Published in final edited form as:

Int J Offender Ther Comp Criminol. 2014 December ; 58(12): 1540–1557. doi:
10.1177/0306624X13501472.

Prevalence and Risk Factors for Self-Reported Violence of Osaka and Seattle Male Youths

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Abstract

Traditionally, Japan has been regarded as a country with low crime. Comparative research has given insights into the extent of similarities and differences in crime between America and Japan. The importance of these studies is the examination of whether Western-established criminological knowledge is applicable to non- Western societies like Japan. Unfortunately, comparative self-report studies involving Japan and investigating youth offending are scarce. The current study investigates risk factors and self-reports of violence from Osaka and Seattle male youths. The findings reveal that Japanese male youths self-report a higher prevalence of violence than Seattle male youths. Risk factors for violence, issues of comparability, and prevalence versus strength of relationships of risk factors are examined. It is concluded that the higher prevalence of violence in Osaka is primarily a function of the higher prevalence of troubled peers and risk taking. The findings call for replication of this type of comparative research.

Keywords

Japan; comparative research; self-reports; youth violence; risk factors

Within the criminological literature, Japan is viewed as the nation with “low crime.” Its reputation for being a low-crime society is typically based on official crime statistics, particularly for homicide and violent crimes. For instance, The Japanese Ministry of Justice’s 2009 White Paper on Crime observed that in 2007, Japan ranked lowest in homicide, theft, and major offenses compared with the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. For instance, for major offenses, Japan reported a rate of 1,494 per 100,000 persons as opposed to the United States (3,730), the United Kingdom (9,157), Germany (7,635), and France (5,833).

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Empirical studies of Japanese low crime rates tend to use official homicide and crime statistics (e.g., Roberts & LaFree, 2004; Tsushima, 1996). Recently, however, concerns about using official crime statistics to evaluate Japan's low crime have surfaced. In David T. Johnson's (2007) book review of *Trends in Crime Rates in Postwar Japan: A Structural Perspective* (Park, 2006), he highlighted the use of official crime statistics and the book's assumption that these could be trusted. The problem with this, he points out, is that recent revelations about police misconduct and distortion of crime rates, particularly for larceny and assault, may in fact make official numbers unreliable. Because relevant studies have only analyzed official statistics, it is not clear to what extent Japanese low crime exists. Last, if Japan does indeed have relatively low violence, this should be reflected in self-reports and may be pervasive throughout all subpopulations.

Comparative research investigating American and Japanese self-reports of offending has given insights into the extent of similarities and differences in crime between these two societies. In the first Japanese study in English of self-reported delinquency, Tanioka and Glaser (1991) found that Osaka youths had a significantly lower prevalence of delinquency. Specifically, the prevalence levels of violence and theft were higher among Seattle and Richmond high school students than in Osaka.¹ However, Osaka youths had a higher rate of joyriding (taken a bike or motorcycle without owner's permission) than their American counterparts.

In studies of self-control and deviance, Japan had significantly higher levels of self-control compared with other nations. In a cross-national study of self-control, Vazsonyi and Belliston (2007) found that maternal closeness and monitoring were not salient correlates of Japanese self-control and deviance. However, the relationship between low maternal support,² low self-control, and deviance was significant only in the Japanese sample, though the researchers believe that this is because of Japan's relatively small sample size. In another cross-cultural study of self-control, Kobayashi, Vazsonyi, Chen, and Sharp (2010) found that low self-control was significantly associated with deviance in both Japan and the United States. Like Vazsonyi and Belliston, the study demonstrated that the link between low self-control and deviance was replicable in different cultures. Although Kobayashi and her colleagues were unable to support the hypothesis that there would be cultural differences between the two countries, they proposed that perhaps differences of cultures did exist, but more so in the complementary relationship between internal attributes (e.g., personal thoughts and feelings) and expressive behaviors, and the forms of deviance that are idiosyncratic to each society.

Fukushima, Sharp, and Kobayashi (2009) investigated the relationships between social control and deviance, and found that, although their Japanese sample were more conforming and less deviant than their American sample, these results were not caused by stronger bonds to conventional society in Japan. In fact, American youth had stronger ties than

¹The violence prevalence are as follows: Richmond males (41.9) and females (15.2); Seattle males (50.9) and females (24.4); Osaka males (19) and females (5.6).

²Maternal support refers to whether the mother belittles the child in front of others, whether the mother listens to the child's opinions, whether the mother gives the impression that the child is not living up to the parent's expectation, and whether the mother appears to wish the child was a different person.

