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Intergenerational Transmission of Religious Beliefs and Practices and the Reduction of Adolescent Delinquency in Urban Thailand

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Abstract

This study examines the intergenerational transmission of family religion as measured by parent's and adolescent's beliefs and practices in Buddhism, and its relation to delinquent behaviors among early adolescents in Thailand. The data set is from the Thai Family Matters Project 2007, a representative sample of 420 pairs of parents and teens in Bangkok. A structural equation model is employed for the analysis. The intergenerational transmission and the direct and indirect association between parents' and adolescents' beliefs and practices in Buddhism and adolescents' minor and serious delinquent behaviors are revealed to be significant, controlling for secular parental monitoring. Spirituality within the family can play an important role in preventing delinquency among early adolescents. Policies in the areas related to family empowerment and delinquency prevention may need to consider integrating both secular and non-secular program inputs in their implementation design.

Keywords

religious beliefs; adolescent delinquency; family matters; parental monitoring; Buddhism; family spirituality

The ability of parents to deter their children from delinquent pathways is an important parental role in all cultures. To raise children to become law abiding citizens providing to the productivity of the community is an important social function of the family throughout all cultures across the ages. Much of the research on how parents prevent their children from becoming delinquent has been focused on parents functioning in a secular world, adopting family functioning processes that promote healthy child development.

A large majority of researchers have recently focused on the effect of secular parental monitoring, the set of behaviors that controls and allows for awareness of children's whereabouts, conduct, and companions (Barnes & Farrell 1992; Byrnes, Miller, Chen, & Grube, 2011; Dishion & McMahon 1998; Ingram, Patchin, Huebner, McCluskey, & Bynum,

2007); and on family management practice (Herrenkohl, Hill, Hawkins, Chung, & Nagin, 2006). Such family process affecting adolescents' problem behaviors also include the forms of family loyalty, parental attachment, and other parent-adolescent connections (Delsing, van Aken, Oud, De Bruyn & Scholte, 2005; Ingram, Patchin, Huebner, McCluskey & Bynum, 2007; Smetana, Crean & Daddis, 2002). These interests in family process are usually value-free, pragmatic and focus on utilitarian functions mainly of ensuring teens' safety, aiming to public health intervention or secular social or educational measures.

Although such secular monitoring by parents when children are very young is crucial, it is certainly not sufficient to protect the future incidence of undesirable or criminal behaviors, perhaps if the spiritual aspect of child rearing, and the spiritual role model of parents is not equally emphasized. The addition that spirituality addresses is that it is more than just behaviors and concerns for physical safety. It is also a reflection of parental norms and values about how one should conduct oneself as a teen and the belief that there are underlying morality codes that add something more than simply behavioral assessments. This is because, at least in the US, teens learn spiritual practices through moral directives and develop pro-social ties through collaborating with others participating in the spiritual practices (Miller, 2005). It is important to compare with settings where religion/spirituality is an embedded component of the culture as most US and western based programs do not have these elements. Thus an in-depth understanding of the cultural context for the development or adaptation of any public health or family support program involving both secular and spiritual elements becomes inevitable.

The importance of religion on social bonding and conformity to societal laws and beliefs has been scientifically recognized by sociologists under the social control theory (Baier & Wright, 2001; Hirschi, 2002). Family socialization should prevent delinquency and other problem behaviors because it helps youths internalize their parents' expectations for behavior, thus helping them develop conventional values which protect them from deviant behavior (Bell, Fortun & Sun 2000). According to the social control theory along this line, family religion is suggested to deter delinquency (Baier & Wright, 2001; Hirschi, 2002; Mapp, 2009). The investigation of the effect of adolescent religious commitment on delinquency by (Johnson, Jang, Larson & De Li, 2001) confirmed the significance of religion. Using latent-variable modeling and analysis of longitudinal data, the authors demonstrated the theoretical importance of religion as a social institution of informal social control and socialization in understanding delinquency (Johnson, Jang, Larson & De Li, 2001).

The relationship between religiosity and delinquency under the social control theory is challenged by the psychological explanation under the "arousal" theory. Under this theory, the religion-delinquency relationship is seen to be dubious or believed to be only spurious. Because of variations in brain functioning, individuals are different in their sensation seeking behavior. Lack of interest in religious engagement as well as involvement in delinquent activities, are both related to their arousal or the "thrill-seeking perspectives" (Cochran, Wood & Arneklev, 1994; Ellis, 1987). The true causal association between delinquency and religiosity is therefore challenged.

