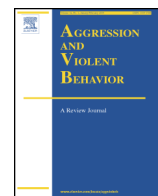




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Aggression and Violent Behavior



## Juvenile delinquency in Chinese adolescents: An ecological review of the literature

Xue Weng<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mao-Sheng Ran<sup>a</sup>, Wing Hong Chui<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

<sup>b</sup> Department of Applied Social Sciences, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 7 January 2015

Received in revised form 20 March 2016

Accepted 29 June 2016

Available online xxxx

#### Keywords:

Juvenile

Adolescent

Delinquency

China

Hong Kong

Taiwan

Ecological systems analysis

Literature review

### ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency is a serious concern in China. This article provides a comprehensive review of studies on Chinese juvenile delinquent behaviors over the last two decades. Forty-five peer-reviewed studies were identified through a four-step selection procedure, and their empirical findings were organized according to ecological system theory. The findings indicate that micro-level factors (i.e., age, gender, self-control, parent-child relationship, peer influence, and school attachment), meso-level factors (i.e., interactions between self-control, family, and school), exo-level factors (i.e., socioeconomic status and community), and macro-level factors (i.e., stereotypes and culture) are associated with increased involvement in juvenile delinquency. Multiple implications for practice and policy are discussed, followed by the limitations of current research and suggestions for future research.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Contents

1.	Introduction . . . . .	0
2.	Methods . . . . .	0
3.	Ecological systems analysis . . . . .	0
3.1.	Microsystem. . . . .	0
3.1.1.	Youth characteristics . . . . .	0
3.1.2.	Parent-child relationship . . . . .	0
3.1.3.	Peer influence . . . . .	0
3.1.4.	School attachment . . . . .	0
3.2.	Mesosystem. . . . .	0
3.3.	Exosystem. . . . .	0
3.3.1.	Socioeconomic status (SES). . . . .	0
3.3.2.	Community environment. . . . .	0
3.4.	Macrosystem . . . . .	0
3.4.1.	Stereotypes and social labeling . . . . .	0
3.4.2.	Confucianism and collectivism . . . . .	0
4.	Discussion . . . . .	0
4.1.	Microsystem. . . . .	0
4.2.	Mesosystem . . . . .	0
4.3.	Exosystem. . . . .	0
4.4.	Macrosystem . . . . .	0

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: wengxue@connect.hku.hk (X. Weng).

5. Limitations and directions for future research . . . . .	0
References . . . . .	0

## 1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency is an emerging social problem in China (e.g., Deng & Roosa, 2007; Liu & Lin, 2007; Lu, Yu, Ren, & Marshall, 2013; Weng, 2014). Due to effective informal controls, China enjoyed a very low crime rate during the pre-reform era. However, since the mid-1980s, China's modernization has not only resulted in rapid economic development, but also increases in the rate of juvenile delinquency. In the effort to explain the rising juvenile delinquency in China, a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon is imperative. China provides a unique cultural setting to investigate juvenile deviant behaviors (Zhang, Messner, & Liu, 2008). Unfortunately, only a handful of empirical studies (primarily in Hong Kong) have applied Western theories to investigate delinquency among Chinese adolescents. To the best of our knowledge, no researcher has yet conducted a thorough review of empirical studies conducted so far on juvenile delinquency in China. To address this gap, a systematic review of Chinese empirical studies published during the past decade is much needed. This article therefore aims to offer a systematic summary of the influential factors related to Chinese juveniles' delinquent behaviors. This review covers not only studies conducted in Mainland China, but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The issue of juvenile delinquency is multi-determined. Developmental theories postulate that the age of onset and offending persistency are key factors determining the severity and stability of antisocial behavior. Moffitt's (1993) developmental taxonomy put forward two distinct offender profiles: life-course persistent (LCP) offenders and adolescence-limited (AL) offenders. According to the theory, the two offender profiles are distinct in terms of the age of onset and the duration of antisocial involvement. Relatively few people are LCP offenders, a type of behavior which originates in neurodevelopmental disorder and disadvantaged environments. Persistent and stable antisocial behavior begins in childhood and continues persistently into adulthood. Unlike LCP offenders, AL offenders are quite common in the general population and their antisocial behavior is only temporary and situational. AL offenders desire to overcome the "maturity gap" and obtain equal status with the privileges of adults (i.e., alcohol use, driving, sexual activity). AL offenders' antisocial behavior emerges in adolescence in order to obtain mature privileges and responsibilities, but ceases after transition to adulthood. Though the contributions of Moffitt's (1993) theory have been widely acknowledged, recent review studies have suggested that the theory is in need of revision. Fairchild, van Goozen, Calder, and Goodyer (2013) and Assink et al. (2015) found that the distinctions between LCP and AL offenders appear to be more quantitative than qualitative, which is not consistent with Moffitt's (1993) proposition.