Japanese youth. The researchers explain that bonding may be influenced by the overall economic situation in Japan; the younger generation currently experiences pessimistic economic prospects and may have little reason to have strong bonds to the conventional order. In addition, using the same dataset, Kobayashi, Sharp, and Grasmick (2008) found lower levels of deviance in their Japanese sample than in their American sample. The same Japanese youth also supported the applicability of attitude transference (see Kobayashi, Akers, & Sharp, 2011).

The importance of these studies lies in the examination of whether established Western criminological knowledge is applicable to non-Western societies like Japan. However, these previous studies suffer from several methodological limitations. For instance, although Tanioka and Glaser's (1991) study find lower levels of delinquency from Osaka high school students compared with their American counterparts, it should be noted that the scholars divided the delinquency recall period into 6 months (April to October; where survey administration occurred in October) instead of the 12-month delinquency recall period that marks the Seattle and Richmond studies. Furthermore, the previous studies testing theoretical applicability (Fukushima et al., 2009; Kobayashi et al., 2008; Kobayashi et al., 2010) used a sample of university students (Japanese $n = 433$, American $n = 369$), which was not representative of the criminological literature and the Japanese population. Criminology had established that crime is most prevalent during the teen years (15- to 17-year-olds) and university students are a sample that is at least older than 18 years of age and is a sample that is better educated than the average population. Second, in Japan, more than half of the youth population does not advance onto 4-year universities (Sugimoto, 2003). Thus, the findings of these studies that rely on a university sample are called into question because of their weak representation of the criminological literature and of Japan. Unfortunately, comparative studies of self-reports involving Japan and investigating youth offending are scarce.

The Present Study

The present study takes into account the previous studies' limitations and investigates self-reports of violence from Osaka and Seattle male youths. By examining self-reports, the biases of official statistics are avoided and insights into new explanations for Japanese youth offending can be obtained. The self-report method has been validated in numerous studies (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000). Self-reports are a useful measure of offending compared with official crime statistics because they capture a larger fraction of the true number of offenses committed (see Farrington, Jolliffe, et al., 2003). Studies that have tested the validity of self-reports have found that they are significantly consistent with official records (Babinski, Hartshough, & Lambert, 2001). Furthermore, self-reports have also been proven to predict recorded crimes before they occur (see Farrington, 1973; Jolliffe et al., 2003).

Issues in Comparative Research: Prevalence Versus Strength of the Relationship

An important issue within comparative criminology is whether differences in the prevalence or level of offending are explained by differences in the strength of the relationship between risk factors and offending or by differences in the prevalence of risk factors. In other words,

does the difference between two groups disappear after controlling for risk factors? It may be that a particular type of strength of relationship matters, where the risk factor predicts a higher level of violence in one group than in another.

For instance, there are two groups: Groups A and B. Group A revealed that 80% of its aggressive members watched violent films daily while 40% of its aggressive members did not. However, in Group B, 40% of its aggressive members watch violent films daily while 20% of its aggressive members did not. The strength of the relationship between aggression and watching violent films daily for both groups are similar but the risk factor (e.g., watching violent films daily) predicts higher aggression in Group A than B. Prior studies have proposed that the strength of the relationships between risk factors and offending are similar among groups (e.g., among males and females), but it is the different prevalence of these risk factors that explains the differences between these groups in offending (see Farrington & Loeber, 1999; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, 1994).

Key Questions

1. Do Osaka youths commit less violence than Seattle youths?
2. What is the strength of relationships between risk factors and violence in Osaka and Seattle?
3. How similar/different are these strengths of relationships between Osaka and Seattle?
4. What is the prevalence of risk factors in Osaka and Seattle?
5. How similar/different are these prevalence levels of risk factors between Osaka and Seattle?
6. To what extent can any differences in youth violence between Osaka and Seattle be explained by differences in the prevalence of risk factors or in the strength of their relationships with violence?

In addition to addressing these key questions, the importance of the current study is as follows: (a) It is the first study written in English of self-reported delinquency from Japanese high school students since Tanioka's (1989) study, (b) its data were from a nonaffluent area with a high percentage of working mothers (74.6%), (c) it comparatively investigates the similarities and differences in risk factors for violence and their possible mechanisms, (d) it was highly considerate of the Japanese context in the survey construction, and (e) it has a robust sample size ($n = 878$).