However, the above studies may lack the social control perspectives when they do not take into account all the family process within the larger context rather than only the individual level framework. Family spiritual connection and control through religious beliefs and by setting examples of religious practices especially among very young teens in addition to the effective parental monitoring may be able to explain delinquency among teens more comprehensively. Under the social control framework, the design to include intergenerational family process in the study of the religion-delinquency relationship is

therefore important to clarify the spurious hypothesis and to maintain that perhaps religiosity is developed in the family and not the result of the low arousal stimulation at the individual level.

Under the social control theory, the effect of religion should therefore be investigated in the total family context including two generations, rather than only on the level related to individual adolescents. Religion of the family involving both parent and teen, rather than only particular individuals should be emphasized. Also in this regard, Miller (2005) saw the importance of a systematic way to investigate both parents' and teens' spirituality since there is a family process of intergenerational transmission of religiousness from parent to teens. The intergenerational forces described by Miller (2005) helps to point out how teens' moral reasoning process and moral modeling is developed, and specifically, how the family that is well bonded has a better chance of transmitting social and cultural morality norms.

The need to look at both parents' and teens' religiosity rather than at only one generation (Thornton & Camburn, 1989) also stems from the important work of Regnerus (2003) where an intergenerational model of religious influence was developed and tested successfully to explain delinquent behavior especially for girls. An intergenerational model was also investigated by Pearce and Haynie (2004), when the concept of familial conflict as well as harmony of religious beliefs was introduced. According to Pearce and Haynie (2004), the influence of adolescents' religiosity on delinquency was found to vary according to parents' level of religiosity as well.

Studying the effect of religion by including both parental supervision and family religiosity in the same model in order to investigate their total and separate effects on adolescent delinquency had been found to be important (Benda & Corwyn, 1997, 2000; Petts, 2009; Pickering & Vazsonyi, 2010). These studies showed that investigation of religion controlling for other factors in the family domain had helped to shed more light on the direct effect of religion on delinquency. In order to replicate and make comparison to these previous studies and hypothesis testing in the West, it is proposed here to focus on Buddhism in Thailand.

The Buddhist religion comprises of 95% of the Thai population. Buddhist teaching focuses on the beliefs in the Law of Karma, reincarnation, the benefit of religious prayer and meditation, and merit making. They seek to follow and observe the Five Precepts, offer contribution to the monks, study Dharma and practice meditation. The Five Precepts prohibit bad deeds including killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and consuming alcohol and intoxicants. It is also widely believed in Thailand that Buddhism strengthens family values by emphasizing the concept of gratitude, especially to parents.

Because of the social change and the globalization process, these beliefs and practices are being increasingly challenged in Thailand. Although a large proportion of the population may still follow the religious teachings, some, especially the younger generation and those in the urban areas, are less committed to these traditional Buddhist convictions. As in many countries especially in the urban areas, the intergenerational transmission of Buddhist values is currently challenged.

The objective of this study is to investigate the association between Buddhist beliefs and practices in the family domain and delinquent behaviors among 13 to 14 years old in urban Thailand, by controlling for level of secular parental monitoring. In our previous study, spirituality was found to have an impact on substance use and sexual behavior (Chamratrithirong et. al., 2010). Unlike substance use and sexual behavior, which are undesirable when the teens are too young, delinquency is to be prevented at all ages and needs to be understood most comprehensively. Previous study also recorded that parental monitoring significantly reduced sexual risks and delinquency among Thai adolescents

(Rhucharoenpornpanich et. al. 2010). Teens with perceptions of greater parental monitoring were less likely to engage in delinquent behaviors, and findings held for both males and females. In this present study, the roles of spirituality on delinquency will therefore be investigated by controlling for the prevalence of parental monitoring. The study will explore both minor and major delinquent behaviors. Under the social control theory and the intergenerational transmission model, it is hypothesized that spirituality of parents will be related to teens' spirituality, which in turn will have a direct and negative association with their delinquent behaviors.

Methods

Data Source

This study utilizes data from the Baseline Survey conducted in 2007 under the Thai Family Matters Project, which adapted a U.S. based family prevention program to the Thai cultural and religious settings in 2008 (Rosati et. al., 2012). The funding of the study was from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) (R01AA015672). The study was conducted by an international collaborative team, composed of investigators from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation – PIRE - (USA.), Mahidol University, Chiang Mai University, the research company CSN & Associates (Thailand), and an American Program Advisor to the Thailand Ministry of Public Health. The study, including its data collection activities, was approved by both the PIRE Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the IRB Committee of the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University.