Looking beyond within-individual changes in delinquency, control theories and general strain theory focus on the social factors that restrain or facilitate criminal acts. Control theories (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi's, 1969) claim that people are naturally self-seeking and delinquent. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory explains adolescent delinquency as a response to a lack of bonds to conventional society (e.g., family, friends, social norms). It is the external controls of society that restrain people's desire to commit crime. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) proposed an internalized mechanism of self-control as the major resistance to criminal impulse. Individuals with low self-control tend to be more impulsive, insensitive, physical, risk-taking, short-sighted, and nonverbal, thus resulting in a greater probability of delinquent behaviors (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Children with a lack of self-control are at risk of delinquent behavior and will probably

continue their deviant path in adult life. Agnew's (1992) general strain theory views juvenile delinquency as the effect of negative emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety, depression) when individuals find themselves unable to achieve positively valued goals. These negative emotions in turn provide motivation for deviant acts as a way to relieve internal pressure.

Focused on cultural and structural factors, cultural transmission theory and labeling theory place adolescents' antisocial behavior in a larger sociological context for understanding. Cultural transmission theory explains how cultural mechanisms affect the value of behavioral patterns (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958). Juveniles' antisocial behavior is a reflection of deviant norms, values, beliefs, and behavioral characteristics, thus all behavior is learned through the culture that surrounds them (Berg & Stewart, 2009). Labeling theory concerns the process of producing delinquency and self-perception as a delinquent (Becker, 1964; Lemert, 1972). This perspective regards juvenile delinquency as a result of society's application of the deviant label to the individual and the individual's response to that labeling.

Longitudinal studies have provided comprehensive understanding of the risk and protective factors of juvenile offending (Farrington, 2011; Farrington, Loeber, & Tfofi, 2012; Loeber & Farrington, 1998). Based on a meta-analytic review, Andrews and Bonta (2010, pp. 58–60) categorized the major risk factors into eight domains: criminal history, antisocial personality pattern, antisocial cognition, antisocial peer associations, family relationships, school performance, leisure activities, and substance abuse. The first four factors, labeled the "big four," have the greatest impact on criminal behavior; the last four factors, labeled the "moderate four," have a slightly weaker but still moderate predictive power for criminal behavior. An improvement of the recent reviews also indicated an association between poor mental health and juvenile delinquency (Colins et al., 2010; Vermeiren, 2003). Lösel and Farrington (2012) reviewed the major protective factors and classified them into four domains: individual factors (i.e., high intelligence, positive attitude, low impulsivity, and easy temperament), family factors (i.e., close parent-child relationship, intensive parental supervision, low physical punishment, and positive parental attitudes toward the child's education), school factors (i.e., sound academic achievement, strong school bonding, support and supervision of teachers), peer factors (i.e., nondeviant peers), neighborhood factors (i.e., nondeprived and nonviolent neighborhood).

The identification of risk and protective factors is important as it can facilitate the development of intervention and prevention programs for adolescents who are at risk of becoming serious offenders. Given that juveniles' antisocial behavior can be facilitated and/or inhibited as a result of the interrelations among multilevel contexts, the current review is best described through a social-ecological approach. Social-ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is a multidisciplinary and holistic framework positing that individuals' behavior patterns are formed by the interplay of the immediate environment (family, school, peer groups), broader systems (community, society, culture), and the reciprocal interactions between the different system levels. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model consists of a set of nested structures – micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-system levels – in which each structure is settled inside the next.

In sum, the present review represents an effort to synthesize the existing knowledge about Chinese juvenile delinquency research within the ecological framework, which has two objectives: (1) to explore the factors related to juvenile delinquent behaviors, and (2) to make recommendations for further research and programs in the context of Chinese social and cultural settings. Following a multilevel review of the major findings, we then concentrate on some of the most pressing concerns

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4760140>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4760140>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)