Method

Data used to answer the key questions were collected using self-reports of 15- to 16-year-old males from Osaka, Japan, and Seattle, Washington, United States. The Japanese data were self-collected in spring 2011 from two private high schools in the Osaka Prefecture while the American data were obtained in 1991 from the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP), which is a prospective longitudinal study. Although there was a 20-year difference

between the Osaka and Seattle samples, the reasons for comparing these two particular samples are (a) they are both from nonaffluent areas, (b) they have similar age groups, and (c) the Japanese survey contains questions derived specifically from the SSDP belonging to the Social Development Research Group (SDRG; Hawkins et al., 2003). Details of both datasets are given below:

Self-Collected Japanese Data

A total of 878 high school students, located in the Osaka prefecture area, participated in the survey. The sample consists of 652 males and 222³ females. The age range of the students was 15 to 18 with a mean age of 16.1. In addition, School A consisted of 388 males and 118 females while school B consisted of 264 males and 104 females. The small fraction of females was because data collection was from predominantly male schools. Through an application process to the educational committee and through a series of meetings with high school principals in nearby prefectures, access was finally obtained for two private high schools in the Osaka prefecture. Although the students were derived from two high schools, the classes in each school were randomly chosen to participate in the survey. Thus, the sample should be representative of these schools. The survey comprised questions on living arrangements; attitudes about shame and embarrassment; youths' relationships with their parents, schools, communities; and delinquent involvement. For the present study, only the 15- to 16-year-old males were used ($n = 398$).

The survey was originally designed in English, and a back translation (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004) was conducted where the survey was translated from English to Japanese, and then translated again into English without reference to the original text. In addition, some questions were altered at the schools' request because the school found them inappropriate and an invasion of privacy. For instance, a measure of socio-economic status was replaced by a measure of material well-being.

The SSDP

This dataset consists of three-hundred and ninety-two 15- to 16-year-old males who were originally selected from 18 elementary schools located in high crime neighborhoods in Seattle, Washington, United States. This diverse sample includes the following ethnic groups: Caucasian American ($n = 186$; 47.4%), African American ($n = 98$; 25.0%), Asian American ($n = 94$; 24.0%), and Native American ($n = 14$; 3.6%; Farrington, Jolliffe, et al., 2003). The overall sample of 808 children, including the 392 qualified males, participated in the study when they were in fifth grade ($M_{age} = 10.8$), in the fall of 1985 (Hawkins et al., 2003), and they were subsequently interviewed annually. Teacher assessments and parent interviews were also collected. The information consists of family, peer, school, and community factors, including self-reports of delinquency, violence, drugs, alcohol, and substance use.

³Four did not specify their gender.

Measures

Outcome variable

Violence: This is measured in the SSDP by the question “In the past year how many times have you hit someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?” To fit the Japanese context, the Osaka version asked “In the past year, how many times have you hurt someone in a fight?” The Seattle measure which included the wording “hit someone with the idea of seriously hurting them” was considered a strong phrase and it was thought to yield little to no prevalence in the Japanese context if a direct translation was used. The dilemma became how to find an equivalent of the Seattle violence measure for the Japanese questionnaire and it was concluded that “hurt someone in a fight” was the best representation.⁴

The Osaka response categories were divided between none, 1 to 2 times, and 3 or more times and subsequently dichotomized between none (0) and 1 or more times (1). The Seattle response asked for frequency, and was also subsequently dichotomized to fit with the final Osaka response.

Risk factors

Factors known to be associated with youth offending: Eight comparable items and measures of established risk factors found in both the Osaka and Seattle datasets were used. Where applicable, to form certain measures, items were combined and then summed. Both samples were then merged to form one dataset where measures were dichotomized to represent the low and high halves of the measures (e.g., if the scale was from 1 through 4, 1–2.5 would represent low, while 2.51–4 would represent the high portion). These risk factors comprised the following item(s) (see also Table 1):

- High risk taking
- Low parental monitoring
- Low parental attachment
- Harsh discipline
- Large family size
- Single-parent household
- Troubled peers
- Low school bonding

For the parenting measures (e.g., low parental monitoring, low parental attachment, and harsh discipline), in two-parent households, the averages of responses for mother and father items were used. For instance, for the low parental monitoring measure, responses of Osaka male youths for both maternal and paternal monitoring were added together and the average was recorded as the final score. For single-parent households, only the one response for whichever parent youths were living with was recorded as the final score.

⁴The Japanese version of the violence measure specified hurt as “physical hurt”: “ケンカをして人をなぐったこと”

Plan of Analysis—Odds ratios (ORs) were used to assess (a) whether the prevalence of Osaka male violence was higher than Seattle male violence, (b) the strength of differences in the prevalence of violence between Osaka and Seattle, (c) the strength of the relationship between risk factors and violence for Osaka and Seattle separately, and (d) whether differences in risk factors between the two contexts can explain the differences in violence. To assess whether the ORs for each Osaka risk factor were significantly different from those in Seattle, *z*-scores were obtained by subtracting the natural logs (Ln) of the ORs and dividing them by the pooled standard error.⁵ Results will be presented by hypothesis.