The study utilized the probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling method (with case multiplication technique), to obtain a probability representative sample of 420 pairs of parents and teens age 13–14 who were residing in seven districts of Bangkok Metropolis. These seven districts were selected from the total of all 50 districts based on the PPS method. Then 35 blocks from each of the seven districts were sampled, again using the PPS method, adding to a total of 245 blocks. Next, CSN & Associates (Thailand), in collaboration with Mahidol University researchers, conducted household enumerations in all of these 245 blocks using maps provided by the National Statistical Office, where data collection teams then identified households with 13–14 year old adolescents.

In each district, families in 60 households were randomly selected from the listing of the eligible households with 13–14 year old adolescents. The total of 420 families were then selected from all seven districts. Separate and private interviews were conducted with one adolescent and one parent in each family. Explanation and instruction was given to adolescents so they could complete interviews by themselves, using an audio computer-assisted questionnaire (ACASI) on a laptop computer. This was also done by a professional research team but without direct face to face interview, to encourage more honest responses given the sensitive nature of many questions. As for the parents, a structured interview administered by the professional research team of a research company was conducted. Both parents and adolescents were asked questions about their Buddhist beliefs and practices in detail. The information about parental monitoring and adolescent delinquent behavior was obtained from the adolescents.

Sample Characteristics

The total number of 420 families of one parent and one child ages 13–14 are included in the sample. Male and female adolescents are of equal number by sampling design. Average age of parent is 41 years old, and most of them (85%) are mothers. About half of the parents attained only primary education (4–6 years), 37% of them had secondary or high school degree and the rest finished higher education with only six percent graduated from college.

About half of the families (52%) had their monthly family income lower than 20,000 baht or 667 U.S. dollars. Approximately one-fifth (22%) had their income range between 667 to 1,000 U.S. dollars, and the rest (26%) earned more than 1,000 dollars.

Measurement

According to Theravada Buddhism in Thailand, the belief in Law of Karma and reincarnation is the important domain of spirituality among Thai people. Following the Four Noble Truths which includes the Eightfold Path to enlightenment and cessation of suffering involves the practices of the Five Precepts and other merit making activities. Being a non-theistic religion, the spiritual beliefs and the religious practices in Buddhism are relatively concretely defined and not complex compared to the spirituality constructs of Western religions (John, E. Fetzer Institute, 2003; Johnstone, Franklin, Yoon, Burris, & Shigaki, 2008). The emphasis on beliefs and practices was also made in a number of previous researches on the relationship between Buddhist religion and health outcomes in Thailand (Assanangkornchai, Conigrave, & Saunders, 2002; Newman et al., 2006). Spirituality in this study will therefore be measured by parent and teen Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Buddhist beliefs are derived from the four questions assessing the perception of the importance of religion to self (How important are these spiritual or religious beliefs to you?; 1=not important at all, 4=very important), perception of the helpfulness of prayer/meditation during times of stress (1=very unhelpful, 5=very helpful), whether they believe in Reincarnation (1=not at all, 4=a lot) and whether they believe in the Law of Karma (1=not at all, 4=a lot). As for the measures of religious practices, four questions were used, including how often they pray or meditate (1=Never, 5=daily/almost daily), the frequency of religious prayer or meditation when life is stressful (1=never, 4=always), the frequency of merit making including *Tamboon* (making donations) and/or *Saibart* (offering food to monks) (1=never, 4=very often); and the frequency with which they observe of the Buddhist Five Precepts (*Tue Sil Ha*) (1=never, 4=very often). For both teens and parents separately, two composites were created reflecting spiritual beliefs (Cronbach's alpha = .63 for both teens and parents) and spiritual practices (Cronbach's alphas = .68 for teens, .67 for parents). Indices were created by summing the four items reflecting each construct.

