			
Collectivism	.360**	(.88)		
Peer Delinquency	.002	-.240	(.88)	
Self-Reported Delinquency	.151	-.178	.587**	(.81)
<b>Laotian/Mien<sup>c</sup></b>				
Individualism	(.82)			
Collectivism	.487**	(.80)		
Peer Delinquency	.224	-.088	(.93)	
Self-Reported Delinquency	.290*	-.022	.810**	(.96)
<b>Vietnamese<sup>d</sup></b>				
Individualism	(.82)			
Collectivism	.073	(.85)		
Peer Delinquency	.436*	-.059	(.86)	
Self-Reported Delinquency	.200	-.294**	.614**	(.86)

Note: Internal consistency reliability listed on the main diagonal.

<sup>a</sup>n = 112. <sup>b</sup>n = 64. <sup>c</sup>n = 67. <sup>d</sup>n = 86.

\*Denotes correlation significantly different from 0, *p* < .05 (two-tailed). \*\* Denotes correlation significantly different from 0, *p* < .01 (two-tailed).

Received November 2, 2004

Accepted June 16, 2005