Results

Prevalence of Violence

Osaka males self-reported a significantly higher prevalence of violence than their Seattle counterparts. Almost half (47.7%) of Osaka males admitted to hurting someone as opposed to 35.2% of Seattle males ($\chi^2 = 12.8, p < .001$). The prevalence ratio for males within the violence category was $47.7 / 35.2$ or 1.36, meaning that the prevalence of violence is 1.36 times higher in the Osaka group than it is in the Seattle group. The odds of committing a violent act is 1.68 times greater for a Osaka male than it is for a Seattle male, with a 95% confidence interval (CI) of [1.26, 2.24]. Because the CI did not include the chance value of 1, this OR was significantly greater than 1.

Risk Factors for Violence

Table 2 reveals that, compared with Seattle males, Osaka males reported higher levels of risk taking (34.9% as opposed to 17.9%), low parental monitoring (31.1% as opposed to 16.7%), low parental attachment (45.4% as opposed to 33.7%), harsh discipline (38.3% as opposed to 7.5%), low school bonding (34% as opposed to 19.8%), and troubled peers (71.6% as opposed to 14.2%). However, Seattle males reported a higher prevalence of having a large family size (40.6% as opposed to 26.9%) and single-parent households (50.6% as opposed to 21.8%).

ORs in Table 3 reveal that the factors associated with violence for both Osaka and Seattle males are high risk taking (Osaka OR = 2.57; Seattle OR = 4.41), low parental monitoring (Osaka OR = 1.54; Seattle OR = 3.30), and troubled peers (Osaka OR = 3.90; Seattle OR = 4.07). For Osaka males, living in a single-parent household (OR = 0.56) and a large family (OR = 1.88) were also associated with violence. For Seattle, low parental attachment was found to be significant (OR = 1.71) while in Osaka, living in a single-parent household serves as a protective factor (OR = 0.56), which is opposite to prior results.

Similarities and Differences in Strength of Relationship

Table 3 reveals that low parental monitoring ($z = -2.14, p < .05$), low parental attachment ($z = -1.96, p < .05$), large family size ($z = 2.36, p < .05$), a single-parent household ($z = -3.00, p < .01$), and low school bonding ($z = -2.23, p < .05$) were all significantly different in their

⁵The formula for obtaining the pooled standard error is $(SE_1 + SE_2)$; the formula to obtain a *z*-score of differences in these samples is $z = [\ln(OR_1) - \ln(OR_2)] / \text{pooled SE}$.

relationships with violence in Osaka than they are in Seattle. However, the strongest relationships, troubled peers and high risk taking, were not significantly different between Osaka and Seattle.

Differences in Youth Violence Explained by Differences in Risk Factors

Table 4 shows that the odds of violence are 1.68 times higher in Osaka than in Seattle ($CI = [1.26, 2.24]$). To discover whether risk factors are significant explanations of Osaka–Seattle difference in violence, Models 2 through 9 assess the impact on violence of each risk factor, controlling for city. The following risk factors were significant and coincided with the city variable (Osaka/Seattle) being significant: high risk taking ($OR = 3.18$), low parental monitoring ($OR = 2.06$), and low school bonding ($OR = 1.52$).

Having friends who were picked up by the police (troubled peers) was the only risk factor that rendered the city variable insignificant ($OR = 3.96$). This means that being either from Osaka or Seattle did not predict violence after controlling for differences in troubled peers. When including all the significant risk factors in Model 11, the city no longer mattered and the two risk factors that were the most important were high risk taking ($OR = 2.30$) and troubled peers ($OR = 2.78$).

Last, additional analyses were conducted which included interaction terms. Table 5 presents the interaction terms between each risk factor and whether the respondent was from Osaka or Seattle. The strongest factors were high risk taking ($B = 1.49, p < .0001$) and having troubled peers ($B = 1.40, p < .0001$) but the interaction terms that included these factors were nonsignificant. However, there were significant interaction effects with Low parental monitoring $\times$ Japan ($B = -0.076, p = .03$), Single-parent household $\times$ Japan ($B = -1.03, p = .003$), Large family size $\times$ Japan ($B = 0.77, p = .019$), and Low school bonding $\times$ Japan ($B = -0.75, p = .025$). This means that some risk factors have a different effect on violence in Osaka versus Seattle. In other words, context matters.