Parental monitoring consists of an array of behaviors that help parents to control and track their children's whereabouts, conduct, and companions (Barnes & Farrell, 1992; Dishion & McMahon, 1998). Monitoring, again as in our previous work was measured from the teen's response to three questions about their parents' regularity of knowledge (over the past six months) of their whereabouts and activities after school or when they were away from home. For example, "Over the past 6 months, how often did your parents really know who you were with after school or when you were away from home?" These three questions were adapted from Patterson and Stouthamer – Loeber (1984) and Capaldi and Patterson (1989), and were chosen because they accurately reflect dimensions of monitoring considered important in measuring parents' awareness of their children's behavior, location, and friends. In addition, high test-retest reliability (.77), and predictive validity have been demonstrated, as this measure of monitoring was the strongest predictor of delinquency in a study of family management practices for adolescents (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). The response ranges from "none of the time" to "all/almost all of the time" on a 4 point scale. Items were averaged to create a monitoring scale (Cronbach's α = .66).

Measures of delinquency reflected illegal behaviors and status offenses (e.g., skipping school). These behaviors were measured by teens' responses to 11 items regarding whether the teen had ever engaged in any of the delinquent behaviors listed. These items were derived from a study by Elliott, Ageton, Huizinga, Knowles and Canter (1983), with items reflecting minor delinquency (skipping school, shoplifting, joyriding, property vandalism

and disorderly conduct.) and serious delinquency (participated in gang fights, joined a gang, giving drugs to friends, being stopped by police and told to go home, being taken to a police station and arrested, and running away from home). Evidence of reliability and validity for these items has been demonstrated (Elliott et al., 1983). Two indices were created by summing the items reflecting each construct to measure minor and serious delinquency. The indices were log transformed due to data skew.

Other background variables in this study include sex (1 = Male, 2 = Female) and age (13 and 14) of teens, parent education, which has possible responses ranging from 1 (Did not attend school) to 8 (Higher than bachelor's degree) and family monthly income ranging from 1 (under 10,000 baht) to 5 (more than 40,000 baht).

Data Analyses

This study employed structural equation models to investigate the association between spirituality and adolescent problem behaviors. First, we impute missing data by using Expectation-Maximization (EM) estimation. Then we use Maximum Likelihood (ML) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), implemented with Mplus 5.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2006), to investigate the latent structures of delinquency. The most important step of the analysis involved the use of ML latent variable structural equation modeling to study the impact of spirituality and parental monitoring on adolescent serious and minor delinquency, taking into account background variables including parent education and age and sex of teen. In this process, Lagrange Multiplier (LM) and Wald tests were operated to help modify the models. According to the recommendation by Hu and Bentler's (1999), to assess model fit, the ML-based comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) were used in this study. A CFI close to .95 and a RMSEA close to .06 specify better model fit. We also utilized robust estimates of the standard errors, because of the non-normally distributed data.

Results

Parent and Teen Spirituality

Table 1 shows spiritual beliefs and practices of parents and teens. In this table, four measures of spiritual *beliefs* are illustrated. These include the report of the importance of spiritual or religious beliefs to oneself, the belief in the help of religious prayer or meditation, belief in reincarnation and belief in Karma. Four additional measures of spiritual *practices* are also provided. These spiritual practices include regular religious prayer and meditation, religious prayer and meditation when life is stressful, the practice of *Tamboon* (religious donation) and/or *Saibart* (offering food to monks), and the observation of the Five Precepts (abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, and substance use). The frequency of these beliefs and practices are presented separately among parent and teen.

According to this table, parents are more likely to report being more religious or spiritual than their teens in all respects, including both areas of beliefs and practices. The greater extent of spirituality among parents was expected. The gaps between parents and teens are only slightly smaller in spiritual practices as compared to spiritual beliefs. The differences are especially pronounced in the two areas of spiritual beliefs namely, the perception of the importance of spiritual beliefs to self and the belief in Karma. Spirituality of parents is also shown to be higher than teens' in the three areas of religious practices: praying or meditation when life is stressful, practices of *Tamboon* and/or *Saibart*; and observing of the Five Precepts. For example, the high frequency of practice of *Tamboon* and/or *Saibart* is about

three times more prevalent among parents than adolescents. Observing the Five Precepts on a most regular basis is also found to be two times higher among parents.

Delinquent Behaviors

The percentages of teens who reported engaging in problem behaviors are presented in Table 2. Approximately 28 percent of teens reported one or more minor delinquent behaviors and about the same percentage reported one or more serious delinquent behaviors. The most prevalent minor delinquent behaviors were skipping school (17%) and getting in trouble for disorderly conduct (11%). The most prevalent serious delinquent behavior reported was joining in school gang fights (15%). Other serious delinquency involved much smaller numbers of teens (under six percent) but denote serious activities such as being stopped by police, running away from home, involving in drug and being arrested.

Parental Monitoring

The results for parental monitoring are presented in terms of the frequency and mean score of the regularity of knowledge on the whereabouts of one's child (Table 3). Most of the teens were found to be well monitored by their parents. About three-fourths of them reported that their parents knew who they were with after school or when away from home, for at least most of the time

Structural Equation Model of Spirituality, Parental Monitoring and Delinquent Behaviors

The structural model was developed based on our conceptual model. According to our conceptual model, controlling for parents' education and teens' age and sex, the spiritual beliefs of parents will sequentially have an impact on adolescents' delinquent behaviors. According to this model, parents' spiritual beliefs will first determine their own spiritual practices and which will reduce serious delinquency among teens. Teens' spiritual beliefs which will be strengthened by parents' spiritual beliefs, will bring about teens' spiritual practices which, in turn, will discourage their not only serious delinquent behaviors but also minor ones. In this respect, the explanation for this direct casual relationship is linked to certain purely or authentic religious factors, rather than familial or social forces in nature. In addition, in our model it is expected that in the process of socialization of the teen, the influence of parents' religious beliefs and practices on the teen may also be indirect or work through increased parental monitoring of the teen or greater knowledge of teens' whereabouts. Parent spirituality is expected to increase monitoring and, in turn, reduce the problem behaviors of teens. Parental monitoring which is expected to directly and significantly reduce serious delinquency among teens, is hypothesized not to be secular or independent from spirituality.

In this analysis, teen age and sex, parent education and family income are controlled for. All background variables and variables at the same level of analysis (e.g., parent education and parent spiritual beliefs) are allowed to co-vary. In addition, the disturbance terms for the outcome variables of minor and serious delinquency were allowed to co-vary. For model parsimony, non-significant paths (including that of family income) were then dropped from the models.

The result of the structural equation models is shown in Figure 1. For serious and minor delinquency among the adolescents, the final structural equation model is presented. The model also fit the data well [RWLS χ^2 (N = 350, df = 30) = 72.46, $p < .001$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .064].

As expected in the intergenerational transmission model, parental spiritual beliefs influence teen's spiritual beliefs which increase teen spiritual practices. These spiritual practices

among teen, in turn, reduce teens' minor and serious delinquency. At the same time, parents' spiritual practices (resulted from her/his religious beliefs) directly influence teens' serious delinquency, regardless of whether teens become spiritual or not. This direct causal relationship is probably linked to certain purely or authentic religious factor on the part shown by parent. Teens seem to be also able to change his/her behaviors by just observing parent's religiosity. This family process is probably due to semi-spiritual component, rather than either fully- spiritual features or familial or social forces in nature. In sum, there seems to be two effects of spirituality on teen delinquency. One is via the transmission of religious values and practices to young generation. Another effect may not be through the transmission of religious practices per se, but probably associated with psychological and family level factors where family level overshadows individual level or self.

As for the role of parental monitoring, the results show that minor and serious delinquency is negatively and significantly associated with parental monitoring. Our hypothesis is not confirmed that parental spirituality will increase monitoring. The role of parental monitoring appears not to be influenced by spirituality within the family. This non-spiritual practice of parental monitoring especially for daughter is significantly related to reduction of both minor and serious delinquency behaviors. The nature of parental monitoring is shown to be secular and not related to family spirituality.

Table 4 summarizes the final structural model by presenting the magnitude of the direct and indirect effects of parent and teen spirituality and parental monitoring on delinquency. The effects of family spirituality and the correlation of parental monitoring with adolescents' behaviors are found to be both direct and indirect. Apart from the control variables, the most important direct association with behavior outcomes of adolescents is parental monitoring. For example, the standardized coefficients of parental monitoring on serious delinquency ($-.37$) are the highest. The second most important direct effect is teen spiritual practices. The standardized coefficients range from $-.18$ to $-.27$ for the effects of teen spiritual practices on serious and minor delinquency respectively. In general, parent and teen spiritual beliefs only act indirectly via spiritual practices. The magnitude of the indirect effects is relatively large for the teen spiritual beliefs on their minor delinquency ($-.17$), and parent spiritual beliefs on teen serious delinquency ($-.16$).

In summary, although secular parental monitoring is most importantly related to delinquency, almost equally, teen spiritual practices also have significant and independent effect on serious and minor delinquency. The additional indirect effects of family spirituality including parent and teen spiritual beliefs also play additional important role in reducing delinquent behaviors among teens.