The prevalence levels found in Table 5 refer to the prevalence of violent males within each category of a particular risk factor. For example, observe the results for high risk taking: 62.5% of high risk taking Osaka males are violent while 39.4% of low risk taking Osaka males are violent; 64.3% of high risk taking Seattle males are violent while 29% of low risk taking Seattle males are violent. To better illustrate these findings, take school bonding, for example. The difference in prevalence levels between high and low school bonding violent Osaka males is not too different (46.6% as opposed to 49.6%, respectively). However, in Seattle, a higher prevalence of low school bonding males report being violent (50.7%) compared to high school bonding violent Seattle males (29.9%). This huge difference in prevalence is what accounts for the interaction effect between school bonding and city. By examining the prevalence levels, one can interpret exactly why this interaction for low school bonding is significant. The same pattern is found with large family size.

Living in a single-parent household (Osaka no: 51.0%; Osaka yes: 36.9%; Seattle no: 26.8%; Seattle yes: 36.6%)⁶ is a protective factor for Osaka males but this factor does not

⁶“O” refers to Osaka, while “S” refers to Seattle.

make much difference for Seattle males. It seems that there is a significant effect on violence in one city but not in the other.

Discussion

The current study used youth self-reports from Osaka and Seattle to investigate whether violence is lower in Japan than in America, and whether known risk factors for crime and violence are applicable in a Japanese context and to what extent these factors are related to Japanese male youth violence.

The first set of results reveals a surprising finding: Osaka male youths have a substantially higher prevalence of violence than Seattle male youths. This seems to contradict the previous literature on comparative self-reports, which championed Japanese low crime. However, as previously mentioned in the introduction, serious limitations existed for these studies. Unlike the previous studies of American and Japanese youth self-reports, the current study required a 1-year recall of delinquency in both countries, which is aligned with most previous self-reported delinquency studies, and it has large sample sizes of high school students from nonaffluent areas.

While constructing the Japanese survey, it was suggested by our colleague Mitsuaki Ueda that the original SSDP violence measure “In the past year how many times have you hit someone with the idea of seriously hurting them?” should be changed for the Japanese survey into “In the past year, how many times have you hurt someone in a fight?” because the SSDP item was too general. But more importantly, the direct translation of the Seattle item with the phrase “hit someone with the idea of seriously hurting them” was thought to provide little to no prevalence from the Japanese respondents because of the strong connotation. Thus, it was thought that the best Japanese equivalent of hitting and seriously hurting someone without explicitly stating the “seriously hurting them” would probably only occur in the context of a fight. One possibility is that the difference in wording may have significantly inflated the prevalence of Japanese violence. However, a counterargument would be that the Osaka/Japanese version is a more direct measure of violence because it asks if someone *did* get (physically) hurt whereas the Seattle/English version is ambiguous on this, referring only to the idea of hurting someone and not establishing that the person was indeed hurt. Furthermore, the Osaka violence measure is more restrictive than the Seattle violence measure because it requires the context of a fight. Because of this context, it would be expected that the prevalence of violence should be less in Osaka than in Seattle. Thus, it is not too clear why Osaka males report a significantly greater prevalence of violence than Seattle males. There is clearly a need for replication because the present results are unexpected and contradict the previous belief about Japanese low crime.

In addition, social desirability was not a concern because the prevalence and significant relationships found in this study complement previous criminological findings. If the Japanese respondents were answering in a socially desirable way or concealing their true answers, then many of the known relationships between criminological risk factors and delinquency would have been nonsignificant in this study.

The risk factors associated with Osaka violence are youths' high risk taking, low parental monitoring, large family size, and knowing close friends who have been picked up by the police. A protective factor, however, was living in a singleparent household. A comparison of prevalence between Osaka and Seattle singleparent households reveals that only 16.8% of Osaka males live in such a household while more than half (58.3%) of Seattle males live with only one parent. However, the context of living in a single-parent household in Osaka should be taken into account.

In Japan, it was mentioned that it is not uncommon for fathers to live away from the family due to the location of their work. This is known as *tanshinfunin* (single posting) and this may explain why being in a single-parent household may have a different meaning in Osaka than it does in Seattle. In Osaka, single-parent households may be caused by fathers working away.

It was also unexpected that living in a large-sized family was found to be a risk factor for Osaka violence. Unlike in America, which is dominated by the nuclear family system, it is common in Japan to have extended families where two adult generations live under the same roof (Sugimoto, 2003). It would make sense that, the more adult supervision that is available, the more likely that having a large family in the Japanese context would act as a protective rather than a risk factor. It seems that large family size in Osaka may reflect other issues such as overcrowding.