Conclusion

This study examines, in urban Thailand, the association between family religiosity and delinquent behaviors among teens 13 to 14 years old, controlling for secular parental monitoring. The intergenerational transmission of family spirituality measured by parents' and teens' religious beliefs and practices in Buddhism is shown in the structural equation model to be associated with delinquency in early adolescence, independent of parental monitoring.

Discussion

The results of the study of religion in Thailand here are found to be consistent to many comparable studies in the West. In the United States, where national youth surveys were used, religiosity among the adolescents across the nation was revealed to have a significant

effect on delinquent behaviors (Johnson, Jang, Larson & De Li, 2001) and particularly on smoking, alcohol and marijuana use (Sinha, Cnaan & Gelles, 2007). Another national representative sample of adolescents and their mothers also showed the inverse relationship between religiosity and adolescent delinquency, when both mothers and adolescents were similarly religious (Pearce & Haynie, 2004). Our analysis which is quantitative in nature is in agreement with the ethnographic investigation of the Protestants, Catholics and Spiritists in Brazil where the religiosity also reflecting family moral values as the protective mechanism against young adult substance use behavior were clearly illustrated (Sanchez, Opaleye, Chaves, Noto & Nappo, 2011). On the whole, from our study the empirical evidence on the intergenerational transmission of spirituality renders itself to support the social control theory described by Hirschi (2002), where the focus is on the process of socialization, in this case, through the social control mechanism of religious beliefs and practices, which starts with parents who are the first agent of society's socialization process.

In addition, similar to research on the Western religions, the relationship between religiosity and delinquency in our study is revealed to be independent of other non-religious parenting. Our result has provided important support on the issue of universality of religion when religiosity in the West was similarly found to be an "important social control mechanism" on adolescent delinquency and that its effects were also not reduced by other protective factors and in particular, family process did not mediate the relationship between religiosity and deviance (Pickering & Vazsonyi, 2010).

Furthermore, in our study, parents' spirituality is also linked to teens' behavior directly, specifically to reduced serious delinquency, without having to convert them to actually follow their parents' religious practices. In this study, therefore, family spiritual energy has generated both intergenerational transmission and non-transmission influences. The so-called non-transmission impact seems to reflect the process that by observing their parent's spirituality alone, early adolescents can also be prevented from problem behaviors. This may be due to both the authentic religious factor of Buddhism and the delicate family process, where, as mentioned earlier, further empirical studies on this topic are called for. In comparison, as mentioned earlier, Sanchez, Opaleye, Chaves, Noto and Nappo (2011) also found evidence reported by adolescents of three Western religions that, with absence of a clear position from the religion, the link of religion and delinquency was related mainly to the family process and family influence, including the increase of adolescent self-esteem and future prospects, rather than the direct essence of the religious teachings per se. Although in general, Buddhist teachings specifically point out the undesired delinquent behavior, for example, the straight prohibition of consumption of alcohol and intoxicants in the Five Precepts, interpretation of religious teaching and family values on the part of the adolescents themselves may still be required. Possibly further ethnological study on Buddhism in this same line would be able to shed more light on this profound linkage of spirituality and delinquency in adolescence in the Buddhist setting. Research to indicate whether Thai adolescents' position is more reflective of family values or specifically religious beliefs, would be equally important. In addition, interaction of family process and religion as evident in the West where religion could amplify the effect of supportive family practices on delinquency trajectories (Petts, 2009) should be investigated in the comparative setting of Buddhism in Thailand.

The association between spirituality and adolescent behaviors appears to be complex and related to intergenerational relations. Spiritual beliefs of parents are related to teens' spiritual beliefs, which are then connected to increases in teens' spiritual practices, which finally correlate to the reduction of their minor and serious delinquent behaviors. The findings here seem to support the full intergenerational role model process in the family. The implications are clear that school intervention alone may not work well without the family programs

where parents are not only to be brought into pictures but also to be considered for change. In this regard, the appropriate age of adolescents, young enough to still be attached to parents and to undergo the family socialization process, and old enough to start to experience the problematic behaviors, can be crucial in the research and program design. The intergenerational transmission of spirituality points to careful consideration of the appropriate ages and timing for any proposed implementation, where family influences are most important, and the school-peer-neighborhood context is relatively at the minimum. And at these particular ages, the family program rather than adolescent program should be focused.

Comparing the direct and indirect effects of the determinant of teen problem behaviors, it is evident in our study that although secular monitoring may play a major role, the magnitude of the effect of spirituality in the family appears to be almost equal to parental monitoring. Especially for minor delinquency, teen spiritual practices backed up by parent spiritual beliefs, are found to be even more important in scale than parental monitoring. Implications for prevention where spirituality may be overlooked in prevention programming in favor of parenting strategies, need to be verified. Since religion may also be integrated into or as part of the socialization process, the intervention design to include religion in the secular program could be considered.

The findings of this study are important and can perhaps supplement a number of previous scientific studies on religion and family process in the West. To a certain extent, the study may help to substantiate the similarity and universality of the roles of particular religious and secular family practices. However, findings from several contrasting and similar literatures point to the need for further studies and the theoretical discussion on the mixture and interaction of the religion and family effects in different settings, perhaps more on the religions of the East as well.

However, one should still also consider the limitations of the analysis. Our study is cross-sectional in nature and may not provide the true causal linkage between certain family processes and adolescent outcomes, particularly pertaining to the reciprocal relation between parental monitoring and adolescent delinquency. However, our findings are conceptually consistent with social control models. As for the link between spirituality and delinquency which is the main focus of our study, the causal relationship is believed to be less problematic and the reverse association is assumed to be less likely since our study focuses on the very early adolescent ages of 13 and 14. Given the nature of spirituality that needs to be accumulated with a longer term of the socialization process, the absence of delinquent behaviors among these ages tends to be the consequence rather than the determinant of spirituality. However, caution on the interpretation of this relationship still has to be made. The use of self-report measures may also be a limitation. The validity of self-reports of sensitive behaviors (e.g., delinquency) is maximized, however, when privacy and confidentiality can be assured during data collection. Confidentiality and privacy of interviews were emphasized to participants, and interviews for parents and youth occurred in separate, private locations. Finally our study has an additional limitation where alphas for some measures were less than ideal.

However, with certain limitations, we proposed that there existed an intergenerational transmission of Buddhist beliefs and practices and that this family spirituality process worked significantly and independently to prevent serious and minor delinquency among early adolescents in urban Thailand. At these young ages, religion within the family appeared to add to other secular protective mechanisms against delinquent behaviors. The important role of the family spirituality process in this study is found to be clear, supporting several studies of other religions in the West. Besides secular parental monitoring, religion

and spirituality within the family can also play an equally important role in preventing delinquency among early adolescents. Policy makers on family and public health fields such as those related to family welfare and support, mental health, psychological treatments, and crime and violence prevention, may need to take into account the integration and balance between secular and non-secular program inputs in their implementation design.

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Figure 1.

Final Structural Model of Spirituality and Adolescents' Delinquency. Standardized robust weighted least squares (RWLS) coefficients are shown. Model fit: RWLS $\chi^2(N = 350, df = 30) = 72.46, p < .001$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .064 † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 1
Percent Distribution and Mean Scores of Religious Beliefs and Practices among Parent and Teen.

Religious Beliefs	Parent	Teen	t, χ^2	p	Religious Practices	Parent	Teen	t, χ^2	p
Perception of the importance of spiritual beliefs to self					Regular religious prayer or meditation			$\chi^2=38.78$	.001
A lot (4)	57.5	44.4			Daily or almost daily (4)	34.0	33.9		
Somewhat (3)	36.3	44.9			About once a week/about once a month (3)	38.1	43.3		
Little or not quite (2)	5.3	7.4			A few times a year (2)	12.9	9.1		
Not at all (1)	1.0	3.3			Never (1)	15.0	13.7		
Total	100.0	100.0			Total	100.0	100.0		
(Number)	(419)	(394)			(Number)	(420)	(395)		
Belief in the help of religious prayers or meditation			$\chi^2=42.75$	<.001	Religious prayer or meditation when life is stressful			$\chi^2=23.35$	.005
Very helpful (4)	35.8	30.6			Always (4)	27.2	13.5		
Helpful (3)	45.5	42.5			Most of the time (3)	24.0	28.1		
Neutral or mixed (2)	14.5	21.8			Hardly ever (2)	24.3	38.5		
Unhelpful or very unhelpful (1)	4.1	5.1			Never (1)	24.5	19.9		
Total	100.0	100.0			Total	100.0	100.0		
(Number)	(385)	(353)			(Number)	(416)	(392)		
Belief in Reincarnation			$\chi^2=24.93$	.003	Tamboon and/or Saibart			$\chi^2=71.78$	<.001
A lot (4)	30.0	24.5			Very often (4)	22.6	7.4		
Somewhat (3)	33.3	43.3			Often (3)	53.8	54.1		
Little or not quite (2)	23.8	24.8			Seldom (2)	19.8	31.5		
Not at all (1)	12.9	7.5			Never (1)	3.8	6.9		
Total	100.0	100.0			Total	100.0	100.0		
(Number)	(420)	(400)			(Number)	(420)	(403)		
Belief in Karma			$\chi^2=31.87$	<.001	Observing the Five Precepts			$\chi^2=27.35$	.001
A lot (4)	56.4	46.8			Very often (4)	20.2	10.1		
Somewhat (3)	31.0	35.4			Often (3)	46.9	48.9		
Little or not quite (2)	9.8	14.4			Seldom (2)	21.9	30.7		