Seattle male youths had similar risk factors to Osaka male youths, with the exception of low parental attachment and low school bonding. These particular two risk factors were significantly related only to Seattle violence. The higher prevalence of low parental attachment and low school bonding among Osaka youths than their Seattle counterparts is not only limited to those two risk factors. Osaka males self-reported a higher prevalence of all of these risk factors with the exception of large family size and single-parent households.

However, though these two contexts are significantly different in the prevalence of the risk factors and the strength of their relationships with violence, the strength of these relationships is weaker in Osaka than in Seattle. Thus, the concern here is, which is a better explanation for Osaka violence?—the higher prevalence of risk factors in Osaka than in Seattle or the different strength of the relationships between these risk factors and violence in the two places. Apparently, it is differences in the prevalence of risk factors that best explains Osaka violence, especially differences in high risk taking and troubled peers. This adds further support to previous criminological findings that, although there are established risk factors for offending and these are similarly shared among seemingly different groups, the differences between groups are attributable to differences in the prevalence of risk factors. Rowe and colleagues (1994) previously reached similar conclusions, stating that the developmental processes (the association between risk factors and offending) of their racial groups were similar, but the prevalence of risk factors was different. The relationships seem to be universal, but what separates groups, whether societies or individual people, from each other is how often those particular risk factors occur. This is where context comes into play.

How does this fit into the literature on Japanese youth offending? The consistently higher prevalence of risk factors in the Osaka sample than in the Seattle sample attests to the possibility that what we may think are risk factors for youth offending and violence in Western contexts may be less so in the Japanese context. For instance, a very high 71.6% of Osaka youths self-reported having a close friend being picked up by the police, as opposed to only 14.2% of Seattle youths who have had their best friend(s) arrested. But there are two factors to consider: One, the Seattle item is stricter because it was limited to three best friends and required an arrest. Second, in Japan, there is the category of “pre-delinquents,” also known as The Juvenile Police Activity Regulations (Nawa, 2006; Research and Training Institute of the Ministry of Justice, 2009). Deviant behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and late-night roaming through adult entertainment districts are not classified as illegal, but are perceived as acts that are likely to result in offending (Lewis, Brooks, Ellis, & Hamai, 2009; Yoder, 2011).

When Japanese police officers identify at-risk youth, they must provide guidance consisting of a caution for the misconduct and advice targeted at preventing delinquent behavior (Lewis et al., 2009; Nawa, 2006). The police may also contact the parents or guardians of the youth to notify them of the misconduct and suggest changes in family supervision. Thus, the stricter strategies used by the Japanese police toward youth may have resulted in the much higher prevalence of having picked up peers for Osaka males. Additional analyses not detailed in this article were also conducted to assess whether the findings were valid. In the SSDP data, one item asked whether, in the past year, the youth’s best friends has ever done anything that could have gotten them in trouble with the police; the prevalence of this was 34.8%. Although this measure is not equal to the Osaka troubled peers measure, it is a measure more likely to yield a higher prevalence than a measure worded as “being picked up by the police” because the activities of the youths’ friends in the “done anything that could have gotten them in trouble” measure were not necessarily followed by being picked up or identified by the police. But because the prevalence for this measure was much lower than that of the measure for troubled peers in Osaka, it seems that detected and apprehended peers are really more common in Osaka and that the difference in violence between Osaka and Seattle may be driven by the difference in the prevalence of troubled peers. It is known that offending increases after detection (e.g., Farrington, 1977; Huizinga & Henry, 2008).

It seems that, without contextual information, it is difficult to understand the prevalence of these risk factors. The findings indicate that conceptions of attachment/bonding and single-parent households may not be relevant to violence in a Japanese context, whereas parental monitoring, a large family size, and especially high risk taking and having troubled peers may be very important.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our current study: First, the Seattle sample is a couple of decades old compared with the Osaka sample. How contemporary Seattle male youth compare with the current sample of Osaka male youths is unclear. Thus, differences in crime trends, and societal and historical events may have contributed to the obtained results. Second, the Osaka sample was a convenience sample, rather than a randomly chosen one. It

would have been preferable to have a randomly chosen sample, but time, access, and funding proved to be problematic.

Last, and most important, is the comparability of the surveys. The present study highlights the challenges and difficulty in comparative criminological research. Language barriers, misinterpretations, and preconceived beliefs are the obstacles that comparative work must confront when investigating two different societies. The comparability of our surveys was not perfect, although we took care in back translating the surveys and in ensuring that the interpretation and meaning were similar between both surveys. However, some of the items needed different wording either because of their lack of applicability in the Japanese context or because the meaning of words had different interpretations.

Conclusions and Future Directions

The current study empirically addresses the gap between the Japanese context and the Western criminological literature. The finding that Osaka males self-report a higher prevalence of violence than Seattle males merits additional investigation and replication. Although this finding is different from previous comparative results regarding Japan, the present study highlights the value in studying and understanding crime in non-Western societies. To make research from the field of criminology more inclusive and universal, examining the contexts in which crime occurs will reveal the mechanisms in which criminological relationships such as risk and protective factors operate. The challenges of this are identifying appropriate and reliable measures for crime that correctly translate the meaning in different societies. Future studies of comparative criminology, particularly with Japan, should be attentive to the comparability of measures and be mindful of how to best approach study in specific societies and contexts. From there, a better understanding of criminological risk and protective factors will be produced.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank 社会安全研究財団 (Research Foundation for Safe Society) and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation for their generous support. The authors are also grateful to Bryan Burton and the Social Research Development Group of the University of Washington for their helpful comments.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This study was supported in part by Grants 5R01DA003721- 01-08 and 1R01DA024411-01-03 (National Institute on Drug Abuse), Research Foundation for Safe Society and The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation.

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Table 1

Items of Comparable Risk Factors for Osaka and Seattle.

	Osaka	Seattle
High risk taking	$\alpha = .78$ Shock [upset or annoyed adults] people just for the fun of it. Do what feels good, regardless of the consequences Do something dangerous because someone dared you to do it. Do risky [crazy] things even if they are a little frightening [dangerous]	$\alpha = 0.77$ Items are the same as Osaka
Low parental Monitoring	$\alpha = .85$ Father knows where I am when I am not home Father knows who I am with when I am not home Mother knows where I am when I am not home Mother knows who I am with when I am not home	When you are away from home, do your parents know where you are and who you are with?
Low parental Attachment	$\alpha = .72$ Mother easy to discuss my problems With Father easy to discuss my problems With I like to be the kind of person my parents are	$\alpha = .59$ Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother? Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father? I like to be the kind of person my mother is I like to be the kind of person my father is
Harsh discipline	$\alpha = .71$ Father hit or slap Father yell or scream Mother hit or slap Mother yell or scream	$\alpha = .35$ Do your parents [Hit or] spank you? Do your parents yell, shout, or scream at you?
Family size	Are you currently living with your father? Are you currently living with your mother? How many people do you live with excluding your parents?	Altogether, how many people live in your home?
Single-parent Household	Are you currently living with your mother? Are you currently living with your father?	Did the student live with his or her natural mother? Did the student live with his or her natural father?
Troubled peers	Close friends picked up by the police	$\alpha = .66$ First best friend: (If yes) Was he or she arrested? Second best friend: (If yes) Was he or she arrested? Third best friend: (If yes) Was he or she arrested?
Low school Bonding	I like my school	I like school

Note. For family size and single-parent household, alphas were not needed because these items were not combined but used to create a new variable. Alphas were shown where there were more than one item; for high risk taking, the same items were present in both surveys. For family size, living with father and mother items were added to the number of people living with respondent to form the final variable.

Table 2

Prevalence of Risk Factors Comparing Osaka and Seattle.

	% Osaka	% Seattle	OR	CI
Violence	47.7	35.2	1.68 ***	[1.26, 2.24]
High risk taking	34.9	17.9	2.46 ***	[1.76, 3.42]
Low parental monitoring	31.1	16.7	2.26 ***	[1.61, 3.19]
Low parental attachment	45.4	33.7	1.64 **	[1.22, 2.20]
Harsh discipline	38.3	7.5	7.69 ***	[5.01, 11.83]
Large family size	26.9	40.6	0.54 ***	[0.40, 0.73]
Single-parent	21.8	50.6	0.27 ***	[0.20, 0.38]
Troubled peers	71.6	14.2	15.21 ***	[10.45, 22.15]
Low school bonding	34	19.8	2.09 ***	[1.51, 2.90]

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = 95% confidence interval.

*
 $p < .05$.

**
 $p < .01$.

 $p < .001$.

Table 3

Strength of Risk Factors for Violence in Osaka and Seattle Separately and z-Scores of OR Differences.