Religious Beliefs	Parent	Teen	t, χ^2	p	Religious Practices	Parent	Teen	t, χ^2	p
Not at all (1)	2.9	3.5			Never (1)	11.0	10.3		
Total	100.0	100.0			Total	100.0	100.0		
(Number)	(420)	(404)			(Number)	(420)	(397)		
Religious Beliefs mean score (SD)	13.47 (2.69)	12.36 (3.21)	$t = 6.36$	$<.001$	Religious Practices mean score (SD)	11.75 (3.12)	10.71 (3.21)	$t = 5.43$	$<.001$
(Number)	(420)	(417)			(Number)	(420)	(416)		

Note: The total number of cases may not be equal because of the "don't know" category and/or refusal to answer particular questions.

Table 2
Percent Distribution of Teens Who Reported Having Minor and Serious Problem Behaviors.

Problem Behaviors	Percentage	Total Number
Minor Delinquent Behaviors (%)		
Did you ever skip school without a valid excuse?	17.1	397
Did you ever take anything that didn't belong to you (from school, a friend's possession, etc)?	9.3	400
Did you ever go joyriding, that is, take someone else's motor cycle or car for a ride without their permission?	2.2	404
Did you ever vandalize property? By that I mean, graffiti, purposely damage or destroy property?	9.2	403
Did you ever get in trouble for disorderly conduct, by that I mean being loud or rowdy in a public place where someone complained?	11.2	393
Teens reported having 1 or more minor delinquent behaviors	28.4	409
Serious Delinquent Behaviors (%)		
Did you ever participate in gang fights?	14.7	402
Did you ever give your friends drugs that you obtained?	2.0	405
Have the police ever stopped you and told you to go home?	5.8	398
Have you ever been taken to a police station or arrested?	1.5	408
Did you ever run away from home, at least overnight?	3.4	411
Teens reported having 1 or more serious delinquent behaviors	28.2	419

Note: The total number of cases may not be equal because of the "don't know" category and/or refusal to answer particular questions.

Table 3
Percent Distribution and Mean Score of Parental Monitoring as Reported by Teens.

Parental Monitoring	Percentage and mean score	Number
Last six months, how often did your parents really know what you were doing after school or when you were away from home?		
None of the time (1)	5.6	23
Hardly ever (2)	19.6	80
Most of the time (3)	39.9	163
All or almost all of the time (4)	35.0	143
Total	100.1	409
Last six months, how often did your parents really know who you were with after school or when you were away from home?		
None of the time (1)	5.6	23
Hardly ever (2)	17.9	74
Most of the time (3)	38.0	157
All or almost all of the time (4)	38.5	159
Total	100.0	413
Parental Monitoring Mean Score	3.05	414

Note: The total number of cases may not be equal because of the "don't know" category and/or refusal to answer particular questions.

Table 4

Direct and Indirect Effects of Parent and Teen Spirituality and Parental Monitoring on Teen Delinquency.

Major Constructs	Serious Delinquency		Minor Delinquency	
	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects
Parent spiritual beliefs		-.158**		-.072**
Parent spiritual practices	-.167*	-.036		-.029
Teen spiritual beliefs		-.112*		-.168**
Teen spiritual practices	-.178*		-.267***	
Parental monitoring	-.366***		-.155 ⁺	
Age of teen	.281***		.206**	
Teen sex		-.120***		-.051
Parent education		-.020		-.003

Note. Cell entries are standardized coefficients.

Model fit indices are presented in Figure 1.

⁺ $p < .10$,* $p < .05$,** $p < .01$,*** $p < .001$.