	Osaka		Seattle		z-score
	OR	CI	OR	CI	
High risk taking	2.57***	[1.67, 3.94]	4.41***	[2.56, 7.61]	1.53
Low parental monitoring	1.54*	[1.01, 2.37]	3.30***	[1.90, 5.72]	-2.14*
Low parental attachment	0.94	[0.63, 1.40]	1.71*	[1.09, 2.67]	-1.96*
Harsh discipline	1.21	[0.81, 1.82]	1.34	[0.62, 2.90]	0.23
Large family size	1.88**	[1.19, 2.98]	0.87	[0.56, 1.37]	2.36*
Single-parent	0.56*	[0.34, 0.92]	1.58	[1.00, 2.51]	-3.00**
Troubled peers	3.90***	[2.40, 6.36]	4.07***	[2.15, 7.69]	0.10
Low school bond	1.13	[0.75, 1.71]	2.40**	[1.44, 4.02]	-2.23*

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = 95% confidence interval two-tailed test, critical value = ± 1.96 .

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 4Odds Ratios of Risk and City Factors for Violence ($n = 790$).

	OR	CI
Model 1		
City (O/S)	1.68 ***	[1.26, 2.24]
Model 2		
O/S	1.39 *	[1.03, 1.87]
High risk taking	3.18 ***	[2.27, 4.45]
Model 3		
O/S	1.61 **	[1.20, 2.16]
Low parental monitoring	2.06 ***	[1.47, 2.90]
Model 4		
O/S	1.74 ***	[1.29, 2.33]
Low parental attachment	1.23	[0.91, 1.65]
Model 5		
O/S	1.59 **	[1.17, 2.16]
Harsh discipline	1.24	[0.86, 1.78]
Model 6		
O/S	1.84 ***	[1.36, 2.49]
Large family size	1.27	[0.93, 1.74]
Model 7		
O/S	1.96 ***	[1.43, 2.70]
Single-parent household	0.98	[0.70, 1.36]
Model 8		
O/S	0.8	[0.54, 1.18]
Troubled peers	3.96 ***	[2.69, 5.84]
Model 9		
O/S	1.67 **	[1.24, 2.23]
Low school bonding	1.52 *	[1.10, 2.11]
Model 10		
O/S	0.76	[0.51, 1.13]
Troubled peers	3.24 ***	[2.17, 4.83]
High risk taking	2.59 ***	[1.80, 3.73]
Model 11		
O/S	0.77	[0.51, 1.16]
Troubled peers	2.91 ***	[1.93, 4.39]
High risk taking	2.42 ***	[1.66, 3.51]
Low parental monitoring	1.53 *	[1.05, 2.23]
Low school bonding	1.27	[0.89, 1.83]

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = 95% confidence interval.

*
 $p < .05$.

**
 $p < .01$.

 $p < .001$.

Table 5

Interaction Effects for Violence Between Risk Factors and City.

	Violence			Prevalence of risk factor in violent males			
	B	SE	OR	Osaka no	Osaka yes	Seattle no	Seattle yes
High risk taking	1.49	0.28	4.41***				
Japan	0.47	0.18	1.59**				
Risk taking × Japan	0.54	0.35	1.72	39.4	62.5	29.0	64.3
Low parental monitoring	1.19	0.28	3.30***				
Japan	0.66	0.17	1.93***				
Monitoring × Japan	0.76	0.36	2.14*	44.5	55.3	29.4	57.8
Low parental attachment	0.54	0.23	1.71*				
Japan	0.79	0.20	2.20***				
Attachment × Japan	0.59	0.31	1.81	48.4	46.9	29.8	42.1
Harsh discipline	0.30	0.39	1.34				
Japan	0.48	0.17	1.61**				
Harsh discipline × Japan	0.10	0.45	1.11	45.9	50.7	34.4	41.4
Single-parent	0.46	0.24	1.58				
Japan	1.05	0.21	2.84***				
Parent × Japan	1.03	0.35	2.81**	51.0	36.9	26.8	36.6
Large family size	-0.14	0.23	0.87				
Japan	0.35	0.19	1.42				
Family × Japan	0.77	0.33	2.15*	43.6	59.2	35.2	32.2
Low school bonding	0.88	0.26	2.40**				
Japan	0.71	0.18	2.04***				
School × Japan	0.75	0.34	2.13*	46.6	49.6	29.9	50.7
Troubled peers	1.40	0.32	4.07***				
Japan	-0.21	0.25	0.81				
Peers × Japan	0.04	0.41	1.04	25.0	56.5	29.1	62.5

Note. OR = odds ratio.

*
 $p < .05$.
**
 $p < .01$.

 $p < .001$.